

Diary ka Soso

Season 2

#1

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"Don't make me wait until the morning. Got a bed, wit' your name on it. Got a kiss, wit' your name on it. Love me good, love me down. Don't turn me down." - Ariana Grande [Nicki Minaj]

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Someleze

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7 months later - June

I love that point in a relationship when you're close and comfortable with each other so much that you do almost everything together. Doc and I were also there at some point but not

anymore - well, because of circumstances.

From my solo morning jog, I walk into my kitchen to find Kevin and Asanda, his pregnant girlfriend, sitting at the counter, having some breakfast. At first these jogs weren't so fun without Doc but I eventually got used to it. I just let the music waves from the iPod Touch I got as a little gift from Anathi, Doc's sister, help pump adrenaline through my veins as I push my body forward. I no longer take my phone with me because I'm avoiding draining its battery by playing music on it.

-Asanda: "Hey, Iviwe just called your phone. She wanted to know if you got to fit the dress she sent yesterday."

She informs me as I walk past them, making my way to the fridge.

-Me: "No. I'll fit it when I have time. I thought I told her this."

-Asanda: "But isn't the wedding next Saturday? What if the dress doesn't fit?"

-Me: "I'm sure it'll fit. But if it doesn't, I'll simply have my mom alter it. She's good and quick. Ivi needs to chill."

-Kevin: "You're serious about attending this stupid wedding, Soso, aren't you?"

He asks half-humorously as he jabs his fork into a piece of sausage and chews slowly.

Since January these two have been living with me in the house I once shared with Doc. I know I said I'd look for housemates to help me with the rent but that didn't quite happen. These two are living here for free. I took them in when Asanda's parents kicked her out of their house as her pregnant belly started to show. Kevin is still working at the filling station and I know for a fact that he can't afford to pay this rent and also save enough money for the coming baby,

so I asked them not to bother with the rent and just save for their baby. My background helps me understand other people's hardships and show some compassion. The fact that I have a rich father, who also happens to be my mother's boyfriend, hasn't changed who I am, I'm still the same old Someleze and I'm still living the simplest life. I only let my dad cover our rent and I only use the credit card he gave me to buy myself a few clothing items every month, nothing more. Anything else, I cover with my own money. Despite the slight drop in my marks during my last ever semester, I managed to earn my B.Sc. degree cum laude, I got that scholarship, Fort Hare admitted me into the Honours programme in Biochemistry and I'm also working for them as a lab assistant, so I'm earning my own cents to cover my other expenses.

-Me: "Of course, I'm serious, Kev. I've been

telling you that I'm cool with the wedding. It stopped bothering me a long time ago."

I reiterate, taking bottled water out of the fridge to hydrate my body.

-Him: "I thought you were just pretending, you know."

-Me: "Nope, no pretending, buddy. I meant it."

Iviwe and Alex are getting married next weekend and I'm seriously cool with it. I'm not only attending their wedding but I'm also one of my aunt's bridesmaids. I accepted the fact that the both of them are now my family a while back. There was nothing I could do about it anyway, so accepting it was the only way. If there's anyone who still gets uncomfortable when we are all together it's Alex. The guy seriously needs to deal with the feelings he still has for me or his marriage won't last.

-Kevin: "You're a better person than I am, S. I

swear, I wouldn't be civil towards those people if I were in your shoes."

-Asanda: "Baby, come on, don't put ideas in Soso's head."

-Me: "Nah, don't worry about it, Asa, it won't happen. Kev, I'm in a very good space in my life. I don't have time to worry about those two, I don't even have to waste my emotions on them. I have my own loving fiancé, I don't have time to entertain or create drama with them."

When Doc asked me to marry him last year I was in complete shock and some doubts started circling my mind, but the excitement of continuing my life with the most romantic and loving man I've ever known, the man that I love with every fiber of my being, trumped all of that. I took his hand and helped him up from that kneeling position on the beach sand, then I pulled him fully into my arms and kissed his lips. I was so excited that I almost forgot to answer

the most important question that I would ever be asked. After I let go of him, he asked, "So is that a yes?" Of course, I said YES!! He did such an amazing job planning out that sweet proposal. It was definitely the best day of my life and one I will never forget.

When we got back to our suite at the resort he made love to me in a way he'd never done before. I thought I knew all he could do, but it turned out I was wrong. He was all there, so gentle and passionate. I swear, I could not only feel the love but I could also touch it - to me, HE was love at that moment.

And that's exactly how I also want him to feel tonight. Tonight is just another special night for us and I want to make it extra special for him before I make love to him like I never did before.

-Asanda: "I'm sure you can't wait for your own wedding, hey."

-Me: "You have no idea, babe. The 28th of December seems so far. I really can't wait to be Mrs Thando December."

-Her: "You are one lucky girl, babe. And I'm happy for you. I just wonder when I'll get my own engagement ring."

She says, her eyes boring into Kevin.

-Him: "Baby, no, don't do that. We talked about this. We can't..."

I quickly cut him off.

-Me: "Okay guys, that's my cue to leave. I think this conversation needs to be just between the two of you."

I leave them there and go to my bedroom, then to the en-suite bathroom to take a shower.

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After getting dressed and eating breakfast, I pack my bag then go put it in the boot of my car - well, the car that I'm using. In January Doc gave me his second car to use, the car that was gathering dust in his parents' garage in Jo'burg, the very same car he once refused to give to his little sister just for a short period of time until her insurance claim could be approved and her own car fixed. He was like, "no woman of mine will take 2 taxis every time she needs to come to EL to see me." So he went to get the car from Jo'burg and gave it to me. It's a five-year old Audi A4, the first and only car he's ever bought with his own money - the spoils of having a rich father. It has always been his baby but he didn't have a problem giving it to me, and it works well for me.

After closing the boot, I go get my handbag from the house then say my goodbyes to my housemates.

-Me: "Y'all enjoy some time alone, hey. But don't do anything I wouldn't do, okay? See you in 3 weeks."

As the tight family that we are, we share a group hug then I walk out. I'm going to spend the winter research break with my fiancé in East London. I know that it's only going to be 3 weeks but I'm just glad that the long wait is now over, my excitement levels are running high, they are off the charts. And who can blame me? Doc and I no longer get to spend much time together since he went back to medicine, and the fact that my research project is also keeping me busy is not making things easier either, hence I want to make the most of this time together.

I get in the car and pace the German machine down the R63 route. My body is here but both my heart and mind are already in East London. I just can't wait to see my man again, God knows

it's been two extremely long weeks. Excited, I keep tapping my fingers against the steering wheel as I sing along my favourite artist - The Weeknd. Waiting until I could get to see Doc to share the exciting news that I have has been difficult for me, but I find this too important to share over the phone, so no matter how difficult it was I just had to wait. And I couldn't miss the opportunity to see his face when he hears the news, I'm sure he'll be as excited as I am, if not more.

I get to Frere Hospital around 11:00 and I dial his number as soon as I park in the parking lot. From his voice I can tell that he's pleasantly surprised to hear that I'm around to collect the keys to his townhouse. He's surprised because he didn't know that I was coming today, he thought I was only coming tomorrow. Hell, I couldn't wait until tomorrow, not when I miss him this much. God, I'm aching to feel his warm

embrace, to sink into his dark spices and let him take me where he would.

Twenty minutes later I see him approaching my car in his scrubs. I blush as I realise just how much I still find him irresistibly sexy in this gear. This is no ordinary uniform, in this clothing he makes the difference between life and death almost daily, and he wears it with pride and honour.

I know that he's only been on duty since 07:00 this morning and that he's going to be on call after his normal working hours but I'm still hoping to see him home for dinner this evening - the special romantic dinner that I'm planning. And I'm also hoping to spend some quality time with him for the next 4 days since he's going to be off work, but deep down I know that it won't happen, not when the twins are coming.

I get out of the car as he gets closer. A broad, bright smile finds a way to his face as soon as

his eyes land on me, causing my heart rate to skyrocket and my temperature to rise as if I'm seeing him for the very first time. I honestly find it quite amazing that he still makes me feel this way.

-Him: "Hey, Mrs Me."

He says as he comes to stand before me.

-Me: "Not yet, baby. We still have 6 more months to go."

I correct him, laughing.

-Him: "That makes no difference to me. Just come here."

He opens his strong arms and in a non-verbal response I eagerly slide into them. They surround me in a warm, passionate embrace that has no urgency. I melt in them, consumed by the raging fire of emotion his embrace never fails to ignite. With my face buried in his neck and the scent of his cologne penetrating my

bewildered senses, we stand like that for a long moment with neither of us speaking, just holding onto each other and letting our bodies communicate our innermost feelings.

Eventually, he releases me only to push me against the car as his lips seek mine.

Concerned about the fact that we are in public, I hesitate for a moment, but unable to resist I surrender to his warm lips and secure embrace, clinging to him as my heart steps up pace. He takes possession of my lips hungrily and with a heated urgency. Our tongues dance in each other's mouths, with us completely forgotten about where we are and that we are actually visible to anyone passing by. We only stop when his beeper goes off. I withdraw from his embrace, withdrawing from the warmth and comfort of his body.

-Him: "I'm sorry, babe, but I gotta go."

-Me: "It's okay, I understand. But please be

home for dinner at 7."

-Him: "7? Okay. But, sthandwa sam, if I can't?"

-Me: "Please, thando lwam, try. This is a special dinner, we'll be celebrating something."

-Him: "Celebrating something?"

-Me: "I can't tell you now, I'll tell you over dinner. Just make sure you get there, okay? If we don't do this dinner for two tonight we won't get another chance, babe. The kids are coming tomorrow, remember?"

-Him: "Okay, I'll be there. I promise. But for now let me get back in there."

He pulls me into an embrace once again and his lips seek mine briefly. Then he gently breaks the embrace and steps away, smiling at me in an inviting way.

-Him: "We'll finish this tonight."

-Me: "Tonight."

He hands me the keys then turns and walks away. Smiling from ear to ear, I watch him from behind until he disappears. God, I love this man.

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Some minutes later I walk into the always immaculate house that belongs to my man. Gracefully, I sit on the couch in the lounge and let my eyes wander around the room. When they land on the three framed photos on the modern fireplace mantel, photos of me and this man of mine on the day of our engagement, I let out a smile. That was truly the best day of my life, and it's a good thing that Doc hired professionals to capture every moment of it.

Okay, enough reminiscing. I need to go get fresh ingredients for the dinner I'm planning to cook. After considering several options I've



chosen a fairly demanding menu that would keep me busy all afternoon: Clam Chowder with Saffron, Coconut, and Orange Pasta Baked with Mushrooms, Fresh Herbs, and Five Cheeses. Rosemary-Infused Veal Spareribs with Vinegar and Roasted Garlic. And Lime-Bathed Green Bean and Cauliflower Salad. Then for dessert I've decided to make Warm Chocolate Soufflé.

I was never that big in the kitchen but since I met Doc I fell in love with cooking. The guy is very good with pots and he made me fall in love with them too. Now I find creating a delicious meals out of ordinary ingredients not only gratifying and fulfilling but also strangely sensual. Besides, it quiets my mind. The kitchen is the one place in my life where I can avoid the outside world altogether and stop the flow of time within myself. For some people sex might have the same effect, I imagine, but that always requires two people, whereas to cook all one

needs is time, care and a bag of groceries. Since Doc moved to East London I no longer get to have much sex, and the fact that I'm living with a couple that's always at it like rabbits isn't making things easier either, so I always find comfort in the kitchen.

For hours after coming back from grocery shopping, my mind is filled with thoughts and excitement while my hands are restless, doing all the work. I chop tomatoes, mince garlic, sauté onions, simmer sauce, grate orange peels, and knead dough for a loaf of homemade whole-wheat bread.

Having worked the entire afternoon, just before 18:00 I set an exquisite table with matching napkins, white unscented candles, and a small bouquet of red roses mixed with a single white orchid, my favourite flower. For the final touch, I add sparkly napkin rings that I just bought today. When I'm done, the dining table resembles

those found in stylish home magazines and I'm satisfied. I set the oven timer for forty minutes, so that the food could still be warm by seven o'clock. It occurs to me to light the candles, but I change my mind upon second thought. I think it's better to leave the table like this, like an immaculate picture. Untouched, unmoving, until that moment when Doc drives through the complex.

Tired but satisfied, I leave the table and go take a quick shower. After the shower, I quickly put on my new sexy lingerie and a sexy black satin bare back floor-length gown with a long left slit that goes all the way up to my thigh. As a final touch, I put on my sexy and seductive perfume. Then I go wait for Doc in the lounge, with my eye not leaving the clock fitted on the wall. The hands of time move past 7 o'clock but there's still no sign of Doc. By 19:30 I move back to the picture-perfect table and light the candles. They

burn, giving the dining room a sacred air, a romantic ambiance. Then I sit down on the chair, my feet tapping the tiled floor incessantly. I'm really running out of patience right now, so I decide to call this man and he answers on the third ring.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam."

-Me: "Baby, are you still coming?"

-Him: "Yes, baby. Just give me thirty and I'll be there. I promise."

-Me: "I really hope you mean that. Please don't make me wait until the morning, baby, okay? I can't have dinner alone and I also don't want to go to bed alone. I seriously need you here. Apart from what we'll be celebrating, I also miss your body on mine. Don't turn me down, please."

-Him: "I won't. I'll be there now, now. I promise."

-Me: "Okay then. See you soon."

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Thando

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After hanging up, I shed off my scrubs and put on my ordinary clothes, ready to leave the hospital and go home to my woman. Excited, I grab my bag and rush to the door. But as I walk out of the office I bump into Emily, one of the trainee surgeons in my unit.

-Her: "Going home?"

-Me: "Yep. I'm done here. I have a hot date with my fiancée."

-Her: "Well, I'm afraid that's gonna have to wait. Doctor Summers has sent me to ask you to scrub up because we have incoming patients from a yacht that blew up in our ocean waters.

7 incoming but only three are critical."

Oh, damn. This is the kind of life we live, our leisure plans often get interrupted by emergencies. We come to work not knowing what to expect. Every single day is different, there is no fixed routine for how our work schedule would be in this trauma unit that is practically run by us - a team of general surgeons, with no specialist trauma surgeons on site.

My first posting as a registrar at The Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital was in the trauma unit. For a newbie, I was initially quite intimidated by the myriad of patients that come through the door. You have no idea what to expect when you come in to work every day, but I grew to like it. When I got moved on to postings in other departments I realised that I missed the hustle and the bustle of that unit. I really like working in the trauma unit but it does

get too much, just like now. The percentage of trauma patients that come through our doors and those of the two other tertiary-level public health facilities in this province is worryingly higher than the national average, and most of them require surgical attention. The reality is that we are always short-staffed, we work long hours but there's still huge backlogs and waiting times.

-Emily: "I'm sorry but as you know, we're short-staffed. We really need you here."

-Me: "Fuck...What do we have?"

I ask as I open my office again to leave my bag then rock and roll.

-Her: "Burn victim. Male, 26, 3rd degree over 70%. Then a pregnant female, mid-30s, multiple lacerations. The third one is open fracture or dislocation right leg and near amputation of right hand...They'll be here in a moment."

-Me: "I'm on."

I hurry down the hallway to the scrub room. I put my scrubs back on and begin scrubbing up. This is going to be a long night, I'm sorry but Soso is going to have to wait.

I only get to go home just after midnight. Braced for a quarrel, I walk through the door only to find Soso passed out on the couch with her phone on her lap and an empty glass of wine by her side. The dining table is still set and the pillar candles are still burning. Now I feel really bad seeing her like this. What's worse is that I didn't even get to call her and cancel. I'm sure she passed out really mad at me, and I honestly don't blame her. With a heavy breath, I blow out the candles then go pick her up from the couch and carry her to the bedroom. Not wanting to wake her, I gently put her on the bed then go take the much needed shower, I can't go to bed like this.



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Someleze

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After calling Doc's phone several times when he didn't show up at 20:00, I drank a glass of wine and laid back on the couch, waiting for him to come home or at least call.

I must have passed out in that wait because I'm only waking up now as I hear Doc in the bathroom taking a shower. My man would work for hours at the hospital, but he would rather not take his shower anywhere other than his own bathroom.

I'm on our bed, a bed that I made anew with fresh special sheets in the afternoon, hoping to later get between them and make love to my

man until the morning. But instead, this is what I got. No call, no text, nothing. I reach for my phone that he's put on the nightstand and check the time only to find that it's 00:40 in the morning. My first instinct tells me to pretend to be asleep when Doc finishes taking the shower and comes back to the bedroom, thus saving him from having to explain himself to me at this hour. But hell, I can't do that. I need to know what happened.

I get off the bed and take off the stupid dress and flat sandals then get under the covers. When he walks back through the room, he finds me sitting up on the bed, waiting for an explanation.

-Him: "Baby, I'm sorry."

I just stare at him without saying a word. He comes to sit next to me on the bed and holds my hand.

-Him: "There was an emergency at work and I couldn't even get a chance to call you and inform you about it. You know how it gets, but I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, sthandwa sam, and I'll make it up to you. That's a promise."

I get it, I understand, but that doesn't make me any less horny.

-Me: "How about you make it up to me right now?"

Without wasting any time, I lean in for a kiss while my other hand unwraps the towel around his waist. For a brief moment he responds but then he pulls back.

-Him: "Baby, I'm sorry, I've been on my feet for hours, I'm extremely tired. I really can't do this right now."

With that he gets into bed next to me, ready to be transported into slumberland. Fuck, I can't fall asleep, not when I'm this horny.

-Me: "You don't have to do anything, babe. Just let me do all the work."

He doesn't respond. But that doesn't bother me. I get on top of him and lean down to kiss his lips, but he still doesn't respond. The next thing I hear is him snoring. What? You have got to be kidding me. This man has just passed out on me. What the hell? Frustrated, I get off of him and lie on my side of the bed. I've been waiting for this night for two long weeks, I'm hot, I'm frustrated and my hormones are all over the place. How am I going to fall asleep? This sure is going to be a very long night.

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"Baby, wake up. Breakfast is ready."

My eyes snap open to find Doc hovering over me, already showered and dressed to go out.

It's the morning, I don't even know how I managed to fall asleep last night, or this morning rather.

I stare at him confused. Why is he dressed like this? Where is he going this early?

-Him: "Good morning. I've made you breakfast."

I'm not interested in breakfast. What I want to know is where he's going.

-Me: "Where are you off to?"

-Him: "Work, babe."

-Me: "But I thought this was your day off. You got called in?"

-Him: "No. I'm standing in for Zizo. She's got a family crisis and I'm taking her shift."

-Me: "And you didn't care to tell me this last night, why? What about your own family, babe? The kids are expecting to be welcomed by us both when they get here, sthandwa sam. They

haven't seen their father in months, they sure want you here. Hell, I want you here."

-Him: "I'll make a plan, baby, I promise. I'm sorry I didn't tell you about this last night but I was really tired and out of it. I also know that I let you down by missing dinner, but like I promised, I'll make it up to you. But for now I have to get going."

-Me: "You remember that I said we would celebrate something last night, right? Well, I still need to talk to you about that."

-Him: "I know. But I'm afraid it's gonna have to wait until I get back, baby. I really have to go now, I'm already running late."

With that he gives me a peck on the lips and hurries out of the bedroom.

-Me: "Thando, I'm pregnant. We're pregnant."

That's supposed to be directed to him but I'm now saying it to myself because Doc is no

longer here.

I sigh then take my phone and play the video that was taken at the Bahamas when this man put the engagement ring on my finger. I need to remind myself that this is what I signed up for the moment I said yes to him.

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Let's please keep those likes coming.

Season 2

#2

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"Like the tree out in the back yard that never has been broken by the wind. Our love will last forever, if we're strong enough to bend." - Tanya Tucker

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Still sitting on the bed, my tired eyes move to the tray on the nightstand, taking in the breakfast Doc has prepared for me. It's a full English breakfast, except there are no eggs included, and a glass of orange juice. I wonder when did he get the time to prepare it. He didn't get much sleep, did he? This guy only slept just before 01:00 this morning and I'm sure he was up before 05:00 because now as I glance at the brass clock on the wall the hands of time tell me that it's 06:50 and he's already left for work - just a few minutes ago. He works really hard and I understand how demanding his job is. Things can get very hectic in the trauma unit. They treat the most high-risk of injuries, life-threatening injuries. And they don't need to just stay focused all the time but they also need to move fast. So I understand why he couldn't get the chance to inform me about the emergency



last night but still, that doesn't make me feel any better about the fact that he missed dinner. I really hate that I stood in the kitchen for hours, slaving away for nothing. And him taking Zizo's shift is making me more mad even though I know and understand their arrangement. When Doc can't make it to work, when he wants to make time for me, Zizo often puts her own affairs aside and take his shifts, take care of his patients, just like she did two weeks ago when I was here. Doc also does the same for her, it's an arrangement they have, it's not the hospital that calls a stand-in. But still, I'm not happy about this. I really needed Doc here. And I wanted the moment I tell him about this pregnancy to be special, but that's all spoiled now. Ugh! I'm even starting to think I'm going to be alone through most of this pregnancy. Or am I thinking the worst of him? I mean, he's been trying to make time for me in the past months even though it wouldn't be as much as I would

like, reason being whenever he has time off he often has to catch up on research because surgery is evolving. But to be fair, he did tell me that things would be like this before he went back to this profession and he asked me nicely to please bear with him, and I promised that I would. To be honest, understanding hasn't been that hard, especially considering the fact that I'm not always available when he needs me either. My research project takes most of my time and I take my studies very seriously. Sometimes he would want to see me and I would be busy, exactly what was happening last year when I was still working at the filling station. Our leisure times often clash. And he always understands when I can't come through, so I also have to understand when he's busy too. Doing that hasn't been that difficult all this time but right now it is, and that's me being honest. Maybe it's because I wanted to share the most important news with him or it's because my

hormones are getting the better of me. I don't know, all I know is that I'm pissed right now.

Once again I look at the breakfast he's prepared. He's really trying, and I probably should appreciate these little sweet gestures but right now, I just can't. In a different day I would find this breakfast appetising but right now I can't stomach it.

I look at the beautiful engagement ring on my finger and it sparkles as it catches my teardrop. It is a thin sterling silver band with a big baguette diamond. It's perfect. But right now I can't help but feel like it's a piece of chain that's tying me down to a man who's never going to have enough time for me. It's probably wrong of me but I'm also starting to feel that way about this baby too. Maybe I shouldn't have relied on the pill, maybe I should have had a new implanon implant inserted when the one I had expired. If I did, I wouldn't be pregnant and

feeling alone right now. I don't want to lie, I wasn't ready for a baby but when I found out that I'm pregnant and knowing that I'm pregnant for the man I love, my fiancé, I got excited. I believe that babies are precious gifts from God no matter how they come about. I just hope that Doc shares my sentiments, but from the way things are right now, I can't help but have some doubts.

Feeling like a bag of mush with a truckload of hormones dumped on top of it, I plop down on the bed and curl up, sobbing lightly, hurt. But soon I can feel myself drifting off to slumberland. That doesn't come as a surprise to me though because I know that I didn't sleep well last night. I had to force my eyes shut and try to fall asleep, but it was hard to ignore that the man who always gives me so much sexual pleasure was lying right next to me, and that if he was awake he would ravish my body over

and over. I so wanted him inside me but he was deep in his sleep. Frustrated, I kept letting out deep sighs, and finally after what seemed like forever, I fell asleep. So it's no wonder I'm still feeling this sleepy, or why I didn't even hear Doc's movements around the house when he woke up.

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In the back of my blissful dream with Doc deep inside me, I hear my cellphone ringing. I don't want to wake up, I want this dream to last forever. But this phone doesn't stop ringing and I'm thrust into wakefulness. Dammit! Who the hell is bothering me in the middle of a sweet dream like this? Whoever it is, I'm already upset at them. I frown as I reach for the incessantly ringing phone but I soften up when I see that it's

my buddy who's come to be more like a brother to me - Kevin.

"Hey, Kev."

I answer, groggily.

-Him: "Are you still asleep at this hour? You do know that it's after 11, right?"

-Me: "After 11 on a Sunday, Kevin."

-Him: "So? Who said that means you should still be in bed? But I can't say I blame you. I can only imagine what you and the good doctor were up to last night."

Yoh, if only he knew.

-Me: "Hey, you know that I don't talk about my bedroom life. Anyway, what's up? Everything okay over there? You aren't calling to tell me that Asa went into early labour, are you?"

-Him: "What? No. Asa is fine. We still have 4 more weeks to go before we meet our bundle of

joy. I'm calling just to check up on you. And to know how Thando reacted when you told him about your own pregnancy."

My own pregnancy? How does he know about that? I haven't told anyone yet, I wanted Doc to be the first one to know.

-Me: "How do you know about my pregnancy, Kev?"

-Him: "You seem to have forgotten that I'm a very observant creature, S. You probably don't even realise it, I'm sure it comes instinctively, but you've been so protective of your belly lately. And that's how I concluded that you're pregnant before I even found the three positive home pregnancy test strips in the trash can last week, but I didn't want to say anything. Knowing you, I figured you'd want to tell Thando first, face to face...So how did he react?"

-Me: "You sure are observant, it's not even funny.

As for Thando, I haven't gotten the chance to tell him yet so I don't know how he's going to react."

I can hear him chocking on the other end.

-Me: "Kev? Are you okay?"

He coughs.

-Him: "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. It's just that I...I gotta go. Talk later."

With that he hangs up. And I'm left looking at the screen of my phone, puzzled. Ugh, whatever.

I need to talk to my mother and tell her that I'm coming home tomorrow. The way Doc is annoying me I'd leave today but because I want to see the twins and also go pick them up from the airport, I'll stick around for today. But tomorrow I'm leaving, and I'll probably come back in two days. I just need my mother's embrace and advice right now.



Before dialling my mother's number, I text Doc, asking the time the twins will be here.

Surprisingly, he texts me back almost immediately, telling me that they are no longer coming today, that they are coming next week. Okay, that means I'm leaving today, but I don't tell him that. I close my WhatsApp then dial my mom's number.

"Hey, princess."

That's not my mom's voice answering but my father's. Eshe, I didn't even know that he was in PE. My parents are sneaky, huh.

-Me: "Hey, Dad."

-Him: "How are you, MaMashiya? Still okay?"

He's calling me with his own clan name.

-Me: "It's MaNdlovu, Dad. uMaGatsheni."

I correct him, giving him the clan name I grew up using.

-Him: "Hey, I don't have a Ndlovu child. Someleze Minenhle Ndlovu. Just listen to that. One would swear you are Zulu."

-Me: "Yah well, blame it on my mom's Zulu father."

He wanted me to change my last name to Mali in December last year after he introduced me as his child to his ancestors in Mthatha but that didn't make sense to me, not when I'm going to change it again to December this coming December.

-Him: "You're bearing the name of a man who left your grandmother to raise your mother and your uncle alone."

-Me: "But you didn't need to mention that now."

I want to remind him that that's exactly what he also did to me and my mother, but I don't like going back to something that already got resolved.

-Me: "And, Dad? I love you, I really do, but when I want to talk to you I'll call your phone, not my mom's. I called because I want to talk to mom. Where's she?"

-Him: "She's still busy right now, baby, but I'll ask her to call you back when she's done."

-Me: "Okay, just tell her that I'm coming home today. And since you're already there, I'm hoping to see you too when I arrive. When are you going back to Jo'burg?"

-Him: "I'm flying back tomorrow morning, so you'll definitely find me here. I can't wait to see you, baby."

-Me: "Me too, papa. See you later then."

That's the truth. I'm looking forward to seeing both my parents. Even though I talk with them over the phone often, the last time I saw them was in April, so I really miss them.

-Him: "Later. I love you."

-Me: "Love you too, Dad."

I hang up then climb down the bed. Today my parents are going to find out that they are soon going to be grandparents. I'm sure they'll be happy because I'm pregnant for a man that has already paid lobola for me, so traditionally Doc and I are already married.

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An hour later, I'm standing in front of the mirror in the bedroom wearing simple blue jeans, a black sweater and sneakers, ready to go. I seriously didn't feel like dressing up in this cold weather and definitely not when I'm feeling this down.

As I'm applying Vaseline jelly on my lips, my phone rings. It's on the bed and I reach for it to find that it's Bhongo calling. Bhongo, Zizo's

husband. When I first met them last year they were still engaged but they tied the knot last December in an intimate ceremony that I was also a part of in Durban.

"Hey, Bhongo."

I answer, wondering why he's calling me. Bhongo doesn't just call me unless there's a very good reason to.

-Him: "Hey, I'm here to see you. Please let me in."

He's here? To see me? Why though? I wonder, but I don't ask. I just hang up and quickly go let him in.

He pulls me in a warm hug once he steps inside the house.

-Me: "Is everything alright, Bhongo? I mean, I heard your wife had a family crisis. Is that why you're here?"

I ask, genuinely concerned as we sit down on the couch.

-Him: "Everything's fine. Relax."

So if everything is fine why is he here?

-Him: "It's just that I heard that you're around so I thought I should pop by and see you."

Okay, I don't buy that. Bhongo and I are cool but we don't have that kind of relationship. We don't meet up unless Doc is also around.

-Me: "Oh."

That comes out flatly that I would have liked.

And it's then that I get up from the couch to go get him something to drink from the kitchen.

Coming back, I hand him the soda then sit down next to him once again, still confused as fuck.

-Him: "So, how's it like being a partner of a general surgeon working in a trauma department of a busy public facility?"

-Me: "Honestly? It's difficult, Bhongo. Tell me, how do you do it? This is new to me, whereas you on the other hand has been in it for years."

-Him: "I know it's not easy. The unpredictable hours. The demands of being on call even at night. But they need our understanding and support. They're already working under a lot of pressure, so they don't need pressure from us too. They perform a number of emergency surgeries almost daily. They often have a person laying on their operating table and they have to do what's right for that person and take care of them, and it doesn't matter what time it is, it doesn't matter if it's 3:00 in the morning, but they have to finish that surgery and take care of the patient. Not to mention the sense of urgency that is often accompanying what they're doing. They need to stay focused, they don't have the luxury of time to think about us when they are busy behind those hospital walls."

Behind those walls they are decision makers, they make life and death decisions. They have to make really hard choices, you know. Do I operate or not operate? What are the consequences if I do, what are the consequences if I don't? What if the patient dies if I choose to go home now instead of putting them under the knife? They have to make good, hard, fast decisions often and I think that's got to be tough enough without us adding more to their stress levels. All we need to do is to be more understanding and patient with them. We need to stress them less. And we need to support them. We chose them, we love them, and that should include everything they come with. It's the life we signed up for."

Of course, he's right. However, I can't help but wonder if Doc has asked him to come talk to me about this after his wife disrupted our plans by asking my man to stand in for her. But Doc



also disrupts their plans every time he asks Zizo to take his shift, so I needn't be harsh.

-Me: "Did Thando ask you to come here and talk to me about this?"

I ask, with a calm voice.

-Him: "Not really. He only mentioned that he feels bad about missing dinner last night. And that he could see that you were pretty mad when he left early this morning."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "Please cut him some slack. And remember that he didn't know that you were coming yesterday so he couldn't make any arrangements or disrupt the ones he had already made."

-Me: "I guess."

We end up talking some more and as we go a little deeper into this topic I feel myself getting

calmer and seeing no reason to go home anymore.

-Him: "Anyway, what are you up to now? Would you mind taking a drive with me to the airport? I'm going to pick up someone and I think you could use some fresh air and just get out of this house."

He says after reading a text message on his phone.

-Me: "Ummh...that won't hurt, I guess. And I'm bored here anyway. So let's go."

But before we walk out, I text my mother and tell her that I'm no longer coming and that I'll call later. Then Bhongo and I leave the house and walk over to his car. Along the way we don't run out of things to talk about, this guy is very talkative I tell you. And because of his flexible mouth the drive seems too short than it actually is, we get to the airport before I even expected.

He pulls up then looks at me with a smile, but I soon realise that his eyes are not actually on me but behind me. He's looking at something or someone through the window of my door. As I'm about to turn to also look at what he's looking at, I hear my door open. I'm surprised when I see who's opening it. Doc. Wait, isn't he supposed to be at work? I turn to look at Bhongo who just shrugs and smiles before telling me to:

-Him: "Just go enjoy some time alone with this man."

I'm confused. But Doc doesn't give me time to process it all. He offers me his hand and helps me out of the car. Then he thanks Bhongo before Bhongo drives off.

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I look at Doc as he stands before me, looking somewhat nervous, but of course sexier than a GQ South Africa model. I'm still a little mad at him for what he did last night and this morning. And I hate that my breath catches when I see him.

"What's going on, Thando? Why am I here? And aren't you supposed to be at work?"

I ask, really confused.

-Him: "I was never at work today, baby. Zizo didn't ask me to take her shift. She wouldn't have done that knowing that you're coming. I just told that little lie because I wanted to surprise you with a little something."

Eshe, this man. He sure loves surprises. I wonder what's the surprise this time around.

He places his hand on my chin and lifts my face so I have to look into his dreamy dark eyes.

-Him: "I'm sorry I let you down last night. And I

promised to make it up to you, so I hope what I've planned will be enough even though I started planning it a month ago...Please tell me you forgive me."

He does look genuinely sorry, but I don't say anything, just staring at him.

-Him: "Oh come on, baby. Just say you do, I know you want to."

He grabs my arms, shakes me gently then smiles. Oh my, that beautiful smile softens me up. I can't help but crack a smile too. He picks me up and twirls me around. But no! What I want is to remain mad at him, even just a little, but it's very hard to when he's being so sweet...not to mention hot.

-Me: "Of course, I forgive you, silly."

I say, with a broad smile on my face as my feet land on the ground again.

-Me: "Now what's the surprise?"

I ask with undisguised excitement.

-Him: "Like I said, I started planning this a month ago. We are going away, but not too far. I just want us to be alone and spend some quality time together for the next few days. We'll come back on Thursday. That's why I asked the twins not to come this week but I couldn't tell you that because I wanted everything to be a surprise."

-Me: "You sneaky man."

I playfully punch him on the shoulder.

-Me: "So where are we going?"

-Him: "You'll see. And you don't even have to worry about your clothes and stuff."

Okay, this sounds interesting and super exciting.

But not as exciting as it gets when he tells me that we'll be flying private.

"A private jet?"

I ask in disbelief. But he just lets out a silly smile, not repeating what he just told me.

I get open mouthed when we get to the jet. So this is really happening, I say to myself as I'm staring at the white and red private jet in front me.

-Him: "This is it. But don't give me any points, I didn't spend a cent on it. I didn't hire it, it belongs to my father's company. And luckily for me, our schedule corresponded with the jet's 'empty leg' so I seized the opportunity. It landed here this morning, bringing in the company's executives from Cape Town for a week-long conference that will be starting tomorrow right here in EL. It was gonna return to Cape Town empty and that's when I jumped in and asked for a favour from my father."

Okay, I already got a clue - we are going to Cape Town.

Doc's father is a chairman of a big construction company. He founded it in Jo'burg with Bhongo's father almost two decades ago. But now it has grown, it has other offices in Cape Town and several shareholders. The duo now has a board to consult before making any decisions regarding the company or the use of its resources, but I guess none of them minded us taking the 'empty leg' flight for free.

We board the jet. And oh my goodness, I literally stop when I see its luxurious interior. But Doc gently pulls my hand and leads me to one of the two long cream-coloured leather couches that are facing each other, instead of the four single seats situated at the front of the jet. Clearly none of this is new to him. He sits me down and takes his jacket off. Then he goes to talk to the two pilots. A few moments later, he closes the door to the cockpit then comes to sit next to me and help me buckle up. I don't



want to lie, not even in my wildest dreams had it ever crossed my mind that I'd ever be flying by a private jet. I have to pinch myself to believe that it's really happening.

Once the aircraft has lifted off and reached cruising altitude, I stretch in my seat, watching Doc sitting smugly back next to me, his eyes closed. As if he feels my stare, he opens his eyes and smiles at me before sitting up straight.

-Him: "I have something for you."

His hand reaches for a flat, white box that's been sitting on the table that's by our seat. With a lazy smile, he hands the box to me.

-Me: "What is it, babe?"

-Him: "Just a little something to say thank you."

Something to say thank you? Thank you for what? I wonder, but I don't ask. I'm just interested in finding out what he could have gotten me.

-Me: "Can I open it?"

-Him: "Impatient, are we?"

-Me: "You have no idea."

-Him: "Then go ahead and open it."

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I lift the lid off the box, and inside I find a card saying "My love, as of today I have another reason to try and be a better man. I will do everything I can to make you and our baby proud of me". What? I quickly lift the card and under it my eyes land on a white...

-Him: "Triple sonogram pregnancy keepsake frame to watch our baby grow through all three trimesters."

I glance up at him, giving him a confused look. How did he know?

-Me: "But how...how did you know?"

He smiles.

-Him: "I'd like to say I felt it as other men would say but no, I didn't. When you told me that we have something to celebrate yesterday, your hand instinctively moved to your tummy. So I kinda guessed that we're pregnant."

Oh, so it's not just Kevin who's observant, huh. I wasn't even aware that I touched my tummy.

-Him: "Then this morning Kevin confirmed it when he sent me a text congratulating me."

Now this makes sense. It explains why Kevin suddenly choked and coughed when I told him that I hadn't told Doc about the pregnancy yet. He was realising that he's let the cat out of the bag without my permission.

-Me: "Oh, wow. This is not how I imagined this moment. I imagined me telling you about the pregnancy, not the other way round."

-Him: "I know. But it doesn't really matter now. What matters is the life we created together. So how far along are we?"

-Me: "5 weeks. But, baby, are you happy? About this pregnancy that is."

His face gets a little serious when I pose the question. He turns fully to look deep into my eyes.

-Him: "To be honest, I wasn't ready for a baby just yet. But now that we've already created one, I couldn't be happier. Hell, I couldn't stop smiling since Kevin sent me that text."

His hand moves to touch my tummy.

-Him: "This life that's growing inside of you is a product of our love, baby. How could I not fall in love with it? How could I not be happy? This is the best gift you could have ever given me. Now, I know that I won't always be there when you need me throughout this pregnancy, and I won't

even lie and promise that I will be, but what I can promise you is that I'll try. I'll make you and our baby proud of me, sthandwa sam, I will. All I need from you is a little understanding when I can't be there for you two. I have a duty to save people's lives but I'll also try not to neglect my duties as a father and a husband. That's my sincere promise to you."

Without a word, I lean in and wrap my arms around him, feeling like the weight of the world has just dropped off my shoulders. After what happened last night and this morning, I was really starting to think he won't be happy about this baby and that I'll be alone in this pregnancy. But as it turns out, I was wrong. I find tears escaping my eyes as I cling onto him. Tears of joy. I think he can feel that I'm crying because he strokes my back gently before pulling us up to our feet and wraps his arms around me in a tight embrace. As calmness encompasses me, I

feel the beat of his steady heart against my breasts. And ever so slowly, my worries melt away. After a moment, he pulls back and wipe away my tears before pulling me down to sit on the couch again. He sits down too then looks at me.

-He: "I know that I'm not a perfect partner, but I promise to try harder. Okay? Let's try harder, sthandwa sam...Our relationship has never been perfect right from the beginning but we managed to overcome several challenges. We were strong enough not to break then and I believe that even with the challenges that we now face and are still going to face because of my job our love and union will remain strong, we need to be strong, strong enough to just bend and not break. Now, that requires some understanding and communication. And no matter how busy we are we should try and make more time for each other. I promise to try

harder, but you also need to do the same."

He's right, it's not just him who needs to make more time for us, I should too.

-Me: "I promise, baby. I'll try harder too."

He smiles then pecks my lips.

-Him: "I have another gift for you."

He pulls the drawer of the table, comes out with another gift box and hands it to me.

-Him: "This is what I went to get when I left the house early this morning. I had it custom-made for you from a very good jewellery store in PE. I wanted to give it to you today, they were going to courier it to my house yesterday and I was gonna go sign for it but when you came yesterday instead of today I had to change plans. I could no longer have them deliver it to the house, I simply didn't want you to see it before I could personally give it to you. So I called them and asked them to deliver it to me

at the hospital but they didn't do that. So this morning I drove to PE to go fetch it myself. Then I also had to make sure that we get the jet."

Aww but my man is really sweet. I just melt before I can even see what the jewellery piece is. But my inner guilt-o-meter has gone up for misreading the situation and thinking the worst of this thoughtful man. I thought he doesn't put me up as a priority in his life and that he won't support me in this pregnancy, but I was wrong. Now, do I share with him the thoughts I had? Oh hell no, let me just let everything go. I open the box and inside I find a necklace with a diamond queen chess piece pendant.

-Him: "14K white solid gold queen chess piece pendant. The crown is pave set with brilliant small round cut diamonds and the rest of the body is pave set with numerous small white round cut diamonds, as you can see. It's



custom-made just for you and it has your initials engraved on the back. I hope you like it."

Wow. I'm speechless right now, I seriously don't know what to say. This sure must have cost him a small fortune. And if I could say I like it that would be an understatement, I love it.

-Me: "Oh my God, baby, I love it. It's so amazingly beautiful. Thank you."

I manage to push out the words a few moments later.

-Him: "I'm glad you love it."

-Me: "Why did you choose the queen chess piece though?"

-Him: "Apart from the fact that you're the queen of my heart, as someone who's big on chess you know that the queen is the most powerful piece in the game of chess. Just like you. You're more powerful than you think, babe. And just like the queen piece you have the ability to

make any move, move any number of squares in any direction. You just need to believe more in yourself and make things happen for yourself. You can do anything you put your mind to, baby. And if you do, you'd never ever have to rely on me or any other man. And with this, I want to show you that I believe in you and your capabilities."

-Me: "Aww, this is so thoughtful, baby. Now I love it more. Hell, I love you more."

He's right, I have the tendency to doubt my capabilities lately, and he's been pushing me to be the better version of myself. Just like he pushed me to continue with my studies when all I wanted and thought I was capable of was just a junior degree. I just wanted to graduate and start looking for a job, a job I wasn't even going to get easily. If he didn't push me to do Honours it's high likely that I'd be sitting at home now as just another statistic, a graduate

with no job. But at least now I'm doing something with my life, equipping myself with more skills.

I guess it's now time for this key locket pendant that I've been wearing around my neck since I was 7 to go and replace it with this classy one. I take it off and Doc helps me put the new necklace on. My God, I really love it.

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I lean in and kiss his lips briefly then pull back.

-Me: "I love you."

-Him: "I love YOU."

He reaches behind my neck and presses my mouth harder to his. His lips are warm and wet, and they taste so good. His kiss grows more demanding, and as I open my mouth his tongue

slips in and out with each erotic kiss. It moves to meet mine and joins in a slow, sensual dance. Oh, shit. At this pace we're going to have sex right here. But do I want that knowing that there are two pilots on the other side of that door? I want to stop him and pull back but I am completely incapable of resisting this man. All reason vanquished by his touch. I can't manage to pull away from his intoxicating kisses. And I can tell that he wants me too, I can feel it in his hungry kiss, in the way he gropes my body, and in the way he's breathing so erratically.

"Do you want to do this right here?"

He asks, pulling away, his arms still around me. I nod, still high from his fervent kiss.

"Are you sure?"

He asks as his eyes darken with a lustful look that I know very well. I nod again, no longer thinking about the company we have - only the

immediate gratification. Hell, I've been wanting him inside me since forever and I can't wait to feel all the sensual pleasures he usually gives me. Damn, the thought of that alone ignites my blood, and has me squeezing my thighs together in sweet agony. My inner muscles clench in anticipation. And when he gives me a wicked grin, and places his hand on my waist, I give him a subtle nod as my breathing turns dangerously shallow.

"Close your eyes and keep them shut. Don't open them for anything."

He tells me and I slowly shut them, feeling my heart beating like a drum in my chest. What is he going to do?

Proceeding to take my hands, he pulls me up from the couch and before I know it, he's pulled my sweater off and is down untying the laces of my sneakers. Unable to see him, but just feeling what he's doing to me is driving me crazy. My

senses seem to come so much more alive.

Soon my sneakers are off and he peels me out of my jeans and T-shirt. I'm now standing in nothing but my bra, and G-string panties.

Goosebumps speckle my skin as I feel his fingertips ever so lightly touching my arm and glide down it. Then they glide all the way up my arm and to my shoulder, continuing on to my chest. I shiver. He reaches behind my back and unclasps my bra. With the bra gone, my breasts meet the cool air in the cabin and I gasp.

Tracing his fingers around one of my nipples, he encircles it around the most tender part. With my eyes shut, I feel every sensation triple-fold.

He blows on me gently, the silken air causing me to tremor and breathe heavily. He takes one of my breasts into his mouth and sucks on it.

Hard. Oh, my! I squeeze my inner thighs together, feeling the heat building there. He glides his fingers up my chest, to my chin, and

to my mouth, letting one of them brush me gentle across my top, and then bottom lip. Suddenly, the finger is gone, and instead his lips press against mine, softly. His tongue delves into my mouth and I meet him in a greedy kiss, my body trembling with each labored breath. But he pulls away all too soon and turns me around, taking my hands and guiding them to the top of couch so I'm bending slightly forward.

"Spread your legs"

He says. And I do as I'm told. My eyes are still closed and the inability to see him is making me even more aware of his deep, raspy voice that seems to make me lose all control of reason. I feel his fingertips on the back of my right thigh, just above my knee. He traces them upward, tantalizing me with them, swirling them toward my ass. Before I met this man, I never knew that simple fingertips could bring me to such an aroused state.

His fingertips reach my ass, and he moves my panties to the side then moves down to stroke my clit gently. I wince. He keeps brushing my sensitive part, the gentleness of his fingers an agonizing delight. Now he pulls my panties down and discards them. Then he slides his fingers deep into me. I gasp at the sensation, the angle of his touch just right. He pulls my head slightly back until I moan loudly as he continues to finger fuck me. I'm glad the hum of the engine is loud, drowning out any noise the pilots might hear.

As I'm still enjoying that, he spins me around so my butt is on the seat and I'm facing him. When he asks me to open my eyes I hurriedly undo his pants, and once I have access, I reach inside and grope around his erection. He lets out a low rumble.

-Me: "Please can I have you inside me now?"

I ask looking into his eyes. Damn, they're ablaze



with desire.

-Him: "Yes, Mrs Me. Right. Away."

He doesn't undress, he just pulls his pants and boxers down to his knees then guides himself into me slowly. He pulls back ever so slowly, tantalizing me with the leisurely rhythm.

"Oh...oh...please, baby, faster, harder."

I beg, feeling his girth all around my insides.

He grabs my waist and pulls me toward him so he plunges deeper into me. With the other hand on the nape of my neck, he crashes his lips to mine, claiming me with his tongue. He speeds up, a hard, relentless, and punishing tempo, and I feel myself climb higher and higher, his passion so severe I think I will soon explode. I brace myself on the back of the couch, my legs burning with fire as he thrusts into me deeper and deeper.

-Him: "Fuck...I missed your tight pussy."

His words take me over the top, and I detonate into a thousand delicious pieces around him. He yells my name, and with the last shove, we both let out unconstrained moans, as we melt into each other's arms.

-Him: "I could have lasted longer but I missed you, I couldn't hold myself."

I smile at him, and kiss him gently on the lips.

-Me: "You have no idea how much I missed you too."

He kisses me then pulls out of me. After pulling his pants up, he helps me up and we make our way to the bathroom to clean up. My hair is a mess, it takes me a few minutes to tame it, and Doc leaves me to it. When I'm done I look into the mirror and take a few deep breaths. I finally got to have him inside me. Mmmh. I can't stop myself from smiling that goofy grin, completely dazed by the amazing sex we've just had.

Pulling my eyes away from the mirror, I leave the bathroom and make my way back into the cabin to sit down next to my man.

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Soon we land in Cape Town and there's already a car waiting for us right off the runway. Doc puts his suitcase, which he just retrieved from the jet, in the boot of the car then we climb in and the driver drives off. He must have packed the suitcase this morning when I was still asleep. And I must say, if there's one more thing I like about flying private is the fact that you don't have to go wait to get your luggage from the carousel.

As the car moves forward, I can't help but wonder where we will be staying.

Season 2

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"Mntan'omuntu ngiyaz'fela ngawe. Wena wedwa, wangenz' umuntu ebantwini. Amehlo am' ohlala njalo ejonge wena, wena wedwa. Ngakho namhlanje ngifis' ukukubonga ngayo yonke inhliziyo yam'. Turn off the lights. Baby come duze. Let me make you feel alright." - Sophelele Fuze

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I can't say I know Cape Town too well but my mom and I used to come here during some summer holidays to visit her cousin who was living in Sea Point. The cousin was the only person she was close to from her father's side of the family, and since he passed away 5 years ago we've never been to this city again. However, that doesn't mean I can't see that

we're now leaving Cape Town behind, driving up on the N1 in the direction of Paarl. All the while, Doc is holding my hand and he kisses me passionately every now and then in this back seat, causing my insides to churn with delicious desire. Our sex up in the air, in the jet, was so amazing, and I can't wait to experience all the sensual pleasures again. My body buzzes with the anticipation, thinking about what we'll do once we reach our destination. Gosh, it feels like an eternity.

Despite the intoxicating kisses that distract me, I notice the car taking the Paarl/Franschhoek exit no. 55. But still, I'm not sure of our destination until later in the drive when I see Grande Roche Hotel signs on the left of a street called Plantasie in Paarl, a hotel I get to see directly in front of us at the top of the street.

"This is our destination, babe."

Doc only informs me when the car turns right

into the hotel's driveway.

-Me: "Woow! This place is charmingly beautiful, baby."

I say as I take in the perfectly manicured front fields.

"So scenic."

I add as I admire the views through the window of the car.

It is now 16:30. And as soon as we get out of the car we get personally greeted by a very nice lady, a member of the hotel's Guest Services team. She walks us inside and we are offered welcome drinks of our choice after checking in. But before being escorted to our room we get a short tour around the estate.

This luxury hotel is actually situated on an old but working wine farm, something I find really amazing. The suites that we are going to be occupying one of, are overlooking the vineyards

of the farm. Isn't that amazing? Here, history intersects with a funky modernity, and I think I'm in love with how the hotel embraces the old and new with equal vitality. We just got here but the way I love this place, it feels like home already. I'm even starting to think it'd be hard for me to leave on Thursday. Here, we sure are going to experience the privacy and tranquillity Doc and I really need. With these stunning views, I feel like we have escaped to our own personal country estate. This is, without a doubt, a perfect getaway, one I want to last forever.

After the brief tour, we get escorted to our suite. The garden suite which we're told was once the original farm stable is a totally private suite, something my man and I really need - total privacy. Doc definitely made a right choice by booking this particular suite. We walk into its lounge with the lady that welcomed us. Looking around, I can already see a combination of

luxury, romance and rustic charm. It sure doesn't get better than this.

"Wow! Baby, this is so beautiful."

I say, impressed.

-Him: "Not as beautiful as you, baby."

He says, his arm tightening around my tiny waist. He's been holding me like this, so possessively throughout the short tour, and not only did I not mind but I also liked it.

My heart nearly misses a beat at the sound of his sexy voice. No matter what this man says, he has a way of making it sound so erotic. I glance at him, then quickly avert my eyes. Shit, I just can't stop thinking about him in that way. What is this lady still doing here? I mean, our luggage, which is the single suitcase, is already inside. And she's already shown us the complimentary flowers, wine and mineral water. Now can't she see that we need our privacy?



Doc glances at me and smiles before pulling me fully into his arms and caressing my ear with his lips. The oxygen in the room suddenly becomes sparse, and the energy that seems to always be pulling us together, that delicious magnet of fire, rises to hazardously high levels. My knees go weak, and my heart rate shoots through the roof. I feel my desire growing stronger, until it floods my senses, and I can't even hold myself steady anymore.

I hear the door slamming shut, the lady leaving. Shuuu! That was long overdue. Doc's warm hands cup my face and gently brush my cheeks and I can't help but remember that just a few hours ago his fingers were on my naked body, inside of me, bringing me to a state of complete frenzy. I feel his warm breath fanning my face then suddenly, he crashes his lips to mine. His hands hungrily grope my body as he guides me across the lounge, walking me into an

unfamiliar room, I'm thinking the bedroom but I don't have time to take it in. I just keep my eyes closed as I lose myself to him, returning his demanding kisses.

"Fuck, baby, I can't keep my hands off of you."

He says in a slurred voice. Well, I like that he can't.

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He lifts me up and throws me onto the plush king-sized bed. I get a chance to quickly scan the bedroom. It is really nice and bright, and so is the bed with its white covers and burgundy pillows.

Immediately, Doc starts tearing off his jacket and shirt.

"Do you have any idea how badly I want you

right now?"

He growls, kneeling on the bed in front of me, his eyes ablaze as he pulls both my sweater and T-shirt off in one go.

"Throughout the drive I've been dying to finally be alone with you. To feel your naked body, and make you come."

Fuck, just hearing him say that is enough to make me slippery wet down there. He commands me to take my bra off, and I follow his orders - no questions asked. He pushes me down on the bed so I'd lie on my back then he lowers himself to tug on my lower lip with his teeth, sending all kinds of emotions raging through me. He seems much wilder than he was on the aircraft, more driven by sheer lust. He cradles my face in his hands as he ravages my lips. His kisses are demanding and wild, like a man who has waited for years before finally succumbing to his addiction. But it's not just

the kisses that are so tantalizing, it's that I can feel he really wants me. That's such a fucking turn on, and I want him just as much.

After opening the covers to reveal the soft, silky sheets, we frantically pull each other's bottom clothes off. Impatient and wanting, our bodies yearning to become one. Soon we're both completely naked, and I take in every inch of his perfect physique. Damn! I don't know if it's because I'm highly aroused but his body seems even firmer, more muscular than I remember it.

He, too, is drinking my own naked body with his eyes.

-Him: "The way you're so sexy, you're driving me crazy."

I only reply with an alluring smile. Pushing me back down on the bed, he rolls one of my breasts between his fingers, then sucks on it, biting it gently. His tongue encircles my nipple,

shooting a trail of sensation all the way down between my legs. I think my senses are still heightened from the session we had earlier, and I find I want him now with so much desperation.

He kisses a trail down my chest to my abdomen, leaving tingles where his wet lips touch. I'm so heavy and wanting, and I arch my back in anticipation. But I feel him stopping, I open my eyes to see him looking at my flat tummy with a smile. I guess he's happy because he knows that there's a little him growing in there. He brushes it gently then starts planting a thousand kisses before moving down south.

He reaches my sex then spreads my legs apart. I close my eyes in anticipation. The way we're both yearning for each other, I'm expecting to feel his dick entering me but instead I feel his fingers slipping inside my wet love hole.

"Fuck, baby, you're so wet."

His voice is raspy, and I can feel his satisfaction in it. He begins finger-fucking me and I moan at the pleasure as I arch my back, allowing his two fingers to go deeper. This is not the real deal yet but this surgeon sure knows how to use his fingers. The intensity increases, making me wince. He moves his fingers, faster and faster inside me as his thumb rubs my clit until I feel myself building.

"Come for me, baby. Come for me."

Shit, his words drive me over the edge and I explode all over his fingers.

Barely do I recover from that orgasm, with my eyes still shut, I feel him kissing a trail up my inner thigh, and I judder with each cold, wet kiss. I instinctively open my legs wider to allow him more access. His cold lips land on my clean shaven mound, kissing it softly. I bite my lip and let out an instant moan as his warm tongue licks my throbbing inner pussy lips and reaches

my sensitive spot. He continues to suck my clit gently before his glorious tongue glides inside my pussy and fucks me senseless, with him drinking my love juices. I arch my back as each dip pushes me closer to the edge all over again. Oh shit! A girly cry mixed with a moan escapes my mouth as I approach the peak of passion and pleasure once again.

"You taste so good."

He says, inhaling me deeply as he sucks and tugs on my most intimate area. He keeps sucking until I feel myself shudder, until I cry out in ecstasy. He takes my cry as an invitation to open my legs even further. As I'm sure I'm about to come, he stops and comes up to kiss me on the mouth, making me taste myself on him.

He lays beside me, then he licks his fingers and slides them inside me once again. He starts moving them against my inner walls. Damn, I

think I'm going to come. My body quivers as he continues to fondle me, bringing me to that sweet high place yet again. I moan louder, almost grunting. He moves his fingers faster and faster until I feel myself rising higher and higher, until I reach that wickedly wonderful peak. I scream as I spasm in yet another orgasm.

"Now I'm ready to take you. And I'm going to make you come so fast and so hard that you can't even remember your name."

He says so close to my lips, sending shivers down my spine. Shit, what is this man doing to me? I haven't even recovered from that last orgasm but I can't wait to have him inside me.

He kneels between my spread legs, grabs his rock hard cock and rubs its tip up against my wet pussy entrance, exciting me even more.

"Please, enter me already. I want you so bad."



I beg, already losing my mind. The throb is so intense it's almost painful. He stares at me, eyes smoldering, his mouth slightly open. He braces himself over me. Then with one merciless shove, he's buried deep inside of me. I gasp at the sudden move, feeling his massive erection so hard and so full that it's almost painful even though I'm dripping wet. But a second later, pleasure washes over me, taking me to a whole other level. Desperate for more, I clutch his ass and try to make him do it again. A greedy laugh escapes his lips, and he slams into me again and again. Deeper. Harder. Oh. My. God. This feels so good and that manifests in my loud moans.

-Him: "Fuck, babe, you're so warm."

His voice is ragged. I gasp in delight as he continues to move inside me. He lowers himself down on top of me, his elbows on either side of my head, holding himself up. I wrap my

legs around his waist, tilting my pelvis up just right, meeting him with each thrust.

He starts to move faster, stroking me on the inside, deep, the intense friction slowly pushing me forward onto yet another amazing release. My breath finds a steady rhythm, and each time he drives into me, a small cry escapes my mouth.

-Him: "Keep making noises like that and I won't last long."

-Me: "Don't stop."

I say, the peak emerging like a burst of fire.

He's moving so fast now, slamming into me at a merciless speed, the sweat of our bodies mingling. Fuck, he feels so good inside of me. The build-up inside me explodes, and my body turns into a storm of tingles. I feel myself climaxing, and he yells my name, slamming into me two more times - so deep, so gratifying and

so forceful. After the final thrust, he exhales, his head dropping down, filling me with his release.

After a moment he lifts his head and his eyes connect with mine.

"Damn, baby, I can't get over how good you feel."

I just smile, feeling my cheeks flush. He smiles too then kisses me slowly before pulling out of me.

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He continues to kiss me as he's still laying on top of me. And his kisses grow more urgent. Soon, I feel him getting hard again.

"Damn, Soso, I can't get enough of you."

He says, as he lifts himself off of me, but still hovering above me, balancing himself with his

hands on either side of my head.

Fuck, I can't get enough of him too.

-Me: "The feeling is mutual, baby."

-Him: "Are you ready to go again? Because if you aren't, it's okay, I'll stop."

Is he kidding me? I respond with a nod and by placing my hand on his hard erection, massaging it. He moans then his lips glide into a smile. He lowers himself on top of me then his lips meet mine and he continues to kiss me as his hands fondle my breasts then move to fondle my ass.

I'm dripping wet all over again, wanting him inside me.

-Me: "Give it to me, baby. Please."

My wish is his command. He braces himself over me again and enters me, ever so slowly. My wet pussy welcomes him. I open my legs

wider for him and he starts moving slowly inside me. But fuck, I want it hard.

-Me: "Harder, baby."

He pulls back then bangs into me, so hard that a loud, uncensored cry leaps out of my mouth before I can silence it.

-Him: "You want hard, I'll give you hard."

His movements become a little aggressive, and I find that extremely hot. As much as I love it and it melts my heart when we make slow, sensuous love, I love it more when it's rough and unrestrained.

Holy hell. I want more.

"Harder. Harder, baby."

I say, my voice more of a breath than a sound.

He pulls back and slams into me even harder.

He continues to thrust into me harder and harder, a slow, and unbelievably forceful rhythm.

God, this man knows how to fuck.

I grip his arms to steady myself, feeling them hard, and strong. He moves faster and deeper into me, twisting his hips in a way that drives me to the brink of insanity. The sounds coming from his mouth are wild growls, unrestricted, carnal grunts. Just those noises alone would be enough to make me come. But then he stops and pulls out of me. What the hell? Why is he stopping? I almost feel let down.

He lowers himself down onto his elbows and his lips grind unyieldingly against mine as his tongue explores my mouth.

After a moment of kissing, he directs his still hard shaft inside me again and he starts to move. I moan, because I need to let the pleasure come out somehow, somewhere. Suddenly, he flips me over so I sit on top, straddling him. I press my hands to his firm chest to steady myself, and he gropes my

breasts, squeezing them. I smile. He wants me to fuck him.

Slowly, I rise up and sink myself down, my inner walls clamping around his brute erection, grinding my clit against him each time I lower myself, a sense of urgency snapping me into a frenzy. The pressure becomes unbearable, the arousal too painful as I yearn for my release. But I can't get myself to move fast enough.

Then, I see a hungry gleam in his eyes, and he starts to thrust upward, hard, unrestrained movements as his features turn strained. He grabs onto my shoulders to keep me there, but I'm still moving up and down on top of him.

Quickly, he flips me onto my back again, pinning my arms to the mattress. He sucks on my lower lip and his thrusts become so hard that with each jolt, my cunt spasms tighter and tighter until it's so wound up, I don't know if it will ever find relief.

When he lets go of my wrists, I grip the smooth sheets, trying to hold onto something as he rams into me hard, again and again. Oh, fuck. Oh, shit. I can't take it, but no amount of force could be too hard. He grunts louder, his carnal sounds thundering through me as a reminder that he has taken full possession of me. Finally, I feel myself come as he drives me, shoves me, flings me over the edge into a wicked orgasm.

As he finds his release, he lets out a loud moan and thrusts into me one more time.

I'm still clinging to the sheets when his head sinks to my forehead. We're both sweating and panting, coming down from our exultant high. A high so intense that the room is a blur, my body numb with tingles.

He laughs as he rolls off me and falls into the mattress.

-Him: "Damn! That was hot."



I smirk.

-Me: "That was..."

I bring my hand to my forehead and laugh.

-Me: "I have no words to describe how amazing that was."

I say, still feeling myself coming down from the earth-shattering orgasm. Damn, this man knows how to do me. Our intimate time together is always explosive, like nothing - nothing - I've ever experienced with anyone before. And that 'anyone' would be that dooch, Alex.

His hand gently lands on my cheek and he twists my face so I can face him.

-Him: "I have no doubt in my mind that you were made for me, Someleze. I really can't wait to give you my name."

He's looking deep into my eyes. And I can see

the sincerity in his. My heart melts completely at this point.

-Me: "And I can't wait to give you another little you."

His lips form a beautiful smile then he kisses me on the lips, ever so gentle. He pulls back then rests his head on the pillow. We lie like that for a few moments, catching our breaths. Then he tells me that we need to go freshen up quickly because we have dinner reservations at 19:30 and now it's just after 18:30. That sounds good to me, I'm really hungry. Apart from the snacks on the airplane, I haven't eaten anything today.

He picks me up from the bed and carries me to the bathroom, and we take a quick shower together.

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In less than an hour we are both dressed in smart, formal outfits. In that suitcase he brought, there were also clothes for me and other essentials like toiletries. Well, new clothes that he bought for me. He bought me everything I'll be needing in this trip, including underwears. No man has ever bought me underwears before but I LOVE that he did, and he sure knows my sizes.

The dress I'm wearing is a ruby red floor-length lace peplum dress. It has a slit in the back and capped sleeves. It's sexy enough to keep him wanting throughout dinner, but also conservative enough to be worn in a formal dinner setup.

When I looked at its price tag, which was still attached, I gasped as I realised that it was only one rand short of 4 thousand. Four thousand rands on a dress? Honestly, I've never in my life

owned a clothing item this expensive, this is my first. But I've always known that Doc has expensive taste.

Both of us looking super duper hot, we leave our suite and go to what he tells me is a private dining room in the property. When we get there, I'm surprised to find the place empty. In my mind I expected to see other diners.

-Me: "Why is this place quiet, babe? Where are other people?"

He looks at me and grins.

-Him: "I actually booked the entire place for us. We'll be dining alone tonight."

Oh wow. I'm impressed and quite taken aback, to be honest. Even though he said it is a private dining room I didn't expect us to have the entire place to ourselves.

Speechless, I take in the place and it's only now that I realise that it is indeed set up for a private

romantic dinner.

It is without a doubt a nice and ideal space for sophisticated intimacy. The lights are dimmed, giving the room that nice, romantic ambiance. An ambiance that is enhanced by a lit fireplace. Wow, this is great.

A waitress comes up and leads us to our perfectly set table. A table with rose petals and lit candles. This is just beautiful. Doc pulls out a chair for me then goes to sit on his once I'm settled.

As I'm still amazed and struggling to push words out of my mouth, a live pianist takes the stage and starts playing something romantically soft, setting the tone. Oh wow, this is really amazing. It's a scene straight out of a romance movie, I tell you.

-Me: "Wow. Baby, this is amazing. You did all of this for me?"

-Him: "You deserve it and more."

I smile then lean across the table to kiss him.

-Me: "Thank you, thando lwam. You don't know how much this means to me."

I say, smiling from ear to ear.

-Him: "You know when I started planning to bring you here I didn't know that we'd also be celebrating our pregnancy."

He holds both my hands on the table and looks deep into my eyes.

-Him: "Thank you, sthandwa sam. Thank you for making me a man again. And I promise to make you and that baby happy, always."

I smile. The sincerity in his eyes making my heart beat faster.

-Me: "Have I told you lately how much I love you?"

-Him: "I don't mind hearing it over and over."

-Me: "Well, I can't tell you using words. I'll just show you by sticking with you through everything. I love you, thando lwam. And there's nothing I want more than to spend the rest of my life with you."

His appetising lips instantly form a smile. Then he takes my hand to them and kisses it.

-Him: "We'd celebrate with champagne but I'd prefer it if you didn't touch any alcoholic drinks in the next 8 months. I'll let the glass of wine you had yesterday slide, but please, baby, you shouldn't do it again. I know that one glass of wine once in a while doesn't hurt, but still, I'd prefer if you didn't touch alcohol at all."

-Me: "That's okay, baby. I promise, I won't."

-Him: "Thank you. Now we're just gonna use grape juice instead."

I nod. Then the sweet waitress comes with its chilled bottle and fills our glasses.

-Doc "So? What are we toasting to?"

-Me: "To me and you... Meant to be. It hasn't been a long road, it's been 9 months to be exact, but 9 months of pure happiness. Yes, I know that at first we experienced some drama but look at us now, we are about to start a life together as a married couple, and there's a baby on the way. What more could a girl possibly ask for?"

-Him: "I think I'll drink to that."

We clink our glasses then take our sips.

-Him: "It hasn't been exactly a smooth ride but I'd like to think it's gonna get better from now on."

-Me: "I'd like that."

The waitress comes with our starters. We dig in then soon comes our main course. The music from the pianist a delightful accompaniment to the exquisite fine dining experience.



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-Doc: "You know, like I said back in the plane, I know that I haven't been the perfect partner to you, especially since I went back to medicine. I'm always busy and I don't give you much time. Yes, I know that you get busy too but not as much as I do. You'd want to be with me and I'd be busy. But in all of that you've never exactly complained. You've been supportive of me, my dreams, my career, even though I know that it's not easy for you. And that's why today I want to thank you for your patience. Thank you, baby, from the bottom of my heart."

He stops then looks away for a moment before looking back at me.

-Him: "I know I said this before, but I'll say it again. Without you, sthandwa sam, I wouldn't

have had the courage to go back to medicine. You're the one who got me in the right state of mind to go back. You breathed life back into me and I became alive again. And yes, I'm aware that it gets too much for you sometimes, but I'm working this hard to make sure that you and our children get to have a home, a home that y'all deserve. And the fact that you don't complain makes me love you even more. My eyes will never look at any other woman the way I look at you. You have my heart, baby, and no one else will ever have it but you...With that same heart, I want to plead with you tonight to please remain patient with me, just a little longer. I know that at some point you'll find yourself running on empty, especially now that you're pregnant. But please don't give up on me, sthandwa sam. I've just gained my momentum as a surgical consultant, and once I reach full speed, I promise to slow down and turn to another chapter in this profession. A chapter

that won't demand much of my time. I'll do it for you, for us. I promise."

-Me: "What do you mean by another chapter?"

-Him: "I can't say much right now, but it's gonna be good for us - for our relationship, our marriage. You know, my worst fear, sthandwa sam, is losing you. I don't wanna see the day where you pack your bags and walk out of my life to be with another man because I don't give you as much time as you would like. That would kill me."

I can now see tears welling up in his eyes. And that breaks my heart. I get up from my chair and walk over to his side of the table. I take his hand, help him up from his chair and pull him into a warm embrace.

I can feel him frantically wiping his tears away and I hold him close to me tight. Honestly, I now feel bad for thinking of leaving his house

without even telling him earlier. It's not like this guy's been neglecting me...well, not on purpose.

-Me: "I would never leave you, baby. Ever. I promise. I promise."

I say, brushing his back. We stand like that for a long moment, clinging onto each other. Then finally, we pull back and kiss before sitting down again.

-Me: "I love you. And I mean it when I say I'm gonna stick with you through everything."

I say, kissing his hand.

He smiles a little. And decides to change gears.

-Him: "You know the real reason I brought you here?"

I shake my head no.

-Him: "You remember saying getting married in the Cape was your dream?"

-Me: "Yes."

-Him: "But then your mother wanted you to get married in PE, and you just had to go along with her suggestion. But, baby, that's not how it's supposed to be. This is your wedding, your special day, so you should do what makes you happy, get married where you want to. And it is because of that reason that I got us this venue in April and I've brought you here so you could see it for yourself. But if you don't like it that's still okay, we'll get married in PE."

-Me: "They also do weddings here?"

-Him: "Yeah. They'll take us through everything tomorrow. And we can pick a choice of venue for the reception. I personally like this place but if you don't, don't feel bad we'll cancel it."

-Me: "Wow, baby, you're one amazing man. You're so thoughtful, and you know exactly what I like. I like this place, babe. No, I love it. I don't know what they're going to show me tomorrow but I'm sure I'm gonna like it. Thank

you, baby. I can't wait for tomorrow."

I'm super excited right now because I know that I've already fallen in love with this place. And saying "I do" on one of these manicured lawns while enjoying spectacular views of the Paarl Valley and Drakenstein Mountains sounds very appealing to me. I know that my mom is going to freak and my dad is probably going to get upset because he's going to lose the deposit on the venue we already booked in PE, but it's like Doc just said - this is my big day and I should do what makes me happy.

I lean across the table to kiss my man on the lips. And from the way he prolongs the kiss I doubt we'll wait for that dessert. Being back in our suite, in that soft bed, to make each other feel good once again is what both our bodies need.

Season 2

#4

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"Once upon a long ago someone touched my heart and soul, my life. You and I were meant to be. Was I just too blind to see the light in your eyes?" - Restless Heart

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Thursday

Last night, which was our very last night in this hotel, I slept like a baby in Doc's arms after our amazing love-making session. When I wake up, I don't find him next to me but I can hear the shower running, so I know that he's already in there. I sit up on the bed and stretch my arms. Damn, I feel sore everywhere, especially in my most intimate places. Deliciously sore. I squeeze my thighs together when I think of Doc being inside me, feeling a burning sensation

down there. I like being reminded of last night and the three other nights before that, nights of pure romance and incredible sex. Doc may not always have time for me but when he does, he makes sure to satisfy me in every way possible. Now tell me, how can I not fall in love with him everyday?

He exits the bathroom with nothing but a towel around his waist, baring his sculpted shoulders, and tight abs. I let my eyes scan every corner, every inch of his fabulous upper body. With it glistening like that, all I want is jump out of this bed, walk over to him and touch that firm, hairless chest.

I shift uncomfortably in my position. His wet skin. The bulge underneath that towel. Damn! My eyes flick to his and I see that he's staring at me. Suddenly, I need him...again.

-Him: "Good morning, baby."



He sits down on the bed next to me and kisses me lightly on the mouth.

-Me: "Morning, thando lwam."

-Him: "Sleep well?"

A smile plays at his lips as he asks.

-Me: "As always when you're next to me. Did you...enjoy your shower?"

-Him: "I would have enjoyed it more if you would have been in there with me."

He leans over and kisses me again. Slowly. His tongue tracing my lips. I feel the blood pool in my lower abdomen.

-Me: "Want to join ME in the shower?"

I ask, already panting.

His eyes smolder, and he scoops me into his arms. With me holding onto him tight, my naked body pressed against his, he carries me into the bathroom.

-Him: "Tub or shower?"

-Me: "Now that I have a choice, tub."

This spa bath looks very inviting. He sets me down onto its edge then turns the water on. When he swivels back around, I see a huge bulge beneath his towel. Oh... The low burning sensation I was feeling before immediately doubles in intensity. Throbbing. I go to him and feel his hard erection through the towel, every part of me hyper alert with anticipation.

He doesn't waste any time, he turns the water off and lifts me up onto the sink counter. He spreads my legs with his hands, his smooth skin sending tingles through me. He hasn't even touched me anywhere erotic, but I already feel the agonizing pleasure between my legs. With my legs spread and no panties on, his two fingers glide inside of my already wet cookie, and he stares me in the eyes.

-Him: "Is this what you had in mind when you asked me to join you?"

Oh, damn! I moan, and let my head fall back.

-Me: "Yes. Yes."

He bends his fingers up and down, pressing them upward against the inside of me, massaging me. He moves them faster and faster forcing me over top in a matter of seconds. Damn!

Impatiently, I tear his towel off and throw it to the floor. My eyes open wide at the sight of his erection. Fuck, I want him inside me. Now.

He kisses me then pulls back enough to ask:

-Him: "How do you want it?"

I don't know what to say, because I only want it now. Hard. Fast. Deep.

He presses the tip of his erection against my sex, and massages me up and down, driving me

crazy. I loop my legs around him, trying to force him inside. Nothing else will do. But he takes my hand and guides it to his erection.

-Him: "Not yet."

A low guttural laugh comes out of his mouth.

-Me: "Please."

-Him: "Touch me, baby. I want to feel your soft hands on me."

I'm game. I let my fingers wrap around his hard cock, and I begin to stroke him up and down, his skin silky smooth beneath my fingertips. His eyes roll back and he lets out a soft moan. That to me is an invitation to do more. I quickly get down from the counter and kneel before him. I grab his rock hard cock and put it in my mouth.

He continues to groan as I sheath him with my mouth. Deeper and deeper I go as I suck on him hard, cupping my teeth with my lips. Suddenly, I feel his fingers fist in my hair.

-Him: "Careful, baby. I don't want to come like this."

I suck harder and he groans loudly.

-Him: "No, baby, you're gonna make me come."

He pushes me back then lifts me back up on the counter.

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I lick my lips slowly, and his lips open in response.

-Him: "What do you want, baby? Tell me."

-Me: "I need you inside me. Hard. Please, I...I can't wait."

I say, the words increasing the longing for him even more.

He smiles and spreads my legs wider. He

enters me, slowly. He lets me adjust then grabs my shoulder and hip and keeps thrusting again and again, deep, and hard inside me. Loud moans keep escaping my mouth as he continues to work me.

-Him: "Say you are mine, Soso. Say it."

-Me: "I'm yours, Thando. I'm yours."

The way he's doing me it's like he wants me to always remember how much pleasure he gives me even when I'm alone in Alice.

He's moving faster now, stroking the entire length of him in and out of me, filling me with heavenly ecstasy, and driving me to higher gratification with each blessed, aching thrust.

-Him: "Say it again."

-Me: "I'm yours, Thando. All yours."

-Him: "Do you want more?"

He asks, thrusting into me with all his might.

Shit, oh, oh, shit!

-Me: "Oh, yes."

He pulls out of me, guides me off the counter and turns me around. He bends me over, spreads my legs, grabs onto my hips, and directs himself back inside me.

I'm holding onto the counter for dear life as he begins to move, and high-pitched moans escape my lips each time he delves deeper and deeper inside me. The sensation is even more intense this way, his erection rubbing against that sweet, sweet spot.

His hands grope my hips and he slams into me, pulling my hips backward and forward so we crash into each other again and again. He's moving faster now, and I feel myself build, coming up to the peak.

-Him: "Yes, come for me, baby. Come for me."

I keep shouting his name as he throws me over

the top.

Our eyes connect in the mirror and I see the pleasure on his face, an agonizing expression filled with passion and lust. He yells my name as he comes. He moans at the very last thrust as the climax rips through him. Then his head sinks onto my back and we are still panting, but motionless, like the calm after the perfect storm.

I'm still clinging onto the counter, and my arms are trembling from the pleasure. Once he has slowed his breath, he pulls out of me, stands me up and we look at each other in the mirror. Still standing behind me, he grabs my breasts and squeezes them.

-Him: "I love you."

I turn to look at him and smile.

-Me: "I love you more."

He pulls me closer then kisses my lips.



-Him: "Now let's go take that bath."

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Three hours later we are on a commercial flight out of Cape Town to East London. It's good to be going home but it has to be said, I really had a great time in Paarl. And it's been settled, that's where my man and I are going to exchange our vows 6 months from now. My parents will just have to understand.

When we land in East London around 12:30, we find Bhongo already there to pick us up in Doc's car. The car has been with him all these days. He went to pick it up from the airport later on Sunday after we had flown to the Western Cape. He drops us off at home then takes a taxi to his place. Doc immediately changes into his PJs and hits the pillow because he has a shift at the

hospital tonight. I, on the other hand, starts cleaning around the house. I get the now spoiled food I cooked on Saturday out of the fridge and throw it out, then I clean everything before preparing to cook another food. I'm going home later this afternoon and I want to leave my man with some home cooked food because I know that he won't have time to cook.

I make him his favourites then plate up for him and put the plate in the microwave. The remaining, I put in containers and then into the fridge.

Now there's one more thing left to do - ironing the clothes my man is going to wear to work when he wakes up. When that's done, I'm reminded that I have another thing hanging over my head, and that's to fit that bridesmaid dress from Iviwe. If it doesn't fit that would be bad because the wedding is on Saturday, the day after tomorrow, and I don't think my mom or

any other tailor can do major alterations to it tomorrow - it would be too short notice. And Iviwe will freak because she's been calling me since Saturday last week wanting to know if the dress fits. But I was too busy with my own stuff to care about her wedding.

I get the dress out of the closet and try it on. Fortunately, for Iviwe, it fits me perfectly. The dressmaker got my measurements right, and I haven't gained any extra kilo yet.

It is an elegant, sleeveless floor-length dress with lace appliques and a sweep train. It's made of silk-like satin and it's lilac in colour - lilac, the wedding's theme colour. It really looks good on me. But is "good" the same word I'd use to describe my feelings about attending this wedding? Well, probably not. Don't get me wrong, I don't have a problem with this wedding but I can't say I'm looking forward to being a part of it. I'm just going because I feel like I have

to.

Now, with everything in place, I'm ready to leave. I pack my bag and go put it in my car. Then I come back to wake Doc up and tell him that I'm leaving.

"Thando. Baby, wake up, I'm leaving."

He opens his eyes and looks at me.

-Him: "What time is it?"

-Me: "It's 17:30. I'm leaving and you need to wake up and get ready for work."

-Him: "I miss you already, you know."

-Me: "But we'll see each other in PE on Saturday. Right?"

-Him: "At the wedding?"

-Me: "No, at the funeral. Of course, at the wedding, silly. You're still coming, right?"

-Him: "I'll see if Zizo is still up for taking my shift."

If she is, then yeah, I'll go attend the wedding of my fiancée's ex. How nice."

-Me: "I know that this is complicated, baby. It is weird for me too that I'll be attending my ex's wedding, but I'm doing it for family. A family that's now yours too. My dad would be very happy if you could go occupy your reserved seat."

-Him: "I know. You don't need to give me this speech again, babe. I'll be there."

-Me: "Thanks, babe. Now let me get going...There's food in the fridge and in the warmer. I've also ironed your clothes. Don't be late for work."

A lazy smile forms on his face.

-Him: "Thank you, sthandwa sam. You're amazing, you know that?"

He pulls me to him and kisses me passionately on the lips.

-Me: "See you on Saturday."

I say, after pulling back from the kiss.

-Him: "Saturday."

I peck his lips one more time then walk out with my handbag.

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Three hours later I'm driving into my mom's driveway after she's let me in. I park in front of our single car garage then get out of the car with my bags and make my way to the front door.

I knock already pushing the door. Upon entering, I find my mother watching TV in the lounge. She smiles when she sees me and immediately gets up to come and hug me. I drop my bag and handbag on the floor and return the hug.

-Her: "Now, tell me. How are my baby and grandbaby doing?"

She asks touching my belly. Yeah, I told her about the pregnancy over the phone on Monday since I couldn't come tell her face to face last Sunday. Just like I'd thought, she got so excited, as excited as she still is right now.

-Me: "Mama, it's not a baby yet. It's still just a tiny embryo."

I say, laughing.

-Her: "Hey, don't be smart with me, I know all about pregnancy. I did carry you, didn't I?"

-Me: "Yes, you did, Ndlovukazi. And you did a very good job not just with that but with raising me too. I can only wish to be just like you and be the best mother to this baby."

She takes my hand and sit me down on the couch.

-Her: "Baby, you have a level head above your shoulders and you're loving and responsible so I know that you'll make a very good mother to that baby."

-Me: "I really hope so, hey. I don't want to flop."

-Her: "Don't worry yourself, everything will come naturally. And I'll also be here to show you the ropes and help you take care of my first grandchild. Lonto you're turning me into an old woman, Someleze. Now I'm gonna be a granny."

I laugh.

-Me: "A very hot granny at that. But you do know that this baby is a December, right? And because of that he or she will spend more time with the Decembers, than he or she will with you. I'm sure my mother-in-law will want to be the one to show me the ropes to motherhood. I'm saying this because I heard how enthusiastic she was over the phone on



Monday, you'd swear the baby was coming the very next day."

-Her: "Yah well, I don't mind who takes what role as long as you give birth to a healthy baby I'll be alright. I have to understand that unlike me, you'll be a married woman when you give birth. That makes me so proud though. You waited until we could get that lobola before you got knocked up - knocked up by a very responsible man. I'm so proud of you, baby. And that's why I'm this happy and excited about this pregnancy."

She pulls me in a warm hug once again.

-Her: "I'm really proud of you, baby."

-Me: "Thank you, Mama. And I promise to continue making you proud by continuing with my studies."

I say after pulling back from the hug.

-Me: "I just hate that I will walk down the aisle

with a big belly, you know. I'm gonna be an elephant bride, just like Iviwe. If I could, I would have changed the date of the wedding to November, at least. But we couldn't get a November date at that venue in Paarl."

-Her: "A venue in Paarl? What are you talking about?"

I tell her, and why I no longer want to have my wedding here. Her face drops. I can see that she's disappointed.

-Me: "I'm sorry, Mama."

She lets out a weak smile.

-Her: "It's okay, baby. It's your wedding after all, not mine, so we'll go with whatever makes you happy. And don't worry about your father. I'll talk to him when he gets here tomorrow for Iviwe's wedding."

Okay, this has just gone better than I'd anticipated. I thought my mother was going to

give me a hard time.

-Me: "Thank you, mom."

-Her: "No problem. Now let's go dish up. I haven't eaten yet, I was waiting for you."

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## Saturday

The big day for my aunt and my ex has arrived, and everything is in place. Yesterday we had a successful rehearsal dinner, even though I noticed that Alex seemed a little uncomfortable in my presence. The guy seriously needs to get a grip and keep his head straight.

But apart from his little discomfort, I think everything went well and we are all hoping that Nathi - Iviwe's ex-fiancé - won't come and gatecrash the wedding. My father had a hard

time getting him and his family to back off last year but they finally agreed to step back even though I still don't know how he did it. I just hope they won't come and cause drama today, for both Alex and Iviwe's sake. And probably theirs too, because I know my father doesn't respond well when people fuck with his family.

Already dolled up as one of the three bridesmaids, excluding the maid of honour, I leave the bridal room in this country style venue in Theescombe, here in Port Elizabeth. The couple chose to get married here, close to the groom's family, even though they are now both based in Durban. Iviwe got a position at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban after she finished her community service in Alice in January. Alex followed her, but he still hasn't found a job yet. He's now a registered PhD student at the Westville campus of UKZN.

I walk out to my car and get the little something

I have for the bride then go back to the bridal room. When I get there, I find the other bridesmaids no longer in the room, only the bride and the hairdresser who is still busy styling her hair. I ask for a minute of privacy and with no hesitation, the hairdresser walks out, leaving me and my aunt alone.

-Me: "You are one beautiful bride, auntie. And this is gonna be a beautiful day. The weather is fine outside."

I say as I come to stand by her in front of the mirror.

-Her: "I hope nothing bad happens, hey. But I'm not sure about me being a beautiful bride though. Do you see how big I am, how big my belly is?"

She is big alright, but not big enough for an 8 months pregnant woman. She looks like she's still in her 6th month.

-Me: "Don't worry about that belly, it takes nothing away from you. Anyway, I have something for you."

I give her the little box in my hands. She opens it to find my beautiful diamond earrings that my father gave to me for my 22nd birthday earlier this year - January 26th.

-Her: "But these are yours, Soso. My brother...well, your father, got them for you."

-Me: "I know that but I figured you'd look more beautiful in them than the ones you are wearing right now."

-Her: "Really?"

-Me: "Yeah. They are something borrowed, auntie. And they are also just a little something to say thanks to you."

-Her: "Thanks for what?"

-Me: "For taking Alex away from me. If you

didn't I wouldn't have found the best love I'm now getting from my fiancé. So yes, thank you."

She looks down, guilt written all over her face. And trust me, this is not me being bitchy, this is me being truly thankful. I no longer have a problem with Iviwe, or Alex for that matter. We talked and made peace a long time ago.

-Me: "You don't need to feel guilty about anything, auntiza. Just finish getting ready and go out there to marry the man you love, the father of your baby."

-Her: "I uhhh...thanks, I guess."

I smile at her in the mirror then walk out.

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The ceremony goes well without any drama, even though Alex's eyes landed on me for a

brief moment before saying "I do". Only he knows what his problem is and I'm not entertaining it.

Doc also came through as he promised. And during the reception I go sit next to him at their table. I had my seat allocated at that table rather than at the bridal party table, I just wanted to sit next to my man.

As we're just sitting there, talking with each other, not paying attention to the rest of the proceedings, I hear his cellphone buzzing in his pocket. He takes it out then looks at me with a hint of concern after reading the text.

-Me: "What's going on?"

-Him: "It's Zizo. Says she can't take my shift tonight. Something's come up, apparently."

He shows me the message.

-Me: "So you have to go?"



-Him: "I'm afraid yes. If I leave now I'll get to EL two hours before my shift starts, and I'll get to have a little rest. I'm sorry, babe. I know I promised to be with you tonight but I..."

I cut him off.

-Me: "It's okay, sthandwa sam. You didn't know that this would happen. Don't worry about me, I'll be fine with mama tonight and I'll join you home tomorrow."

-Him: "Home?"

-Me: "Yes. In EL. Baby, wherever you are that's where my home is."

He smiles.

-Him: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you too. Now come, let me walk you to your car. And don't worry about my parents, I'll tell them that you had to go."

We get up and leave the hall. I walk him to his

car and we kiss before he hops inside.

-Him: "Tomorrow?"

-Me: "Tomorrow."

He gets in and I walk away, back to the hall, as soon as he starts the engine.

"Somi?"

I hear a voice behind me before I could even leave the parking. What? That voice is not just familiar, I know it. It's been a while since I heard it but I still remember it very well. Besides, there's only one person who's ever called me "Somi".

I stop then slowly turn around to see him moving away from his own car, walking over to me. Oh my God, I never thought I'd see this face again.

-Him: "Someleze Ndlovu. It is really you."

-Me: "Oh my God, it is you. My Romeo."

-Him: "If it isn't my Juliet."

He says smiling. Excited, I meet him halfway and we pull each other into an embrace.

Still in that position, my eyes move over to where Doc's car was. I find that it's still there, it hasn't moved, he hasn't left yet. He's just looking at me through the rolled down window, watching me in another man's arms.

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I'll post again once this post and the previous one reach a minimum of 2K likes and 300 comments. I certainly don't mind waiting or quitting. Happy reading <3

Season 2

#5

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"Now when I add the sum of you and me I get

confused and I keep coming up with 3. You're too much for one man. But not enough for two. Dadgummit! Who is he and what is he to you?" - Bill Withers

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Someleze

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Seeing that Doc is still here, I pull back from the hug with the intentions of going over to him and introduce Ryan. But he just throws the car in reverse and screeches out of the parking lot. Shit! I hope he didn't get the wrong idea about me and Ryan. I really haven't done anything wrong here, I just hugged an old friend. And I didn't even know that he was still here when I approached Ryan.

Trying not to let the way he just drove out get to me, or even embarrass me, I look back at Ryan

and offer him a smile.

-Me: "Wow! I didn't expect to see you here, buddy. When did you come back?"

I ask with excitement.

-Ryan: "Three months ago... I spotted you right from the beginning of the ceremony but when you didn't pay me any attention, I kinda doubted that it was you. And the fact that this is Alex's wedding and you weren't the bride but a bridesmaid didn't help either."

-Me: "I know it's weird. And the story is long and complicated, buddy. A lot happened since you left."

-Him: "Yeah, no kidding. How long has it been, again?"

He asks giving me a mischievous smile, the expression he always wore, I swear, like 99% of the time back then. I guess some things never change.

-Me: "It hasn't been that long, this is the 4th year...I swear though, I didn't see you earlier. Trust me, I wasn't trying to ignore you. If I'd noticed you I would have tried to find you and come talk to you during the reception. Anyway, you look good. I can see that America's been treating you well."

Ryan's a dancer who was my Romeo during my days of telling the story of Romeo and Juliet on stage - a story which has become one of the most celebrated, performed and reimagined ballets of this and the previous century. That was when I was still doing professional ballet at that upscale ballet school Amanda's parents enrolled me into after years and years of self-taught ballet.

In December of my matric year my ensemble was to tour a revival of a 1977 Romeo and Juliet production in the US but I couldn't go because I was to register for my first year at the

University of Fort Hare in January of the following year. Ryan tried to convince me to abandon that and go with our ensemble, saying it was an opportunity of a lifetime, but my mother wouldn't let me do something so reckless, neither would Alex, nor myself. Yes, there was a promise of dance scholarships for the leads to major in dance at the University of South Florida School of Theatre and Dance in the US if our tour became a success, but I just couldn't take the risk. Besides, I never wanted to make a career out of dance. Ryan on the other hand was excited to go because he had no other commitments, he was 23 at the time and had practically built his entire life around his dance career. With my situation different from his, I pulled out of my contract with the ensemble and lost the role of Juliet to my understudy. The three-month tour became a success and when it concluded, Ryan landed that 3-year scholarship and got to move to the

States.

This man was my Romeo for two years after a year of me working hard trying to get the principal role of Juliet. In that two years we became more than just dance partners, we became very good friends. He came along and touched my heart and soul, my entire life in a very positive way. As my friend he saw me through my fair share of highs and lows, and he was always there for me. He cared a great deal about me but not even once did he hit on me. He was a sincere friend, a friend who tried to remain loyal and in touch even when he was in the States. But I didn't offer him the same courtesy - I just drifted away from him. Maybe I was subconsciously jealous of what he had accomplished, I don't know. But now that we are meeting again we haven't talked in years.

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-Him: "Life was really great over there, but you know what they say: there's no place like home."

He says, his blue eyes staring straight into my own eyes as he runs his fingers through his blonde hair.

-Me: "I'm sorry I never kept in touch. I'm sorry I drifted away from you. You and I were meant to be friends forever, or at least that's what we promised each other before you left. But I didn't keep my promise, I don't even know why. I uhh...I don't know know whether I was too blind to see how much you cared."

-Him: "Hey, don't worry about it. These things happen. Out of sight, out of mind, right? Seasons change and so do people. I guess we, too, changed and we lost that connection."

-Me: "Ah come on, Ryan. Don't put it like that."

But, anyway, it's so good finding you again. My long lost friend."

-Him: "Ewe kuhle ukukubona kwakhona, Somi. [Yes, it's good seeing you again, Somi.]"

His weird white accent makes me laugh.

-Him: "Anyway, was that your husband that just sped out of the parking lot? I'm seeing a ring on your finger and I saw you two by his car."

-Me: "No, he's still my fiancé actually. This is an engagement ring. But I'm sure that's a wedding ring on YOUR finger."

-Him: "Yeah, it is. Got married last winter, December 10th."

I chuckle.

-Me: "Hey, don't be coming with American tendencies here. December is summer to us, not winter...So, you married an American?"

-Him: "Yeah, she's American. A very lovely

woman."

-Me: "I'm sure she's beautiful. I know you've always had a great taste when it comes to women... Anyway, are you're still around here? In Theescombe?"

He was living here, in this very area that we are in right now, with his family before he left.

-Him: "No. I'm now based in East London. My wife and I have opened a dance studio there. I'm only here to assist a friend of mine, the videographer. He asked me for that favour when his assistant couldn't make it."

-Me: "Oh, I see. Maybe I should pop by your studio sometime and just see it, you know. I'm still in Alice but my fiancé lives in East London and I'll be with him for the next couple of weeks, so I'll have time to come by and see what you guys are up to. But that's if you don't mind, of course."

-Him: "Of course, I don't mind. You'll also get to meet my wife."

-Me: "And you'll get to meet my fiancé."

-Him: "Fantastic. Tell me, do you still dance?"

-Me: "No, no, I don't. I stopped the day I left my Juliet role. I just had to focus on my studies."

-Him: "Well, maybe once you see our studio you'll be inspired to dance again."

Well, I doubt it. I think I outgrew that. But I don't say that to him.

-Me: "Maybe. Who knows."

-Him: "Let me give you my card. Call me, okay? We still need to catch up."

He takes it out of his pocket and hands it to me. I accept it with the promise to call soon. Then we share another hug and part ways.

But before I walk back inside the hall I decide to call Doc and offer him an explanation about

Ryan. The way he drove away makes me think he's mad. I don't even know why he is though because I haven't done anything wrong. Aren't I allowed to have male friends now? When did we get there? I don't remember having a problem with his female friends or colleagues. So why is he tripping? I don't get it. But I still need to give him an explanation, now rather than later. I dial his number but his phone just rings unanswered. I try again, and again. But still, he doesn't pick up. Eshe, I wonder what's going on in that head of his. I guess I'll have to try him again later. For now, let me get back to the festivity inside the hall.

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Thando

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I've never been the overly jealous type and I never thought I'd ever be one, I just don't think it's healthy. But when I saw that guy, whoever the hell he is, wrapping his arms around my woman like that, I felt my anger levels going up. I was far to hear anything escaping their lips but close enough to see everything about their actions. The way they hugged suggests that they are very comfortable with each other, they sure know each other very well. But I don't think something has ever happened between them because I know for a fact that Soso has only one ex, and that's Alex. I don't think something's currently happening either because I trust my woman, in my heart I know that she would never cheat on me. It's the guy I don't trust. I'm a guy too, and I know how we operate. The way he held her, the positioning of his hands on her body, the length of the hug, I just didn't like it. I know that Soso is a woman, a beautiful one at that, and I know that guys probably hit on her on

a daily. But knowing that something like that probably happens and seeing it happening are two different things. And the latter just doesn't sit well with me. Someleze is my wife, mine alone, I don't want no guys putting their filthy hands on her body. There's no longer space for a new variable in this equation.

Fuck, I want to know who that guy is and what the hell he is to her. But when she called earlier I just couldn't talk to her. I was still annoyed, not by her of course, but by that guy's actions, and I didn't want to talk to her at that state, I just didn't want to end up saying something I shouldn't, something I'd later regret. I'll call her back later, for now I have work to do.

Feeling right at home in my white coat over my day-to-day clothes, but feeling down in my heart, I walk into the meeting room at the hospital to find team trauma - our team of nurses, surgeons and other doctors working together to

provide effective care in the emergency department, in the middle of a handover. I'm a few minutes late.

"Oh, look Calvary is now here. You kids won't spend the evening and the night alone."

That's Doctor Summers, one of the senior general surgeons who've been around these corridors for years. The "kids" he's referring to are the surgical registrars, and "Calvary" is me. No matter how much I've tried to have him stop calling me that, he just won't, and I'm now past the point of giving up. He makes it sound like I'm causing these "kids" extreme suffering, especially mental suffering, in their training. And that's not even true.

-Him: "Thank you for finally gracing us with your presence, Doctor December."

He says, with a smirk. If I were him I'd refrain from fucking with me right now, I'm really not in



the mood for his bullshit today. But I don't say anything, I just lean on the wall at the back, with my hands tucked in the pockets of my coat.

-Him: "Calvary's gonna babysit you tonight, he'll oversee any surgery-related matters unless there's something major he can't handle with just you aboard the ship, in that case the other surgeons on call will be contacted. I know that I'm one of those surgeons but that's just on paper. I don't care if the sky is falling but if none of my patients requires EMERGENCY attention by yours truly, don't bother me at home.

Everybody got that, right? Tonight, my kids, you only have yourselves, but Calvary is also gonna be here, and there are also other surgeons on call. So, I repeat, make sure nobody bothers me at home."

It's at that point that I just completely zone out. I can't tell you what's been said after that, I just got derailed and only brought back to earth by

everybody's movements as they leave the room. Pulling myself together, I also follow them and walk out.

"You don't seem so okay today, Doctor D."

That's Emily, the 27-year old first year surgical registrar that intercepted me in the corridor on my way home the other day. She comes to stand before me in the corridor and puts both her hands on my chest.

-Her: "Would you like to talk about it? I'm known to be a good listener."

She asks, seductively pulling both lapels of my white coat. Her tiny voice is supposed to be seductive too, but it only sounds like nails on a chalkboard to my ears.

I've been around long enough to know when a woman is flirting with me. And Emily has been flirting with me for some time now.

-Her: "We can maybe grab some coffee and go

to your office to talk and ease that tension."

She's really picked the wrong day to up her game with these antics of hers.

-Me: "Take your hands off of me right now, Doctor Marais."

She slowly takes them off but her eyes keep boring into mine.

-Me: "Listen, Doctor Marais, I'm a senior surgeon around here and you're a trainee. This is a teaching hospital and you're here to learn, not to seduce your seniors. Now go do medical stuff, all the scut work, just like your fellow trainees. And I'll be in my office catching up on some paperwork, I'll only come to the floor when paged."

She looks down, somewhat embarrassed. Then without a word she turns and walks away.

As I'm still watching her walk away, my cellphone buzzes in my pocket. And it's

Someleze.

Season 2

#6

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"I tore down my walls. And opened my doors.  
And made room for one. So, baby, I'm yours." -

Alessia Cara

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Someleze

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Today the drive from Port Elizabeth to East London seems too long. I don't know, maybe it's because I'm anxious to get to Doc and talk to him once again. We did talk yesterday and he seemed alright, he seemed to have believed my explanation about Ryan. But I still need to talk to him face to face and make sure that we are

really okay and that this misunderstanding is completely solved before we move forward. I do find his jealousy kind of cute but he needs to know that he could do better without it, he already has all of me for goodness sake.

This morning I woke up pretty early and got ready to hit the road immediately. I want Doc and I to talk and be okay before the twins get here this afternoon. I don't want the kids to find themselves in a tense environment, they deserve better than that.

After three hours that felt like six straight ones, I finally reach my destination. With the remote to the motorised gate, I drive through the little complex and go park the car securely. Then with my bag in hand I get out and go knock on Doc's door. It's now around 10:00 and I know that he's only expecting me around 13:00, but I'm already here.

I keep knocking but he takes time to come get

the door. I understand why though - the poor guy must be deep in his sleep, he only got home a few hours ago after finishing his last emergency surgery around 6:30. He was so touched that he texted me about it. He said it was a 37-week pregnant woman who got seriously injured in a car accident in the early hours of this morning, and they had to choose between saving her or the baby, but in the end he and his team managed to save both.

Some moments later the door opens a few inches, and I glimpse the man who means so much to me hovering just beyond the threshold. He's not dressed. All he has is a towel around his waist and slides on his feet. His sexy upper body is exposed, wet and sleek, an indication that he just stepped out of the shower. Damn, I have to do everything in my power not to drool.

When his eyes meet mine for the first time today, he lets out a warm smile of excitement.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam? I wasn't expecting you 'til later."

His smile is so damn contagious, I find myself smiling too.

-Me: "I know. But I missed you. Sue me."

He chuckles.

-Him: "I just might. Come on in."

He opens the door wider and I step inside.

-Me: "But I thought you were sleeping, considering the fact that you only got home around 7."

He closes the door and comes to stand before me by the couch.

-Him: "I got here around 8:30 actually. I stayed in my office working on that lecture that I'll be presenting at the surgical conference next week. Then when I got here I took an hour for a workout. I was gonna go straight to bed after

the shower."

This house has 3 bedrooms, but Doc turned the third one into a home gym and that's where he works out to keep his body in shape.

-Me: "Oh, I see."

-Him: "But now that you're here I doubt I'll go to sleep right away."

He takes my bag off my hand, lands it on the floor then pulls me to him for a passionate kiss. With my hands caressing his wet, naked body, I lose myself to him, thinking of nothing else...until he pulls back.

He takes my hand and sits me down on the couch before sitting next to me.

-Him: "Again, I'm sorry for what happened yesterday, sthandwa sam. I swear I'm not the overly jealous type, my jealousy has limits. And like I said yesterday, it's not that I don't trust you, it's the guys I don't trust. I don't want to see



some guy touching you inappropriately, and I don't want you to encourage them."

-Me: "Encourage them? What are you talking about? I didn't encourage anyone, Thando. And Ryan didn't touch me inappropriately. The guy's a dancer, he's just used to putting his hands on his dance partners the way he did to me. I don't think it was inappropriate and it certainly didn't mean anything. Ryan would never do that to me. He respects me as a friend, and I'd like to believe he also respects his new wife."

-Him: "I didn't say you encouraged HIM. And I know all that you're saying now, but yesterday I didn't. I didn't even know that the guy was the Ryan you used to tell me about. I'm sorry, okay?"

-Me: "It's okay. And I'm glad you didn't do anything stupid when you saw me with the guy, I'm glad you decided to take some time to cool off before talking to me. I wouldn't have wanted

you to embarrass me in front of my friend and I certainly wouldn't have wanted us to fight over something so stupid."

-Him: "Bona, sthandwa sam, I don't want to come across as that guy who doesn't want you to have male friends. It's okay, you can be friends with whoever you want to be friends with, but they should know that you're someone's woman and that there are boundaries. That's all."

-Me: "I get it. But, baby, I want you to trust me more. You may not trust the guys I'm close with, but you should trust me. Baby, I opened my door only to you. I have room for only one man in my heart and that's you. I'm all yours, babe. I'd never cheat on you. I respect you and I respect this ring on my finger, but most of all I respect myself and the baby I'm carrying. I would never go around opening my legs for other men when there's a baby growing in my

tummy and a lobola that has been paid for me, I respect myself and my family too much to do that."

-Him: "I know, I know. And I trust you, babe. Believe that."

He shifts on the couch to sit much closer to me.

-Him: "Have I told you how much I love you today?"

He asks smiling, and I smile too as I shake my head 'no'.

-Him: "Well, I..."

He leans over and kisses my lips.

-Him: "...I love you...so ...so much."

The words leave his lips between the kisses, and his hands are busy tugging at my clothes. But I push him back and get to my feet.

-Me: "Follow me and I'll show you just how much I love YOU, and that I'm all yours."

I'm now walking on reverse in the direction of our bedroom, my eyes on him and a seductive smile on my face as I take my jacket off and drop it to the floor. He bites his bottom lip then get up from the couch.

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As soon as we get to the bedroom, his hands are all over me. He pushes me up against the door and kisses me again, harder and with more need this time. His hands move up and down my back, grabbing my ass with every pass. But when his hands come to the front and his fingers start to pull at the zipper of my jeans, I slide out from between him and the door, about to make him trade places with me.

-Me: "Today is all about you, honey. And I'm in control of your pleasure."

I shove him up against the door, pin him and kiss his lips hard before moving down to his neck. Still devouring his lips, I let one hand trail down his shoulders, down his bare chest, down his abs. I feel his hitch as I work my way closer to his waist. My hand reaches his erection and I rub it over the towel. He moans in response, and I love it.

-Him: "You had better do me hard because right now I'm all revved up."

He whispers so close to my my mouth.

With an alluring smile, I step away from him and move deeper into the vast bedroom.

Him: "And where are you going?"

-Me: "You better follow me."

I wink at him and kick off my shoes. He smirks then follows me to the bed.

-Me: "Lay down."

I give him an order as he comes to stand before me by the bed. He chuckles but happily follows my orders.

Ever so slowly, I lose my top, jeans then my bra and panties. With each article of clothing I lose, Doc's breathing gets increasingly more jagged as he ravishes me with his eyes. Completely naked now, I crawl up to him and straddle him, spreading myself as wide as I can go.

-Me: "Don't come quickly, okay?"

I whisper close to his ear before devouring his lips. Moving away from his mouth, I kiss down his throat, gently tickling my way down with the tip of my tongue. I continue down his chest until I reach his waist. I yank off his towel, loving how his cock springs out hard as steel. I lower my mouth onto it, taking him in as far as I can before sliding back off again. I repeat the motion over and over again until my eyes water.

"Oh. My. God. Holy. Fuck."

He moans. I pull my mouth off slowly, catching my breath while I wrap a hand around the base of his thick shaft. I lick the tip like an ice cream cone before sliding my mouth back down his cock, my hand and mouth moving in unison, up and down, up and down. His hands claw at the mattress as I move faster.

-Him: "Jesus Christ, Soso, stop. Stop, stop, I'm gonna come."

I chuckle with him still in my mouth. But I stop then get on top of him, straddling him. I let him catch a breath and the climax that was approaching to subside before I tease the tip of his cock in my wet sex, swirling it along the throbbing bud of my clit. I continue to rub and tease myself, ignoring the thrusts of his hips. My free hand goes up to one of my breasts, and I play with it, squeezing it as I continue to flick my clit with his cock. I can feel his cock pulsing

desperately against my p\*\*sy, and I smile as I see him being consumed by desire. His breath is heaving and his eyes are filled with lust.

-Him: "God damn it, woman. You are going to kill me."

He grabs my hips and tries to force me down on him but I hold my position and laugh.

-Me: "Not so fast, honey."

I crawl up to his face and display my swollen, wet sex over him. Like he was a starving man, he grabs me by the waist and starts eating me. He delves his tongue deep into me, pushing me down by my hips, penetrating me with his tongue. Fuck, that always feels so good. I moan as he drags his tongue to my clit and starts rubbing it in long, languid strokes.

At this rate I swear I'm going to come and I don't want that, so I get off of him and go down to his cock. I finally slide myself down onto his



rock hard dick, slipping my wetness along his length and I watch as his body tenses. He lets out a moan as I swirl my hips and clench my inner muscles around him. I go slow, sliding all the way off his cock before going back down. I throw my head back as I start to ride him. But he pulls me down, run his fingers down my throat and down my chest, over my breasts. I ride him harder, digging my hips hard against his as his hands play with my breasts, tugging on my nipples then rolling them slowly between his fingers.

Before I know it, the wave of orgasm, the hot pricks of molten pleasure starts to build up within me. I spread myself even wider, taking all of him inside of me. He forces his hips up, but I push them down, grinding against him, riding him frantically.

-Him: "Holy fuck, Soso. This feels so good."

He groans beneath me as I go harder on him.

Then hot waves pull me apart from within, engulfing me in a fiery explosion. I collapse on his chest, heaving.

"I hope you aren't quitting on me, because I'm not done with you yet."

He says, breathless.

-Me: "I'm not done with you either."

Coming once is never enough for me when I'm with this man. I need more. I sit back up and start grinding him, harder and harder. He grabs my hips, holding me in place as he sets the pace from below. I cry out as he drives deeper and deeper into me until I feel the heavy pleasure build up again. Our hips gyrate so fast and hard, with him driving even deeper inside of me. I throw my head back and let myself get lost in the sensations. His grunts bring me back to the present, he has to be getting close but I'm still not there yet. Not wanting to be left

behind, I put all my weight on one hand and use the other to reach down and play with my clit with two fingers.

"Oh my god yes."

I moan. My orgasm hit me out of nowhere, harder and stronger than the first time. Doc thrusts hard and deeper into me as the waves of pleasure rolls through my body, dragging it out as long as possible. And he soon follows me, filling me with his hot liquid as he lets out a loud, prolonged groan under me. When my orgasm subsides, I lean down and kiss him. I don't stop kissing him until he has gone soft and slips out of me. Then I roll off of him.

-Him: "Damn, baby, that was hot."

-Me: "It sure was."

He pulls me close and I snuggle in his arms, melting at his soft touch, back and forth, along my sides.

-Him: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you too, babe."

He pecks my lips then he drapes the blanket over us and holds me in his arms, making me feel unbelievably wanted, making me feel that he and I really belong together. I let myself savor this moment a little before rolling away from him.

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I can see that the sleep he evaded is now catching up with him, and I decide to leave him to sleep. But before I do, I need one thing from him.

-Me: "Baby, I need to cook something nice for the twins before they get here. So can you give me some money for the ingredients?"

-Him: "I don't have cash, so take my card. I think it's in the back pocket of my pants on the couch. I used it this morning at the filling station."

He answers with a groggy voice, his eyes closed. He sure is a moment away from drifting into a deep slumber.

-Me: "Okay, thanks."

I go take a shower first. When I'm done getting ready, I go get the card from Doc's neatly folded pants on the couch in the corner of the bedroom. Clearly it's the pants he was wearing at work last night.

I find the card but I also find something else. A piece of paper with a phone number and a short message: "Call me. Ems."

Who the hell is Ems now? I ask myself, as I feel my blood pressure rising. I want to wake Doc up and ask him who the hell is this Ems, but I think better of it. Let me let him sleep, he's tired, I'll

ask him later when he wakes up and when I have also calmed down.

I go grocery shopping then I come back and start cooking. I've decided to make:

Spinach Soup with Creamy Mushroom Mash, Mussels with Mustard Mayonnaise, Seared Scallops with Tarragon-Butter Sauce, Garden Salad with Cranberries, Zucchini Rice Gratin Rhubarb, and for dessert a Vanilla Cream Lattice Pie. I know that it will take me hours and hours to cook all the dishes, but I like it, this will keep me busy all afternoon.

When I'm done, I take out the plates and the cutlery. Doc walks into the dining room when I'm about to start setting the table for the early dinner with the family. It's now a little before 17:00 and Doc has already showered, ready to go pick up the girls from the airport. Their flight lands at 17:05 but he's still here, I guess he was too tired to wake up earlier.

-Me: "Hey. Before you go I need to ask you something."

I want to ask about that Ems but he doesn't give me the chance.

-Him: "I'm already running late, sthandwa sam. Whatever it is, I'm sorry but you'll have to ask me later. You know how much those little divas hate waiting."

He comes to peck my lips then leaves. I guess I'm going to have to wait some more, huh.

Upon second thought, I don't set the table, I just put everything on it and leave it there. I'll set it with the girls later. In the meantime I prepare the croutons, and put the dressing in the salad, thick and fatty, just as Lily prefers.

When they arrive I get jumped on in excitement and I receive several kisses on my cheeks.

Awww my girls are really sweet and they sure are as fond of me as I am of them. The last

time I saw them was in April and they've grown some more since then. They are 10 but you'd swear they are 12 or something.

Some moments later, I set the table with them then by 18:30 we all sit down to eat as a family. I hardly touch my food though, I just watch as Lily digs in hungrily while her twin, Lathi, is trying to calculate how many bites of which food she can eat so as not to ruin her diet of 650 calories a day - life of a little ballerina. My eyes move to Doc and I watch him chewing his food slowly. I can't stop wondering who that Ems is to him, but I can't ask him right now, I have to wait until we are alone. Even though I'm kind of pissed I try to act normal for the benefit of the kids and we enjoy our dinner, with the girls talking non-stop.

After dessert, me and the girls clear the table and do the dishes. Then I leave them in the lounge playing video games with their father. I



go take a shower, getting ready for bed.

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Doc walks into our bedroom as I peel the bed covers ready to get under them.

-Him: "You're already going to bed? But I thought you'd want to go say goodnight to the twins first."

-Me: "Yeah, I'll go."

I leave the room and go to the twins' bedroom. I kiss them goodnight then return to our own bedroom. I find Doc already in bed and I join him. As soon as i get in next to him he tries to touch me but I push him off. Hell, we need to talk first.

-Me: "Baby, who's Ems?"

-Him: "Why are you asking?"

-Me: "I'm asking because I've found a piece of paper with her name and phone number in your pocket when I was getting the card. She wants you to call her. Who's she?"

-Him: "Damn, that little devil. So she was putting her number in my pocket."

He growls, seeming a little angry.

-Me: "Who's she?"

-Him: "Emily, the trainee surgeon from the hospital."

-Me: "Emily as in Doctor Marais?"

-Him: "Yeah. Her."

I know Dr Marais. I've seen her a number of times at the hospital when visiting Doc.

-Me: "So why would she want you to call her in her private cellphone?"

-Him: "Because she wants me. The girl's been flirting with me but I put her in her place

yesterday. I thought she got the message but clearly I was wrong because here, she put her number in my pocket. I didn't even know that it was there, I just know that she tried to get closer to me in the elevator and put her hand on my behind. I told her off, but I didn't know that she was putting her number in my pocket. I swear, babe, I didn't know."

-Me: "She's been flirting with you, and you never told me this before because? Do you want her, Thando? Why did you keep this a secret from me?"

-Him: "Baby, please don't do that. Let's not fight over this, please. I didn't tell you because I didn't think it was important. I'm sure you also don't tell me about every man that hits on you. Do you?...I don't want Emily, Someleze. I thought you knew me, babe. I would never do that to you. I'm committed to you, to us. You're the only woman for me, don't you get that?"

-Me: "Well, you better put this Emily in her place and make the message clear. I don't want history to repeat itself. I don't want what happened with that nurse in Jo'burg to happen again."

-Him: "It won't. Trust me. I'll deal with Emily once and for all."

-Me: "Good."

I turn and look the other way, ready to sleep.

He tries to touch me again, kissing my neck from behind, and I can feel his erection rubbing against my butt but I really can't have sex now.

-Him: "Come on, babe, don't tell me you've been put off by this Emily crap."

-Me: "No. I'm just not comfortable with having sex while there are kids in the next room. They'll hear everything."

-Him: "We'll be quiet, baby. Please."

I chuckle.

-Me: "Quiet? Do we even know what that means? I want to feel free when doing it, Thando. Free to ignore my inhibitions. Free to be as loud as I want to. Free to tell you just what I want. And I can't do that with the kids next door, literally. No, I can't do this, sorry."

-Him: "Fuck."

He curses under his breath, but I can still hear him. Clearly annoyed, he turns away from me and looks the other way.

Not long after that his phone rings and it's the hospital. There's an emergency and he's on call.

-Him: "I'm sorry, babe, but I gotta go. I'll be back as soon as possible. Okay?"

He says already climbing down the bed.

-Me: "It's okay."

He quickly gets dressed then leaves without

saying anything more. I just hope he won't get to meet Emily there.

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Thando

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I drive as fast as I can to the hospital even though I'm frustrated as hell by what Someleze just did to me. The twins will be with us for the next two weeks so I wonder if that means we won't have sex for that entire period. This is just bullshit.

I get to the hospital, and the first person I meet upon walking in is Emily. She immediately comes straight to me.

-Her: "Good, you're here, Doctor D. I'll bring you up to speed."

Season 2

#7

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"You can hide behind your stories, but don't take me for a fool. You can tell me that there's nobody else, but I feel it. You can look into my eyes and pretend all you want but I know, I know. Your love is just a lie." - Simple Plan

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Thando

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My first instinct is to come down on Emily like a ton of bricks right now, but then I stop myself - now is not the time.

-Me: "What do we have?"

My voice comes out harsher than I would have

liked. And that causes her to hesitate.

-Me: "Dr Marais, you're here to bring me up to speed, so do that."

I say taking strides down the corridor. She hurries after me, trying to catch up after snagging a blood bag out of a cooler.

-Me: "That O negative?"

-Her: "Yeah. We've got a major bleeder in there. The patient is male, mid 30s. Bullet wound to the abdomen, teared a small part of his liver. When removing the bullet, we pulled his gall bladder and the major bleeding started."

-Me: "What's his pro time?"

-Her: "He's at 36 seconds. Like I said, we've got a major bleeder in there."

-Me: "Who cut him open?"

-Her: "Doctor Limba. It was urgent and there was no senior around. We had to stop the



bleeding and remove the bullet, but it just got worse."

Doctor Khwezi Limba is a chief surgical registrar, but as a trainee he needs help in a case like this.

-Me: "Tell them that I'll be there now, now."

I go put on my scrubs as Emily rushes off to the OR.

Now wearing scrubs and a head gear, I also move down to the OR hall. I stick my head to the operating room to let them know that I've arrived.

"Calvary's here."

Linda, the scrub nurse, says with excitement upon seeing me. Khwezi looks up and nod, glad to see me too.

-Me: "I just need to scrub up then I'll join you."

They nod. And I move to the scrub room and

begin scrubbing. When I'm done I go join the operation in progress. I greet the other medical professionals in the room who are here to do their part in making sure that the surgery goes well, then I move to the patient on the table. Khwezi, assisted by one of the junior surgical registrars, is doing his best with his steady hands. I take over from him then ask the junior registrar to step back and let Khwezi assist me. We work so intently, never looking up.

-Me: "Okay, Tony, I'm clamping. Can he tolerate it?"

I'm asking Tony, the anaesthesiologist.

-Him: "He's very sick, weak."

-Me: "Do we have a choice?"

-Him: "Go for it."

-Me: "Linda, give me a clamp."

Linda, the scrub nurse, passes me the

instrument and Khwezi and I continue to work, with that junior registrar now assisting again, while a couple of other junior registrars, including Emily, are just observing.

-Khwezi: "What did your woman say when you had to leave her in bed and come here, Thando? Didn't she give you a hard time? I'm asking because my wife's so jealous of this late night thing we've got going here."

He asks never looking up, working.

-Me: "Someleze understands."

Khwezi and I are not exactly friends but we do talk outside of these walls. We live in the same area, he knows Someleze and I also know his wife. But that doesn't give him the right to ask me personal stuff in front of everyone in this operating room.

-Me: "I'm sure he'll live. Bleeding has stopped. And we're done here."

I am now talking about the patient, the only thing we should be talking about right now.

-Him: "You staying for the closing?"

-Me: "No, that's on you. I'm going home."

I really can't stay for mere closing, I need to get home. I move away from the table and shed my gloves and gown.

-Him: "Hey, Thando."

I turn to look at him.

-Him: "Thanks for coming."

I want to say it's my job but I just nod then leave the room. I go back to the scrub room and throw away my hat and mask. Just then, the door opens behind me and it's Emily.

-Her: "Doctor D, can we talk?"

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Someleze

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I haven't stopped checking the time since Doc left for the hospital. I wish he could come back home soon, I'm seriously not comfortable with the possibility of him being in the same environment as Emily right now, especially because I know how sexually frustrated he was when he left. Girls like Emily are just like Thuso, they don't know when to stop and in the state Doc was in when he left he might get tempted. Men are men.

I sit up on the bed, my heart refusing to rest until Doc comes back home to me. As I'm still sitting there, I hear a frantic knock at my door. I wonder what do the girls want at this hour. But before I can even answer, Lily barges in. From the glow of my bedside lamp I can see her face

and her shaking hands, she's as frantic as her knock was.

-Her: "Mama, please come quickly."

They both call me mama now, even though neither I nor Doc has ever asked them to.

-Me: "What's going on, baby? What's going on?"

I ask already climbing down the bed and putting on my sleepers.

-Her: "Something's wrong with Lathi. Come now."

She runs out of my bedroom and I don't hesitate, I immediately run after her. We get to their bedroom and I find Lathi having a seizure on the bed. Oh hell no! What am I going to do? I've never seen anybody having a seizure before and my anxiety is now kicking in.

-Lily: "What are we gonna do, mama? Aren't we supposed to put something in her mouth so she

wouldn't swallow her tongue?"

-Me: "No, no, don't put anything in her mouth, that might hurt her. And no, she won't swallow her tongue, there's no such thing. Just watch her and make sure that she doesn't hurt herself, I'll call your father."

I grab her phone on the nightstand and call Doc, but his phone send me straight to voicemail. What the hell? I'm not just in panic mode right now, I'm losing my mind.

"Thando, why aren't you here?"

I scream and hurl the phone across the room. It hits the wall and falls to the floor, destroyed. Lily starts crying, I'm guessing not because of her phone but because I'm scaring her with my crazy behaviour.

Okay, Soso, stop. Stop and focus. I say under my breath, trying to calm myself down.

-Me: "I'm sorry, baby. I'm sorry. Let's just stay

with your sister and make sure she doesn't hurt herself until she's fully awake. But if the seizure doesn't stop after 5 minutes we'll take her to the hospital."

The seizure stops soon but when I check, I find that she is not breathing. Shit! I immediately straddle her and start mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing. When she regains consciousness and starts breathing on her own, I pull a robe over her PJs and ask Lily to also put on some warm clothes as I carry her sister to the car. I put her in the back seat and have Lily sit with her as soon as she gets to the car. Then we make our dreadful drive to the hospital, with me still in my skimpy PJs.

On the way I try Doc's number one more time but it sends me to straight to voicemail once again. Dammit, this man. My anxiety levels go sky high when Lathi experiences yet another seizure, and I take corners on two wheels until



we reach the hospital. When we get there, the convulsions have stopped but Lathi is still out of it. I carry her inside, and immediately when we approach the reception a nurse comes to assist us.

-Her: "What's wrong with her?"

-Me: "She's just had multiple seizures. Please help her."

-Her: "I need a doctor over here."

She screams for help, then turns to me.

-Her: "Has she ever experienced this before?"

I seriously don't know, but Lily comes to my rescue.

-Lily: "No, this is the first time. Is she gonna be okay?"

-The Nurse: "She will be okay. Anyone with a history of seizures in her family? Are you her mother?"

I don't know the answer to this question either.

-Me: "No. I'm her stepmother. And I don't know much about her medical history, but her father's here, Doctor December."

-The Nurse: "Bongi, please page Dr December now."

She's talking to the receptionist. They had better move fast because Lathi's weight is getting too much on my arms, and I can't put her down when she's still like this. As I'm about to complain about that, a doctor and another nurse arrive with a gurney and they take Lathi from me and put her on it. The nurse I was talking to tells them what I've just told her and they push the gurney away. I'm left having to fill in a form at the reception, and I'm about to do that when I spot Khwezi talking to who I assume are his patient's family at the waiting area.

-Me: "Lily, please go sit over there, baby. And don't move until I come sit with you, okay?"

-Her: "Okay, mama."

She goes to take a seat at the waiting area, and I immediately walk over to Khwezi, leaving the form I was supposed to fill out on the counter at the reception.

-Me: "Khwezi, I'm sorry to disturb but I need to speak to Thando. His daughter is sick. Is he still in the OR?"

-Him: "Hey, Soso. No, Thando left the OR about 15 minutes ago saying he was going home."

Home? Which home? I leave Khwezi standing there and race to Doc's office.

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Still in panic mode, I get to his office and knock

already pushing the door. I know that I had some disturbing thoughts when I was alone in my bed, but nothing could have prepared me for what my eyes land on when the door swings open. Emily is sitting on Doc's lap, her lips on his. Shocked and in disbelief, I just stand there like a statue while Doc quickly jumps, pushing the bitch off of him.

-Him: "Baby?"

He's looking at me as if I've just caught him with his pants down, literally. Well, I might as well have.

-Emily: "Oops!"

The bitch says with a smirk on her face. And from the way she walks over to where I am standing, at the door, she's sure of herself. When she gets to me, she looks at me from head to toe as if sizing me up, then she walks out. On another stress-free night, and if I wasn't

so paralysed by shock, I would probably slap the bitchiness out of this woman but right now I can't, I have neither the time nor the energy to deal with her.

"Baby, I swear, it's not what you think."

Doc says after his whore has walked out.

-Me: "Thando, please spare me the crap. Just come, your daughter needs you."

I finally manage to pull myself out of the shock and push words out of my mouth.

-Him: "What do you mean my daughter needs me?"

He's now standing in front of me.

-Me: "Thando, Lathi had seizures. I just brought her in."

-Him: "What?"

He doesn't wait for me to answer, he hurries out of the office, leaving me to pull the door closed.

He races down the corridor and I follow behind.

When we get to the reception he asks them which room his daughter has been taken to. As soon as they tell him he hurries off without even saying anything to me. He just leaves me standing there as if I'm a worthless piece of log. Well, fuck him.

About 30 minutes later he comes back and finds me sitting with Lily at the waiting area. He plops down next to me and lets out a huge sigh. I want to ask about Lathi but I'm too mad to say anything to him right now. Hell, my anger won't even allow me to acknowledge his presence. It has built up to the max in the past 30 minutes.

-Lily: "Daddy, how's Lathi? Is she gonna be okay?"

-Him: "Yes, she's fine. But the doctors are still trying to figure out the cause of the seizures. They are running some tests and I also had

them take her for an MRI. We'll know once all the results come back."

-Me: "And when are they gonna come back?"

I find myself asking even though I'd told myself that I won't say anything to him. Thing is I'm worried about Lathitha.

-Him: "I've had them speed things up at the lab and I think the results will be ready in an hour."

-Me: "Oh, good."

I say dryly.

-Lily: "Can I go see her?"

-Him: "A little later, baby. Right now I need to talk to your mama alone."

He looks at me.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, can we please go talk in private?"

I'm so not doing this with this man right now.

Really, not now.

-Me: "I'm not going anywhere with you, Thando. And I don't wanna talk."

-Lily: "Is everything okay, Dad?"

-Him: "Yeah, everything's fine. Just sit still and keep quiet, okay?"

Damn him for doing this when there are kids around. Damn him!

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We sit there in silence, and I even hate taking his jacket but I need to cover up, and the night's extremely low temperatures aren't so kind on me.

About two hours later we get the results. It turns out Lathi's seizures were caused by low sugar levels in her blood. It's that stupid diet of



hers, I know it. The girl literally took a few bites of food during dinner and she was done. And that's apparently what she does all the time. If why Busi has been encouraging or even pushing her to take it this far, I honestly have no idea. Does she want her daughter to grow up as a successful ballerina so bad that she would let her starve to lose weight? This is a 10 year old girl for goodness sake. What kind of a mother is she? I'm so mad right now. But then again, I'm not a mother, what do I know? I questioned this in my head during dinner but because I didn't want to sound like I'm saying Busi is a bad mother, I chose to keep quiet. She and I have a good relationship right now and I don't want to ruin it.

But anyway, I'm glad Lathi's condition is not serious, and that they won't keep her here overnight.

"I'm going to drive with the girls in my car."

Doc tells me when he comes back with Lathi.

-Me: "You'll do no such thing, Thando. The girls came here with me and they'll go home with me. You can stay behind and finish off what you and Emily already started in your office. Me and the kids will be fine."

I yank off Lathi's medication from his hand then turn to the twins.

-Me: "Girls, come. Let's go home."

The girls follow me and we exit the hospital, going to my car. On the way home, I can't even hear a word they are saying. My mind is still stuck on what I saw in that office. But how could Thando do something like that? How could he? The way I'm so mad at him right now I wouldn't even sleep next to him tonight if I had somewhere else to go. But since I don't, I have to put up with his annoying face.

I feel like dying when he pulls up behind me as

we reach the gate of our complex. The bastard must have taken another route because I didn't see him anywhere in my rearview mirror. We both drive in, and I notice him leaping out of his car immediately after parking it. I don't know what his plan is but he's already in my face as soon as the girls and I are out of our car.

-Him: "Lily, take your sister and go inside now."

-Lily: "But, dad, I..."

-Him: "NOW, Lily!"

He growls, harshly cutting his daughter off mid-sentence.

Shaken, Lily takes Lathi's hand and they walk to the house. Seeing that they are now inside, Doc turns to me.

-Him: "Can we please talk now?"

He opens the passenger door of his car, inviting me to get in. Not wanting drama outside in the

middle of the night, I get in. And he also gets in on his side.

-Him: "Baby, what you saw in that office is not what you think? I swear."

-Me: "Oh? What am I even thinking, Thando?"

-Him: "I know that you think you walked in on me and Emily making out, but that's not true."

-Me: "It's not? Khwezi told me that you left the OR fifteen minutes before I got there, Thando. But instead of coming straight home you went to your office with Emily. The same Emily you told me was flirting with you. The same woman you told me you didn't want. Do you kiss every woman you don't want, Thando? Do you have them sit on your lap?"

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, listen. This is what happened. Emily came to me after the surgery and asked to talk to me about a medical case they had before I got there. I couldn't say no

because assisting them is part of my job description, I had to be professional about it. So we went to my office and discussed what we had to discuss. It's only when we were done that she started her bullshit. She sat on me and before I knew it her lips were on mine. She's the one who kissed me...The devil's timing is always impeccable, that much I can tell you. You got there just as I was about to push her off of me. I swear."

-Me: "Oh, wow. How friggin' convenient. You can hide behind your lame stories, Thando, but don't take me for a fool. We both know that you are lying to me now just as you were when you told me that you don't want Emily. Just as you always are when you tell me that there's nobody else. You can look into my eyes and play with words or pretend all you want but now I know that your love is nothing but one big, fat lie."

-Him: "Baby, that is not true. I love you and I

didn't do anything to hurt you. Please believe me."

-Me: "Tell me, Thando. Why is it that it's always these women who are throwing themselves at you? What do you have that they want so much?"

-Him: "Maybe they see in me exactly what you also saw when you decided to let me into your life."

Oh, he thinks this is a joke.

-Me: "You know what, Thando? Fuck you."

I get out of his car and slam the door behind me. I'm so fucking angry right now.

Upon walking into the house I go straight to the girls' bedroom to see if they are okay before going to my own bedroom, which I've now come to dread. To get myself warm after being out in the cold night, I go take a quick, warm shower. When I get back to the bedroom I find Doc

already in our bed. Damn, how I wish he could give me some space. Irritated as hell, I slip next to him and face the other way. Immediately, I feel his hand creeping up to me, pulling me to him.

-Me: "Thando, ndicela undiyeke maan tu.  
[Thando, please leave me alone, please.]"

I move away from him and he lets me.

-Him: "I love you, and I'm sorry you think I've done something to hurt you."

I don't answer, I just close my eyes and try to fall asleep. He, too, turns and face the other way. This sure is going to be tough.

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When I wake up I don't find Doc next to me. I'm sure he's around though, in the home gym, but I

wish he could just go away. I'm really not in the mood to be in his presence, but I'm going to have to put up with him because he's going nowhere today, it's his day off work.

I drag my tired bones out of bed then make it, before going to take a shower. After the much needed and much rejuvenating shower, I turn the water off. And it is then that I hear the sound of our bedroom door opening. That must be this annoying man, and I know that he'll come straight to the bathroom to clean up. Fuck, I don't want him to find me stark naked in here. Hastily, I step out of the shower and reach for a towel, wrapping it around my naked torso as fast as possible.

Oh God! Please don't let him come in here until I walk out. Thing is I know myself, resisting him takes everything in me no matter how angry I am at him, and the worst part is that he knows it too. God please, don't let him come here, I



don't want him to take advantage and I don't want to be tempted. But my prayer doesn't reach God because the bathroom door clicks open and Doc walks in already taking off his vest. He comes to stand in front of me, enveloping me with the warmth of his body. Jesus, why does he have to be so sexy? And all that sweat from working out adds to his hotness.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, can we please talk? Calmly this time around. Please?"

I take a step back, not wanting to be this close to him.

-Me: "Talk about what, Thando? The fact that I was home alone when our daughter got sick and you were out there whoring around?"

I say, the words increasing my anger levels to the max in an instant. And at this point, I no longer care how sexy he is. My anger outweighs

any of that. I'm sure that he can see that I'm angry but I still notice a tiny smile playing at his lips. I don't even know why it's there, maybe it's because I just used "our" when referring to his daughter.

-Him: "I didn't do anything to hurt you, baby. What I told you last night is the honest truth. I swear...And thank you. Thank you for being there for our daughter when I couldn't. I may not have said it last night but I really, really appreciate it. I don't know what could have happened if they were home alone."

-Me: "Honestly? None of what you've just said means anything to me, Thando. In fact, I don't wanna talk to you about anything. Just step aside and allow me to pass."

I swear I can see a wave of pain washing over him as my harsh words reach his ears. He slowly steps aside and let me pass, without saying a word.

I go back to our bedroom to apply some lotion on my body and slip into something comfortable. Then I go to the kitchen to prepare breakfast for everyone, pretending as if life has resumed its regular course for the sake of the twins.

Doc comes to join us at the table and I have to pretend to be interested in everything he and the twins talk about, just for peace.

Thirty minutes later, the torture is over. I clear the table and go do the dishes. Then I go to the bedroom to change into something appropriate and also grab my handbag. When I come out I find the twins in the lounge and I tell them, not their father, that I'm going out. Standing within earshot, Doc overhears me and he fails to keep quiet.

-Him: "Where are you going?"

-Me: "Anywhere but here."

I walk out with my car keys and he follows me. As I pull the door car door open, he grabs it and pushes it shut.

-Him: "Soso, where are you going?"

-Me: "I'm going to see Ryan in Gonubie. I just can't be in the same space as you right now, Thando. I need some air."

Between chopping and peeling in the kitchen yesterday, I called Ryan and told him that my fiancé and I would love to come by and see his dance studio today. I said that because I knew that Doc won't be going to work today and that the twins, especially Lathi, would love to see the studio. And Ryan's wife would also be there. So we were kind of going to make it a get-together between the two families and get all the parties to know each other better over lunch, but that's all ruined now.

-Him: "You need some air and you go to Ryan?"

Why do you have to go to him? Can't you go somewhere else?"

So fuckin' unbelievable. He still has the nerve to be jealous when he's the one who can't control his needs.

-Me: "Just let go of my door, Thando, and let me to go."

-Him: "Soso, I'm begging you, sthandwa sam, don't do anything stupid out there just to get back at me. Don't do something I didn't do."

-Me: "Just let go of the door and step away!"

My voice is now raised. This man is really annoying me. He looks at me with pleading eyes for a moment then opens the door and lets me get inside.

-Him: "Please drive safely."

He says, then he close the door for me. I start the engine, put the car on reverse and drive out

of there. Leaving him standing there, arms folded across the chest.

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I get to Ryan's studio less than 30 minutes later, and thanks to the GPS I didn't get lost. I call him and tell him that I'm at the parking lot and he comes out to get me. As soon as he sees me leaning against my car he lets out a smile. I meet him half way and we pull each other in a hug.

-Him: "Where's your fiancé? I thought he'd be here too."

-Me: "Sorry, he couldn't come. He got called in at work."

I say lying.

-Him: "Uh that's unfortunate. My wife is not

around either. She had to go to Jo'burg this morning, some family problems."

-Me: "That's really unfortunate."

-Him: "But it doesn't mean we can't have some fun inside the studio. Come, let's go inside."

We walk over to the studio entrance and I'm immediately wowed when I step inside. It is really nice, elegant.

-Me: "So this is where the magic happens?"

I ask looking at the dancers stretching on the floor.

-Him: "This is where it all happens."

He says slipping his arm around my waist, pulling me to him.

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The next episode will come when this and the

previous post reach 2K likes and 300 comments. Let's please work together, lovelies. I always deliver, so please do your part too. To those who always like and comment I really, really appreciate you. The story is moving forward because of y'all <3

Season 2

#8 [Because writing is my therapy]

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"Please don't go, you know that I need you. I can't breathe without you, live without you, be without you." - Shayne Ward

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"May I have this dance?"

Ryan asks, his hands on me, already positioned for a dance. I laugh and wiggle myself away from him.



-Me: "I-dance yani na wena? [What dance?] We don't even have music."

-Him: "We never needed music to do our thing before. Let's just do a piece for old times sake. Let's show these kids how it's done."

By "kids" I'm sure he's referring to the dancers warming up on the dance floor - some stretching, others doing a series of push-ups.

-Me: "Those were great times, but I don't do that anymore, Ryan. I'm fine with just watching. I also wanted to come with my kids, you know. Just to watch. But the other one got sick last night, so I didn't want her to come here and get tempted to take the dance floor, I want her to rest. The girl eats, drinks and breathes ballet. Temptation was gonna win if she had come through."

-Him: "You have kids, Somi?"

He asks, a little confused as he tucks his hands

in his pockets.

-Me: "Well, they are my fiancé's. Ten-year-old twin girls."

-Him: "Oh. That's nice. So how's she now? The one who got sick?"

-Me: "She's okay. She just needs to rest and eat balanced meals...I just wonder what kind of mother I'll be to my own child, you know. It hurts like hell when they get sick."

I say touching my tummy.

-Him: "Wait, are you already carrying a precious cargo in there?"

I nod, smiling.

-Him: "Oh wow, congratulations. Life is really moving forward, hey. How far along are you?"

-Me: "Thanks. I'm 6 weeks now. I'm excited, that's for sure. But if I'm being honest, I'm also kind of nervous. I hear being a mother is one of

the most toughest jobs in the world. And my mother can attest to that."

-Him: "But I'm sure you'll be a great mother, Somi. Pity I can't say the same about Megan. Can you believe that she doesn't want kids?"

Megan, is his wife. I got to know her name yesterday when I called.

-Me: "She doesn't?"

-Him: "She doesn't. But I'm hoping she'll change her mind as the time goes."

-Me: "Yah, maybe she'll be singing a different tune a few years from now. Don't stop hoping and trying to make her see things your way."

-Him: "Yeah, I don't have a choice."

-Me: "I came here hoping to see her, you know."

-Him: "I know. But she really had to go. It was an unforeseen trip. And what's worse is that I don't even know when she'll be coming back."

-Me: "Really? What's she doing in Jo'burg?"

-Him: "Dealing with family problems. Family back home in the US. Her mother called late last night saying her father's knocking on the door to the next life. Apparently he's been sick for weeks now but they kept that from us because they didn't want Megan to worry, and they were also hoping that the big guy would recover soon. But now that things are getting worse, they had no choice but to tell us. So Megan flew out to Jo'burg this morning to take a flight out to the US."

-Me: "Yoh. I'm so sorry to hear that about your father-in-law, buddy. This must be a stressful time for your wife. For you too."

-Him: "It is. It is. I hope he'll be okay though. Miracles do happen...And I also need another miracle to happen around this studio now that Megan is not around."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Him: "I don't come here much often. I only come on Mondays, like today, and that's because I don't work on Mondays. On the other days I work as an assistant for Dr Pretorius, a local sports medicine physician. Megan is the one who's always here, accompanying the ballet classes. But now that she's not around I need to find another accompanist. I can fill in for her today, but what about tomorrow or the next day?"

-Me: "That means you need to find another accompanist as soon as possible. But I don't think you can find one for tomorrow, that's too short notice."

-Him: "Exactly why I need a miracle."

-Me: "No kidding. And the instructors? How many do you have?"

-Him: "Just three right now. One for each class

in a day. Ballet in the morning. Hip hop in the afternoon. Then the several ballroom styles are catered for in the evening, from 17:30 to 19:30."

-Me: "That's nice. So when's the first class of the day going to begin?"

He lifts his left hand to check the time on his wrist watch.

-Him: "In a few minutes, actually. At 11. And it will run for two hours. They all run for two hours."

-Me: "Oh, good. Let it start already so I can watch. I'm sure watching something I used to love more than anything will brighten up my mood."

-Him: "I'm hoping it'll CHANGE your mood so you'd consider dancing again. At 6 weeks you're still good for it. In fact, it will be good for you."

I laugh.

-Me: "Maybe I should talk with my doctor about that, not with you, hey."

-Him: "As someone who majored in dance and Biokinetics, I'm pretty sure it'll be good for you."

-Me: "Yeah, yeah, whatever."

Just then, a guy with curly, messy red hair walks through the door. From the way he walks, I'm assuming he's the ballet instructor. He walks over to us and greets politely.

-Ryan: "Hey, Andy. Meet Somi, a friend of mine. Somi, meet Andy, our artistic director and ballet instructor."

I extend my hand to greet the guy properly.

-Me: "Nice to meet you, Andy."

-Him: "Likewise. I hope you'll join our class soon, if not today. You have a body of a dancer."

I laugh.

-Me: "We'll see about that."

He lets out a smile then walks away, to his dancers. Ryan leaves me too, to sit down behind the black baby grand piano in the corner, ready to accompany this ballet class. Soon, beautiful piano music flows through the room and Andy starts the class.

I sit there, watching with a broad smile on my face - mesmerised by these dancers and completely forgotten about the mess I left at home. Ballet was my first love before I even knew anything about boys. Dance was what I ran to whenever I wanted to forget about the tough life I grew up living. Maybe it could help me even now. Maybe coming here every morning in the next few days will help me relax and forget about my relationship problems.

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When the class ends at 13:00, Ryan walks over to me.

-Him: "So, how was it? Did you enjoy watching?"

-Me: "Hell yeah, and everything you do is what I know. I'm even thinking of joining the class tomorrow."

-Him: "Really?"

-Me: "Really."

-Him: "That's what I wanted to hear. I'll tell Andy...Now come. Let's go have some lunch."

We walk out of the studio and to his car. On the way to the restaurant, he receives a call from his wife. With the phone connected to the car's Bluetooth I can hear everything she's saying. I get to hear that her flight to the US is at 14:05. And I also hear things that make me so jealous as I think about my own situation. From the way they are talking with each other, there's no missing how much they love each other. I can't

believe that Doc and I are no longer that kind of couple at this moment, and all because he couldn't maintain his erection.

Emily's intentions are not a mystery to me. I know that she wants Doc all to herself. And from her behaviour last night, I believe that she's the one who made advances on him. But that doesn't mean I should ignore the fact that Doc was also wrong. If he didn't like what that bitch was doing he would have immediately put her in place and show her the door, just like he'd promised me he would before he went to the hospital. The fact that he let her sit on his lap and kiss him means he wanted her to. And I can't stop thinking about what would have happened between them had I not gotten there when I did. Hell, he was even paged but didn't answer. But how could Thando do something like that? How am I ever going to trust him again now? How?

Anyway, Ryan and I get to the restaurant and we get to catch up some more over lunch. I'm not going to lie, he is a more than welcome distraction. But I don't dare share my relationship problems with him. That's just personal.

After the amazing lunch, we drive to his house, which is also around Gonubie. Wow! That's the only word that comes out of my mouth at the sight of the house. I'm telling you, this is luxurious lifestyle defined. Then again, what did I expect from two spoiled trust fund babies?

He parks the car in front of the double garage then we get out and walk inside the magnificent house. With the clean lines and sparse but chic main room, it is not hard to notice every photo that gives life to the room. Photos of Ryan and his wife - on their wedding day, on vacation, the whole nine - typical happy family photos. In some, the couple is surrounded by who I

assume are Megan's parents and sisters. They really look happy in all the photos. And it is not hard to conclude that they have a happy life. All this just makes me wonder if Doc and I will ever get to this point - the point of being a happily married couple.

I have the time to take in all the photos because Ryan has left me to wait in the main room while he went to get the pointe shoes that I've come here to get. I'm going to use them in my first ballet class tomorrow, after taking a hiatus. They are a new pair that belongs to Megan. With the knowledge that she and I wear the same shoe size, Ryan asked her to let him give them to me when they were talking on the phone earlier. And of course, the woman didn't have a problem with that.

Ryan comes back with them in a paper bag then we leave the house and go back to his car. He drives me back to the dance studio, and we hug

before I hop into my own car and drive home.

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As I've just made a turn into my street, I hear a hooter from a passing car that's moving in the opposite direction. Oh, it's Khwezi. I immediately pull up on the side of the street, and he also does the same on the other side. Seeing him crossing the street, coming over to me, I get out of the car and wait for him outside.

-Him: "Hey, Someleze."

-Me: "Hey, Khwezi. What's up?"

Khwezi is younger than Doc. He's maybe 29 or 30. And that's why I never see the need to be formal with him.

-Him: "How's your daughter today? Is she okay?"

-Me: "Yah, she's fine. Her sickness wasn't so

serious as it turned out. Thanks for asking."

-Him: "Oh, that's good...Did you find Thando still at the hospital when you were looking for him?"

-Me: "Yeah, he was still in his office."

-Him: "You know, I admire how you never give him hell about the late nights he spends at the hospital. You're so understanding and that's more than I can say for my wife. She's so jealous of the late nights I spend away from home. I've been trying to make her understand but she just can't stop complaining. But maybe she'd understand if you could be the one to talk to her."

Is he serious? I laugh.

-Me: "Who says I understand, Khwezi? The late nights are a problem for me too."

-Him: "But you let Thando go to the hospital last night even though he didn't have to."

-Me: "What do you mean he didn't have to? He was on call."

-Him: "Yes, he was. But he was at the bottom of the list of surgeons to be called. He was only to be called if the first 6 were unreachable or already busy in the OR."

-Me: "And is that what happened?"

-Him: "All I know is that it's Dr Marais who had the receptionist make the calls. None of those 6 general surgeons were already at the hospital at the time, and I don't believe they were all unreachable. So, I got surprised when it became Thando who came through."

Oh, wow. So Emily wanted Thando to be at the hospital last night. She wanted him there so she'd do what she did. The lengths some women would go to just to get what they want though. This is just so fucking crazy.

-Me: "Oh, I see."

That's the only thing that manages to come out of my mouth.

-Him: "So are you gonna talk to my wife?"

This guy though. Why is he doing this to me?

-Me: "Sure. I'll give myself some time to go see her."

I'm just saying that for the sake of saying it. I seriously doubt I'll do it. That's his job, not mine.

-Him: "Thanks. And once again, I'm glad your daughter is okay."

And with that, he walks away, back to his car. I'm left cursing under my breath. Emily is really going to be a problem. What is making me sick and angry is the fact that Doc is entertaining her. And what happened last night makes me believe that he wants her too. How am I ever going to deal with that? How!

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I continue my drive home, feeling my heart heavy against my chest.

It is around 15:30 when I walk through the unlocked front door of Doc's house. And I'm surprised to find the house awfully quiet. Where are the twins? I make my way to the kitchen, only to find Doc sitting on one of the high chairs, his head on the counter. His laptop is open in front of him and I can see that he's been working on the lecture that he's going to be presenting at the surgical conference in Jo'burg on Monday next week.

-Me: "Thando?"

He jolts up the chair, startled. He had fallen asleep on the counter.

-Him: "Baby? Thank God you're back."

He's now standing in front of me, with relief painted all over his face.

-Me: "Don't be dramatic, Thando. Who said I wasn't coming back?"

-Him: "I've been calling you but your phone was off. Please tell me you didn't do anything with that Ryan. Please tell me you didn't."

Is he serious?

-Me: "Oh, wow. You're so unbelievable, you know that? Thando, I'm not like you. I don't go around whoring. I told you that I respect myself, the baby I'm carrying and my family too much to do that. And I meant it. When I left here I said I wanted some space to breathe, some air, and that's what I went out to get, not to sleep around...Anyway, where are the girls?"

-Him: "They are with Zizo and Bhongo. I wanted us to have some time alone to talk."

-Me: "Talk? Are you ready to tell me the truth

this time around? Because, Thando, if you are going to tell me the same lies you told me last night you might as well keep your mouth shut...Don't you dare make a fool out of me, Thando. There's no way in hell Emily could have gotten up from where she was sitting, move around your desk, sit on your lap and kiss you without you noticing anything right from the beginning. It reached that point because YOU let it happen. Yesterday morning you were busy telling me not to encourage men to touch me but that's exactly what you did. You encouraged Emily, you're still encouraging her. In fact, it's clear that you wanted her to kiss you. I just wonder what would have happened if I didn't get to your office when I did."

-Him: "I was gonna push her off. That's the honest truth, babe."

-Me: "Oh, so you're still sticking to your lies? You know what, Thando? I'm outta here."

I walk straight to the bedroom and get my clothes and bag out of the closet. I throw them on the bed, ready to pack up.

Doc walks through the door and comes straight to me.

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

-Me: "I'm leaving, Thando."

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, please don't do that. Don't go, not like this. You know how much I need you. I can't be without you. Please don't walk out like this, sthandwa sam. I love you."

-Me: "Thando, I'm leaving because I value the life I'm carrying inside of me. I can't sit around here and have my BP rise every time I see your face or hear the lies you keep telling. You don't hurt or lie to the people you love, Thando. You don't. So don't stand there and tell me about love. Don't do that."

-Him: "Stressing you and our baby is the last

thing I want, believe me...I know that my actions may sound stupid to you but I acted the way I did last night for a reason."

-Me: "A reason? There's a reason you kissed another woman? Are you about to put a blame on me, Thando? Are you?"

-Him: "No, no. Of course not. Just please calm down and listen to what I have to tell you. Please. I'm gonna tell you everything."

He puts his hand on my shoulder and uses the other to wipe the single tear that's now escaping my eye. Then he takes my hand and sits me down on the bed.

-Him: "I think you know me by now, Soso. You know that I don't know how to raise my voice and I certainly don't know how to talk to you when you're angry. I tried talking to you last night, I even tried for humour, but you just lashed out and left me in the car. So, I decided

to let you sleep and cool off. This morning I tried talking to you again but you were still angry and you just snapped. So again, I decided to just take a step back and give you more time to cool off. Trying to talk or reason with an angry person is just a recipe for disaster."

-Me: "Just tell me what you want to tell me, Thando."

-Him: "There's one more thing I don't know how to do. I don't know how to communicate my plans until I get to see the end result."

That's very true. I know that about him. I once asked why he's like that, and his answer was simple: I don't want people to be disappointed should things not go the way I'd planned, so I'd rather see the end result first then share.

-Him: "I promised that I'd deal with Emily and that's exactly what I did, in my own way. I once dealt with a sexual harassment suit in the

workplace before and I wasn't about to let another woman tarnish my reputation like that again. I had to do something. And that's why I had two cameras installed in my office before I left the hospital yesterday morning."

-Me: "Cameras?"

-Him: "I didn't want it to be my word against Emily's when I go report her for sexual harassment to the hospital management, I wanted hard evidence. Evidence I'd also use should she decide to go report me first after I reject her...Last night when she came to me wanting to talk after the surgery, I didn't turn her away. I had to assist her, so I asked her to go wait for me in my office. My head was still trying to figure out why the receptionist called me instead of the 6 surgeons that were supposed to be called before me. None of those surgeons were already at the hospital when I got there. So, I went to the reception and

asked what had happened. Bongi told me that it was Emily who specifically asked her to call me. And it's only then that I understood why Khwezi thanked me after the surgery - he hadn't expected me to be the one to come through."

He's repeating what Khwezi just told me, so it must be true. But I'm still not getting his point.

-Him: "I knew right there and then what Emily's intentions were. I went to her in my office, we discussed what she wanted us to discuss then she started her bullshit. When she got up from her chair and made her way around my desk, I got up from mine and asked her to stop her nonsense. But I knew that she wouldn't, not when she was so determined to get what she wanted. Her determination became clear to me the moment Bongi told me what she had asked her to do...So she got around my desk, pushed me down my chair and straddled me. Before I knew it, her lips were on mine and the kiss



lasted for more than a second. That was all the footage I needed and I promise you, I was about to push her off of me when you got there. I didn't even know that you'd be at the hospital at that time. I wouldn't have wanted you to witness that."

Oh wow!

-Me: "Where's the footage now?"

-Him: "I have it on my laptop. You can come see it."

I follow him to the kitchen.

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He shows me the footage, and it is exactly how he said it happened.

-Him: "It has already served its purpose. After you left this morning, I drove to the hospital to

report Emily for sexual harassment. And I also gave them the footage as evidence. So, Emily won't be a problem anymore."

-Me: "You really did this?"

-Him: "That's what I'm telling you."

-Me: "I uhhh...I feel so bad right now for not believing you."

-Him: "But I can't say I blame you for reacting the way you did. That's exactly how I would have reacted too if I had found you locking lips with another man."

-Me: "Sthandwa sam, I'm sorry. I should have trusted you more."

-Him: "Well, I'm sorry too. If I had communicated with you about my plans, none of this would have happened."

I just pull him to me and kiss his lips.

-Me: "I love you."

-Him: "I love you too. And, baby, you need to know that I would never hurt you like that."

-Me: "I'm now certain that you'd never do it."

-Him: "Good. Now let's go fetch our kids."

He takes my hand and we leave the house. I can't believe I still haven't changed after everything Doc and I have been through together. I couldn't trust him enough to stop and listen to his explanation. Instead, I jumped to my own conclusion and got myself all worked up for nothing. This seriously shouldn't happen again.

We later come back to the house with the two rowdy monkeys and we start cooking dinner together as a family. We always have a great, crazy time in the kitchen with the twins and I would never trade those moments for anything.

At 20:00 we all sit at our picture-perfect table to have dinner. An outsider watching us right now

would never tell that I almost moved out just a few hours ago. I'm sure we seem to be a perfect, happy family, as laughter seems to be our dinner instead of the meal we cooked. The twins are so

chatty and noisy, and we can't stop laughing at Lathi's lame jokes.

After dinner, I do the dishes then make sure that the twins are warmly tucked into bed before going to join Doc in the shower. Even though he and I both want to make love under these jets of water, we know that we can't. We can't have loud, crazy sex when there are kids in the next room. We have to hold ourselves until we get to our bed. Moving fast, we finish cleaning up then we make our way to the bed, already ready to get down to it. We make slow, passionate love, with Doc stifling my moans with his mouth every time they try to grow loud. I really need to practise some restraint, hey.

In the morning, we both wake up and go for a slow early morning jog together, just like old times. But on our way back, shit happens. Just as we are slowing down, about to walk through the gate, I trip and fall, hurting my ankle in the process. But I don't think it's a serious sprain because I don't feel any pain.

-Doc: "It's still early to feel anything, babe. Come put some ice on it."

He piggybacks me to the house, then has me elevate my foot and put some ice on it while he goes to take a shower. After the shower he goes to make breakfast and I go take my shower. When I'm done I find him in the kitchen already setting the table.

-Me: "Mmmh it smells nice in here. The girls aren't up yet?"

-Him: "I heard them in their bathroom. I'm sure they'll join us soon. For now, it's just you and

me."

He grins and takes me in his arms. He kisses my neck, snorting playfully and I giggle.

"Ew! get a room, you guys."

Oops! That's one of the twins. We pull away from each, laughing, to find the girls standing in the doorway.

-Doc: "Just come sit down and eat, you two."

-Lathi: "And I'm super hungry."

It's good to see her eating like she should. The last thing I need is for her to get sick again. Her father better talk to Busi and make sure that she lets the child eat a balanced diet when she goes back to Jo'burg.

We sit down and eat, then the girls offer to wash the plates while I go get ready to leave for my dance class. Doc is fine with me going, and I think my ankle will be just fine. Lathi wants to

tag along but Doc doesn't let her, for the same reason I didn't go with her yesterday.

-Him: "Enjoy at the studio, babe. Just don't forget that we have a doctor's appointment at 14:30, okay?"

He says as he pulls my car door open.

-Me: "I won't, babe. Will see you soon, okay? Love you."

-Him: "Love you more."

I kiss him then get in the car and drive off.

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An hour later I'm sitting sprawled out in the splits in Ryan's dance studio. Ryan is not here, he's at work but he told me that the classes will go on as usual. I just don't know who's going to be our accompanist or maybe we are not going

to have one.

There's still a few of us on the floor, even Andy, the instructor, hasn't arrived yet. But someone else arrives before him. I look up. And my heart is in my throat in one second flat. "Oh, wow. Holy shit." I find myself saying that under my breath at the sight of him. Soso, come on, don't stare at him, I scold myself. But when my eyes are so drawn to him like a magnet to metal, that's so very hard to do. Holy hell, he's hot. Hotter than hot. This guy is GQ handsome times 20. He's probably in his late twenties. And oh Lord, that sun-kissed chestnut hair makes him look even more hotter. Oh, God. Why does he make me feel this way? I don't even know him for goodness sake.

He takes a few steps into the studio and glances at the baby grand piano in the corner. He doesn't look or walk like a dancer, so why is he here exactly? Well, he might not be a dancer,



but he's definitely in great physical condition with broad, defined shoulders and back, impeccable posture, and flat abs that hide beneath his loose, light blue, button up shirt. The sleeves are rolled up to his elbows, revealing veined, muscular arms, and the top button is undone, showing off the pinnacle of a firm chest. Just by looking at him I feel my temperature rising, my heart beating faster. What the hell? I've never felt like this about Doc when I first met him, Alex even. So why is it happening now?

Without warning, his dark, bottomless eyes find mine. I feel funny all over - a delicious ache that resides in my bones and lower abdomen. Quickly, I look away. Shit! I'm a pregnant, engaged woman for goodness sake. I shouldn't be feeling like this about other men. Why is this happening to me? Just one look from this stranger, and my lower belly fills with...lust?

Why? Seriously, Someleze. Get a grip! I remind myself that these feeling aren't welcome. And it ends there.

I glance at Siphokazi, the girl that I found here unlocking the studio. She's one of the dancers and I guess Ryan trusts her enough with the studio keys. She's looking at this guy too, and her mouth is open. Ha! I guess I'm not the only one affected. And clearly this guy is new around here, Siphokazi doesn't know him either.

It's a very bad idea to look at him, but from the corner of my eye, I see him just standing over by the mirrored wall, as if waiting for someone. Who? But why should I care? This is ridiculous. He's so goddamn distracting. Can't he just leave already? I need to focus on my warm-up. And I will. I mean, I am.

Over the course of the next few minutes, the remaining twenty-one ballet ensemble members slowly trickle in. One after another,

they throw their bags in the corner and sprawl out onto the dance floor to stretch. Thera-bands, tennis balls, and foot-rollers are dragged out, and the smell of tiger balm infuses the air. Other than a few curious glances, most of them ignore the sexy newcomer.

In a moment of weakness, I look up. The guy glances my way again, and when our gazes connect, a ripple of desire shoots from my heart and down my core. Shivers everywhere. Fuck! His eyes are black, intense and it's as if a sea of passion sleeps beyond them or slept beyond them, because now it would seem the passion is unleashed towards me. Shit. This is not good. So not good.

The room goes completely silent and every dancer stands when Andy walks in. He approaches the stranger and smiles. They talk in hushed voices so I can't make out a damn word they are saying. I glance around the room

and the other dancers are quietly waiting. I think their ears are pinned too. Andy finally looks at us, his expression back to normal - stern.

-Him: "Dancers, please welcome Nick Walker. Our new accompanist. He'll stay with us for the next three weeks or until Megan comes back."

He explains no more than that. The guy's the new accompanist? Whoa! So that means I'll be seeing him everyday until I go back to Alice? That is so not good. I exhale sharply as I squeeze my lips together. Dammit. My entire dance class will be ruined now. But fine. Whatever.

Nick goes to sit down behind the baby grand and looks to Andy as if waiting for his cue. What...no notes? Obviously, the newbie doesn't know the ins and outs of accompanying a professional ballet class. That much is clear. I place both hands on the barre and stare into

the mirror. Focus, Someleze. Focus. Anyway, I look at myself, admiring my own body. Every day I'm thankful that I was born with an almost perfect dancer body - tall and slender. I say almost though, because the only parts of me that don't fit the norm are my breasts. Most ballerinas have very small breasts but mine aren't. They fit my body perfectly though but I certainly wouldn't mind it if they were smaller. It would make leaping across the floor a hell of a lot easier.

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Andy proceeds to give us instructions for our first exercise - pliés - and then sits down at the front of the room. I know this and I also watched them do it yesterday, so I take first position and wait. Before I know it, beautiful

piano music flows through the room. Nick is not the amateur I thought he was after all. In less than five seconds, I'm completely blown away by the breathtaking melody.

But I'm not gonna look at him. I'm not. However, my gaze steals toward the dude, and a flurry of butterflies swarm in my belly. Fuck! What is it with this guy?

I work through the exercises one after the other, the next melody even more beautiful than the previous one. Nick is an even better accompanist than Ryan if I dare say so, and that's saying a lot. Just then, I feel a sharp pain in my ankle, the one that got hurt this morning. Dammit. With the hot new guy here I forgot to take it easy.

I stop as Nick's eyes scan the room, stopping briefly at each dancer. For the love of God, he shouldn't look at me. Gah! The instant his gaze meets mine across the vast room, it's as if time

has stopped. Oh, fuck. His eyes are intense and demanding. So passionate I find it difficult - no, impossible to look away. I'm still staring. This is so disturbing. The longer we hold each other's gazes, the deeper I'm drawn into his nearly penetrating stare. Shit, it's almost as if he commands some unforeseen power over me that won't let me go until he says it's time to. He stops the music and somewhere in my consciousness it registers that the exercise has ended. I finally manage to avert my gaze when I recognise it's time to do the exercise to the left. I perform the combination on the other side, my eyes trained to Siphokazi as I try not to wonder if Nick is still staring at me, which would be completely and utterly inappropriate. Thankfully, I manage to get through barre without looking at Nick again, although I can't get the image of his eyes out of my head.

I change into my pointe shoes along with the

rest of the female dancers and head to the centre.

Combination after combination, I do the best I can, but for two reasons, I can't give one hundred percent. First, the pain in my ankle is becoming too severe to ignore. Second, Nick's eyes follow me, his dark irises causing me to lose concentration. His stare literally makes me feel as if I'm dancing naked. Naked? No! Naked thoughts lead to naked actions, and those types of actions will not be taken no matter how much my body craves it. I have my own man to focus on.

After I complete a diagonal combination, I end up right in front of the baby grand piano. And there's the eye contact again. And the breathlessness. The look in his eyes is intense, possessive, raw. Sexual. Too sexual. I grit my teeth and frown at him, hoping he'll take the hint and stop staring.



Halfway through one of the pirouette combinations, Andy tells Nick to cease playing. Finally! Andy must have noticed Nick's unsuitable ogling, and will ask the charlatan to stop gawking. But when Andy glares at me as if I've ruined his entire year, I immediately know that Nick's ogling addiction was not why he stopped the music.

-Him: "Somi, is everything okay?"

He must have noticed how off I've been throughout the exercises. I try to ignore the other dancers who have now turned towards me, their faces filled with sympathy. Clearly, they know what's coming.

Andy hates it when there are distractions in his class, I noticed that yesterday.

What do I say? I'm off because my ankle hurts and I'm off because I can't focus with the new piano dude staring at me as if he's undressing

me with his eyes? No way.

-Me: "Yes, I'm okay, Andy. It's just that it's been a while since I did this."

-Him: "You are pulling everyone down with such lazy dancing. Legs not high enough, falling out of pirouette, frown on the face. Do you need to go home?"

-Me: "No, I'll be fine. I'll work through it."

-Him: "Good. Do that or I'll have to put you in the class of amateurs tomorrow."

I glance at Nick who has his eyes glued to my chest. Stop staring, you asshole!

-Me: "I'll do better, Andy. I promise."

-Him: "Good."

He glances at Nick and gestures with his arm for him to play again. Swallowing my pride, I walk back to the corner - the beginning point of this combination - and start over. I work through

every combination as best as I can and avoid looking at Nick behind the piano because he doesn't deserve my attention. After we perform the final bow, Andy asks to talk to me. I wipe the sweat off my brow and paste on as pleasant a look on my face as I can muster.

-Him: "It wasn't a very good day for you, Somi."

-Me: "I know. But I'll improve tomorrow. I swear."

I can't tell him about my ankle because I don't want him to ask me to stop dancing. I need this class.

"Perhaps there's something wrong with your ankle."

Nick says, approaching us. His voice is deep and washes through me like a warm flood of pleasure. I scowl at him with as much intensity as I can muster. However, when our gazes connect, I'm not in the least prepared for how

my body detonates into a million little butterflies. Damn. This close, he's even more handsome. In fact, handsome doesn't even cover it. No words cover it.

-Me: "No, my ankle is just fine."

-Andy: "Are you sure?"

-Me: "Yeah, I'm sure."

-Andy: "Alright, I'll see you tomorrow then."

He walks away and I glance at Nick again. When he lifts an eyebrow, heat flushes from my cheeks to straight between my legs. Shit. I have to step away from him. I have to get out of here. Now. I head over to my bag next to the exit door. I pull off my pointe shoes, toss them in my bag then head for the door.

"Excuse me. Somi, is it?"

A deep voice says behind me. I swivel around and Nick is standing there. I turn breathless in

an instant, but I force myself to keep my expression impassive. After about five seconds, I realise I haven't said anything. A few more seconds pass. And all I can manage to do is stare at the god of a man before me.

-Him: "Somi?"

He asks again with a crooked smile. Oh, God, he's so hot. I swallow.

-Me: "It's Someleze, actually."

I finally manage to say flatly.

-Him: "And I'm Nick."

-Me: "Yeah, I know. Andy told us. Nick? Is that short for Nicholas?"

-Him: "No. Dominic."

Well, Dominic, you're going to be the death of me.

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Thanks for the messages, my supporters and followers. I will sure get past this traumatic experience.

Season 2

#9

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"Baby, thola lendlela. Baby, I wanna know how you really feel, oh darling. Baby, funda lendlela. Ngizok' landela, baby. Ngizok' landela." - Donald

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Nick is now holding out his hand for a shake. Oh, for fuck's sake. Figuring he won't drop the hand until I shake it, I reluctantly give him mine. But then something unexpected happens. The skin on skin contact makes my pulse take off, and I'm as breathless as if I had just performed

a long sequence of leaps across the floor. Which I just did. Although that was some minutes ago now come to think of it.

I thought I had the will of unbendable steel when it comes to guys. And I do! I'm not the cheating type. I'm not. But somehow Nick makes me want to bend my will in forbidden ways. No! No! I can't afford that. Not when I'm pregnant and engaged to be married.

-Him: "May I have a word?"

He asks, folding his arms across his muscular chest. His stance is wide, and he watches me intently.

Seriously, what does he want? I can't talk to him, I can't. In fact, I need to get out of here.

-Me: "No. I really have to go."

I swivel around and exit the studio. But the guy doesn't take the hint, he follows me outside. What is his problem? Even with my painful

ankle, I try not to limp and I don't stop until I reach my car. I open my bag and fish for my car keys. Dammit! Where are they? When I turn around, Nick is right there in front of me. Whoa. His scent drifts towards me, a fresh, clean cologne that makes me dizzy. He takes a small step closer. He's too close, his breath is on my face. Damn. I can't take this. I need him to step back since I can't, my back is up against the car.

-Him: "Sorry. Am I making you uncomfortable?"

He asks, already taking a step back. What does he think? Of course, he's making me uncomfortable.

His eyes lift to mine, making me cringe, or swoon, I can't really tell. It's winter, and today's sun is weak but I'm feeling hot right now. In the studio it was warm because it is air-conditioned...but now it is hot outside? Whoa! What is this guy doing to me?



-Him: I don't want to seem nosey, but the way you moved in there, it seriously made me think your ankle is injured."

I can't deny it. This pain in my ankle is deep. But I'm not telling him that, it's none of his business.

-Me: "Who are you, exactly? A sports medicine doctor?"

I narrow my eyes, noting how his one-day shadow makes his angular jawline even the more touchable. I clench my fists, resisting the urge to reach up and caress his chin.

-Him: "I'm just an ordinary guy working at a bank, actually. But that doesn't mean I don't know an injured ankle when I see one."

He says casually, taking another step back and tucking his hands in the pockets of his pants.

-Me: "My ankle is fine. I thought I said this earlier."

-Him: "But we both know that's not true...I might be able to loosen it up for you, you know."

Loosen it up for me? I open my bag and look for my car keys again when an image of his hands groping my ankle and sliding between my legs crosses my mind. Ha! What an absolutely horrible thought! The space between my legs starts to throb. Where the fuck are my keys? I need to get out of here, NOW.

-Me: "My ankle doesn't need loosening up, Dominic. And you're just an accompanist, not a doctor."

I say, still going through my bag.

-Him: "I'm just helping out as an accompanist because I'm on leave. As for the ankle, well, that's no rocket science."

I find my keys, but instead of getting in the car, I stand there, wanting to know more about this guy. Why though? I'm not even sure myself.

-Me: "Where did you learn to play?"

There's that crooked smile again, gracing his full lips. I refuse to smile back, afraid I might encourage him in a way. Because I...shouldn't or don't want to.

-Him: "I taught myself. It's not rocket science either."

He says, running a hand through his hair.

-Me: "Man of many talents, huh?"

Fuck! Why did I say that?

-Him: "You have no idea."

He takes a step closer. His scent is everywhere. Shit! It's time for me to go. I step to the side, his presence is just too overwhelming.

-Me: "Well, like I said, my ankle is fine. Thanks for offering your services but they aren't needed."

Does he notice how my voice is all wheezy? His

eyes narrow and I swear, I see some concern in them. He tucks his hand in his pocket and comes out with his card.

-Him: "Here's my card just in case you change your mind and realise that you do need my help."

He sure knows how to push, huh. But I won't take the card...and I don't.

-Me: "I won't change my mind."

I say sternly.

-Me: "Have a good day, Dominic."

As I open my car door, he puts the card in my open bag then turns around and walks away, breaking the bizarre magnetised attraction vibrating between us. Oh, thank God, he's leaving. I exhale then get in the car.

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I rest my head on the steering wheel and curse silently at myself. What is wrong with me? I have a man waiting for me at home for goodness sake. I need to stay away from Nick. In fact, I need to stay away from this studio, period. This guy might be hotter than hell, but he's not mine. My will is unbending. So damn unbending.

I take his card out of my bag and throw it out the window. I'm so not calling him. Why should I?

Just then, my phone, which I'd left in the cup holder of the car's centre console, rings. It's Ryan. And I answer, eager to hear where he found this Nick guy.

-Me: "Hey, Ryan. Why didn't you tell me that you've found an accompanist for the classes?"

-Him: "I'm very well, thank you for asking, Somi."

He's being sarcastic but I won't follow him.

-Me: "Yeah, you're always well, I know that. What I still wanna know though is where you've found that accompanist."

-Him: "What, is he bad at the job?"

-Me: "No, he's okay. He's...good. So, where did you find him?"

-Him: "It's more like he found me. I was talking with a friend of mine early this morning and she told me that her cousin could do the job because he's on leave for 3 weeks. She gave me his number, I talked to the guy and he was keen to help me out, for a fee of course. It also turned out we live in the same area. So I'll be seeing him for the first time this afternoon."

-Me: "Oh, I see."

-Him: "So, how was your first day?"

-Me: "It was okay. But I don't think I'll continue with the classes, buddy. I hurt my ankle. But I'll sure pay for today's class."

-Him: "No, you don't have to pay anything, Somi. You're my friend...And I'm sorry about that ankle. Maybe you should come by our office and have Dr Pretorious check it out for you. I'll pay. After all, I'm the one who pushed you back into this dancing thing."

-Me: "No, that won't be necessary, Ryan. Having me not pay for the class is enough. I'll go to my own doctor for the ankle."

-Him: "Alright then. Anyway, I was just checking up on you. Talk again some other time?"

-Me: "Sure. Bye now."

I hang up and look at the screen of my phone, with Doc and myself as the wallpaper, reminding myself that he's the man I committed to. I seriously don't need no distractions.

Quitting these classes is the right thing to do. No, it's the best thing to do.

I start the car and drive out of the parking. But

before I drive home to my family, I drive to the mall even though I haven't washed off that sweat yet. I need to buy a new phone for Lily, to replace the one I broke. It's a good thing that my ID card is always in my handbag. And the credit card I got from my father will sure come in handy because I don't have any money.

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When I get home I find the twins in the lounge, playing Scrabble. When they see me walking in they abandon their board and come to me to give me loving hugs with their tiny arms. Aww, man, coming home to this much love is everything to me. I better make sure that I don't ruin it.

-Me: "I've replaced your broken phone, Lily."

I say, giving her the plastic with the phone box



inside. She takes it with so much excitement.

-Her: "Wow! Thank you, thank you, mama."

She hugs me again then go sit on the couch to open the plastic.

-Me: "I got something for you too, Lathi. You too could use a new phone."

I hand her hers.

-Her: "For me too? Wow, mama, you're the best."

Excited, she gives me a brief hug then runs off to sit next to her sister and rip off the box to see the phone inside.

I learned from Doc that with twins it's like this, you better make sure to never get something for just one of them if you don't want trouble. Besides, I could get the phones for the both of them, they weren't so expensive. So why not? My father won't mind. He doesn't care what I buy with that card, I'm free to use it for

whatever I want. And I have been very responsible with it anyway.

-Me: "Where is your father?"

-Lily: "In his bedroom, working on his computer."

She says without even looking up, busy getting her phone out.

I leave them there and go to the bedroom. Indeed, I find Doc sitting on the couch in the corner of our bedroom, working on his laptop.

-Me: "Hey, baby. How's the lecture coming along?"

-Him: "Hey, babe...It's coming along just fine but it's time for me to take a break now."

He puts the laptop aside and comes to me for a hug and a peck on the lips.

-Him: "How was the dance class?"

Dear God, if only he knew what went down he wouldn't be asking me. Eish, I feel so guilty right

now as if I've actually cheated.

-Me: "It was...it was okay. But I ain't going there again."

-Him: "Is it? Why though? I thought it's what you liked. You were excited about it. And I was fine with you going because I didn't want to prevent you from doing what you love. Besides, I now know that I don't have to worry about Ryan. Apart from the fact that I trust you, you also told me that he only goes to the studio once a week. So, you weren't going to be seeing much of him."

Yoh! If only he knew. Ryan is harmless, the only problem at that studio is Nick and I'd be seeing him everyday if I continue going there. But I can't tell him that, I can't tell him that I'm quitting the classes because I'm crushing so hard on the accompanist. I'm going to use my ankle as the only reason, it's a perfect excuse.

-Me: "Of course, I like dancing. But it's my ankle that is a problem. Yoh, baby, it hurts like hell."

-Him: "Really? Come, let me take a look at it."

He takes my hand and goes to sit me down on the couch and takes a look at the swollen ankle.

-Him: "It is swollen, babe. You made it worse by dancing."

-Me: "I know."

-Him: "When we come back from the OB/GYN we need to pass by the hospital. I'll have our radiographer check it out to see how much you've damaged it."

-Me: "An X-ray? But, baby, that's not necessary. This is not that serious."

-Him: "Do you perhaps have X-ray eyes now? You can see what's happening under this swollen skin? Your eyes can penetrate all the way down to your bones?"

I laugh.

-Me: "Haybo, baby. Of course, not. But I'm sure I'd know if it was that serious."

-Him: "We are going to the hospital and that's final. Just go take a shower then we'll go see our baby first."

-Me: "Our baby. Now that's what I'm excited to see, not ankle scans."

I get up from the couch and make my way into the en-suite bathroom.

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After the shower, I get ready and Doc has me put on an ankle brace after giving me gentle massage strokes. Then we go see the doctor, leaving the twins busy on their new phones. I thought Doc would have a problem with the

kind of phones I bought for them, seeing that they are a little expensive than the ones they had. But he didn't, he just appreciated what I did. If there's one thing Doc hates the most is spoiling the kids. They also know that their father would never get them anything that's not a necessity. And I love that about him, but I also think there's nothing wrong with spoiling them once in a while.

Anyway, we get to the OB/GYN and we get to hear our baby's heartbeat for the very first time.

-Me: "Is that the heartbeat?"

I ask the nice technician who's doing the ultrasound.

-Her: "Yep, that's it. It's beating at a normal rate and the baby is developing where it should."

Oh my God, I didn't think I'd be this emotional. But then again, I'm hearing my baby's heartbeat for the very first time, I guess it's expected. I

feel tears threatening to escape my eyes. Doc squeezes my hand then comes up to kiss my lips.

-Him: "That's the life we created together, sthandwa sam. Thank you."

He kisses me again then wipes the tears that are now trickling down my cheeks, I'm failing to fight them back.

When we leave the doctor's office, we leave in high spirits. Now that I've heard and saw my baby's heartbeat, it sinks in my head that I'm really pregnant, that I'm carrying a life inside me. I sure need to focus on that and on my man, I needn't be distracted by the likes of Nick.

When we get to the car, I get the sonogram pregnancy keepsake frame Doc bought, and together we put in our baby's first picture (sonogram). We also got the digital files on a flash drive, but I love the fact that our baby will

get to sign the print-out one day.

-Me: "First trimester documented. Two more to go."

-Him: "I can't wait to have him in my arms. To see him."

-Me: "Him? Who said it's a boy?"

-Him: "Well, even if it's a girl that changes nothing. I can't wait to have my baby in my arms, period."

-Me: "And I know that you'll be a great father. I love you, baby."

-Him: "I love YOU."

He leans over and kisses me. Then he starts the car and we drive to the hospital he works at. I go for the X-ray even though I think Doc is being too much. It turns out, there's nothing to worry about, it's not a major sprain. I get an injection straight to the ankle, and some tablets,



including safe pain meds, then we leave.

But before driving home, we go grab some pizza. No one is going to cook dinner tonight.

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When we get back home, it's already around 17:30. I go warm up the pizza and we all sit on the mat in the lounge and watch a movie while we eat. With their eyes fixed on the TV screen, I steal a moment to look at all of them - my loving fiancé, and the twin girls that have come to be a major part of my life. This, right here, is my life and I'm content with it. I remind myself once again that I shouldn't do anything to ruin it.

But then, a lot later into the movie, something unexpected happens. With all the Whatsapp messages that have been coming through in my phone, one from a number I don't recognise

also comes through. It reads: "Hey, Somi. It's Nick. Can we talk?" What the hell? Why is this guy following me? Can't he just leave me alone? I shift uncomfortably in my position, as if Doc can see who the message is from, but he's just focused on the TV screen, paying no attention to me or the message I'm reading. I reply: "Where did you get my number?" Nick replies immediately: "When you care about someone, you make a way." I don't reply. This guy needs to leave me alone.

The credits are now rolling on the TV screen, the movie is over. I put my phone aside and pick up the popcorn containers on the floor and the plates we've used. I make my way to the kitchen, leaving my phone behind. When I return to get the glasses, I find Doc with my phone in his hand.

-Him: "You have a message."

What? He opened it? I'm sure it's from Nick and

I didn't want him to see messages from him. My first instinct is to quickly get my phone back. I take long strides to him and quickly snatch the phone away from his grip, panting. I'm definitely acting like a cheating wife right now, aren't I?

Season 2

#10

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"I've been hearing a lot of bad news lately, I'm just trying not to let it phase me. If I didn't have you my baby I'll go crazy. In this crazy crazy world we've got a crazy crazy love." - R. City

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"And then?"

Doc asks, his eyes boring into me. He's obviously pissed by my reaction. The twins are now also staring at me, with questioning eyes.

Okay, I've brought this upon myself. Dammit! What the hell is the matter with me? What the hell was I thinking? Fuck! What am I going to say now?

-Me: "Did you read the message?"

-Him: "Did I read the message? Have I ever read your messages before?"

-Me: "No."

That comes out more like a whisper. But if I'm being honest, I'm relieved he didn't open the message.

-Me: "Sorry. It's just that I saw the phone in your hand when you were telling me about the message, so I thought you've opened it."

-Him: "I was picking up the glasses to take to the kitchen when the message came through. I took the phone because I wanted to take it to you in the kitchen since I was already going there."

He turns to the twins.

-Him: "Girls, it's time for bed. Get going."

-Lily: "But, Dad, we still want to watch more TV with you. It's not even 20:00 yet."

-Lathi: "Yes, Dad, it's still early."

-Him: "Girls, I'm not gonna say it again. Leave the room now."

His voice is stern and the girls know what that means - he really wants them gone. They quickly get up and exit the lounge, leaving me with this pissed off man. I sure as hell am in trouble. I know that he's gotten rid of the girls because he wants to grill me about the crazy reaction I just threw around. Fuck! What am I going to do or say? But whatever I do I better make sure that I don't tell him the truth. No, I can't tell him the truth, because if I'm being honest here, Nick hasn't been hitting on me. I'm the one who's been having some wild thoughts

and forbidden feelings about him, and there's no way I'm going to tell my fiancé that. I can't tell him that the woman he's engaged to, the woman who's carrying his baby, is now not just infatuated with another man but she's also fantasising about sleeping with that man. Oh hell no, the truth won't set me free in this case, it will just piss Doc off, and I don't know what he might do if that happens.

-Him: "Are you hiding something from me, Someleze?"

He's standing right in front of me. His hands folded across his chest. He's trying to act calm but I know that he's pissed, I can see it in his eyes. And I don't blame him. With my reaction I've given him every reason to be suspicious...and pissed.

-Me: "Yes, I am hiding something from you, Thando...I was chatting with the assistant to the designer who's making my wedding dress

and she said she'd send me the complete design of the dress. So, with me thinking the message was from her, I just panicked because I honestly don't want you to get even a glimpse of the dress. I want you to see it for the very first time on our wedding day."

Oh God, what have I turned to now? I'm lying to my man with a straight face. Lies are just flowing out of my mouth. Yes, I haven't formulated the lies in my head. What I'm saying did happen, but just not right now, it happened earlier in the day and the assistant has already sent me the picture of the dress design. And yes, I don't want Doc to see it, but that's got absolutely nothing to do with what's happening now. Right now, I'm lying to my man, period.

Doc chuckles.

-Him: "Are you serious? You got this worked up all because of a wedding gown design?"

-Me: "That's because I don't want you to see it, babe."

-Him: "Well, relax. I haven't seen anything. And I won't snoop around. I don't do that."

Oh God, he actually believes me, he's buying my lies. Shit! Instead of being a relief, this is making me feel really guilty. There's nothing good about making a fool out of another person.

-Him: "Now, come. I'll help you do the dishes."

He says, already picking up the glasses he put on the coffee table.

-Me: "No, no, you don't have to do that, babe. You can go take your shower. I'll clean up here then join you."

-Him: "You sure you don't need a hand?"

-Me: "Yeah, I'm sure, babe. Don't worry."

-Him: "Okay then. You'll find me in the bedroom."



He leaves the room and I'm left letting out a huge sigh. For the love of God, I should make sure that I don't ever, ever find myself in this position again. I need to stop communicating with this Nick guy. I open the message he sent and it's a simple: "On the real though, I got your number from Ryan." Fuck Ryan for what he did. Fuck him. Angry, I message Nick back: "Ryan had no right giving you my number. And you had no right messaging me at this hour. I'm sure you saw the ring on my finger, I'm an engaged woman. Just stop contacting me." I hit send then block him immediately, without even waiting for his response. HUUU! I exhale loudly. That is now out of the way. What's left is for me to quickly clean up around this lounge and in the kitchen then go join my man in the bedroom. I move fast, and I'm done in no time. I then make my way to the bedroom, only to find Doc sitting on the bed, leaning on the headboard,

working on his laptop. I don't say anything, I just go straight to the en-suite bathroom to freshen up. After the shower, I return to the bedroom with nothing but a towel around my torso. A towel that I lose as soon as I get by the bed. I let it slide down to the floor then I crawl up to Doc and fold down his laptop's display before putting it aside.

-Him: "But, baby, I was still working."

I just straddle him and lean over to his ear.

-Me: "I'd rather you work me instead. I want you, babe, right now."

I'm whispering in his ear, nibbling at it. I can hear his breathing getting increasingly jagged as my hand strokes his d\*ck through his shorts, but he tries to remain strong.

-Him: "But, sthandwa sam, I was almost done. Can't you wait just a little longer?"

-Me: "I can't wait. I need you to take me right

now. I want you to have me any way you like. As long as it's hard and dirty."

I'm now whispering close to his mouth. He let's out a crooked smile. I sure don't need to say anything any more. He wants me as much as I want him. In a speed of lightning, he rolls me over and he's on top of me, devouring my lips with his mouth. This is raw, raging passion defined. Just how I want it.

But before he goes further, he connects his phone to the powerful docking speaker that's on the nightstand. He makes sure that the music is loud before he does what he does best, which is to f\*ck me senseless. With the music this loud, I doubt my loud moans reach the kids' ears. That sure works perfectly for me.

With my man's delicious d\*ck deep inside me like this and me feeling the warmth of his naked skin as it rubs against mine, all the inappropriate thoughts I had about Nick quickly

disappear like fog. This is working, just like I thought it would. I sure needed to get Nick's image out of my head.

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Over the next few days life resumes its regular course - I don't think about Nick or his sexy self and I've also decided to avoid Ryan too. I just hate what the guy did. I mean, how could he just give out my number without my consent? Who does that? And why the hell did he even do it? But seriously, I don't care to know his reasons. What I do know is that what he did is wrong in a number of ways. However, I won't waste my energy telling him what he already knows, and I won't even have a dust-up with him over it. I've just decided to keep him at a distance, for my own peace of mind.

Five days later, on Sunday, Doc has to fly to Jo'burg for that Monday surgical conference, and he has me drive him to the airport in the morning. The moment I drop him off I know that I'm going to miss him, but I think the girls and I are going to have some fun in his absence.

Coming back from the airport, I decide to take the girls to Hemingways Mall to burn Doc's money before catching a good movie.

We enjoy the shopping but then something awkward happens. Holy crap! The girls and I are at Wimpy, filling up before the movie, when Mr Sexy, Nick himself, walks through with another guy. Shit! Did he have to be here at the same time as me? I was really counting on never seeing his face again. And I certainly don't want him to see mine - because as it turns out, he still has that same overwhelming effect on me. The minute my eyes land on him, my heart skips a beat and I become aware of the pulse

beating at my core. Really, what is it with this guy that makes me feel like this every time I'm in his presence? But fuck, I don't have to know the answer to that. All I need to know is that these feelings aren't welcome. Period!

God, please don't let him look my way, don't let him see me because I don't want to talk to him. I say a short prayer to myself while looking down, trying to hide my face. These quick, short prayers of mine don't usually reach God's ear, but I think this one did because Mr Temptation and his friend quickly leave the quick service restaurant before he could look my way. It turns out they'd only come to get another friend of theirs who was dining at a table a little far from ours. As soon as they disappear, I let out a huge sigh of relief. Dear Lord, can't this week end already so I can leave this place and go back to Alice? Temptation seems to be in every corner here.

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Doc comes back on Tuesday, in the afternoon. I'm glad that he's back but he's coming back with some terrible news. He sits me down and tells me that when he was in Jo'burg his mother shared some disturbing news with him - she told him that she has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. They still don't know the exact prognosis yet, but this is already hectic. I can see that it is killing Doc even though he's trying so hard not to let it show. It hurts like hell to see someone you care about going through hell and you can't even do anything to help them. All I can do is be there for him, and pray that his mother survives this.

On Wednesday he goes back to work feeling a little better, even though nothing has changed

with his mother. But when he comes back in the afternoon, he walks through the door looking like he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. I'm sitting on the couch, busy with my dissertation on my laptop, when I see him dragging his feet in. I instantly know that something is wrong and my mind quickly goes straight to his mother's condition. Maybe the prognosis is poor. Oh God, the thought of that is enough to make me sick too.

I immediately put my laptop aside and and rush over to Doc.

-Me: "Baby, are you okay?"

He doesn't say anything, he just pulls me to him. I hold him tight in a warm embrace, avoiding to say anything too. We stand like that for a long moment, just holding onto each other as if for the very last time. My heart is breaking and I keep repeating the same prayer in my head: Lord, please let my soon-to-be mother-in-law



live.

From the way Doc keeps inhaling and exhaling loudly, I can tell that he's getting a lot emotional. But I don't want to push him into saying anything until he's ready. He eventually pulls back then plops down on the couch.

-Him: "Where are the kids?"

-Me: "Hear that noise? That's them playing video games in their bedroom."

I answer, taking a seat next to him.

-Me: "What's going on, thando lwam? Is it your mother?"

-Him: "No, this has got nothing to do with my mother. It's about Khwezi."

Okay, I'm confused. But also a little relieved.

-Me: "Khwezi?"

-Him: "Khwezi is gone, Soso. He died on my operating table this morning. The guy saved so

many lives, but I just couldn't save his."

-Me: "Oh, my God! Khwezi is gone? What happened?"

-Him: "He was working through the night. Then apparently around 5 this morning he started feeling weird. He took some tablets, but the others say he suspected fatigue. He'd been working for 22 hours, life of trainees, and he was about to knock off at 7:00. So seeing that his shift was about to be over anyway, he decided to go home and get some sleep around 6:00. But instead of getting some rest when he got home, his eyes landed on something he couldn't un-see. He found his wife in bed, their bed, with another man. Obviously his wife didn't know that he'd be home early, she thought she was safe to do whatever she liked. Big mistake. The man apparently got a chance to run off immediately when he saw Khwezi, but the wife wasn't so lucky. Khwezi, got his gun out of the

closet, shot his wife then shot himself. The wife died on the spot, but Khwezi got the chance to be rushed to the hospital. With the gun fitted with a suppressor, nobody heard anything, but their niece who was visiting found them and called the ambulance. I had just gotten to the hospital when the paramedics got there with Khwezi. He became my first OR case today and he died in my hands."

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-Me: "Oh, God, this is my fault."

-Him: "Your fault?"

-Me: "Khwezi came to me and asked me to please talk to his wife. He said his wife was jealous of the fact that he was spending a lot of nights at the hospital than at home. So he thought, as a doctor's partner, I'd be able to

calm her down and give her some tips on how to deal with all the demanding, long hours that kept her husband away from home. Apparently, he had been trying to make her understand but it wasn't working, so now he thought if I could be the one to talk to her maybe that would make a difference. This was Monday last week, and I promised him that I'd give myself some time to go talk to her. But I didn't do it. Maybe if I did none of this would have happened. Maybe the wife wouldn't have seen the need to cheat. This is my fault, Thando. It's my fault."

He holds my hand.

-Him: "No, sthandwa sam, it's not. For all we know the wife was already cheating. You didn't ask her to cheat. And you certainly didn't put that gun in Khwezi's hand."

-Me: "I know. But still..."

He covers his face with both his hands.

-Him: "Fuck! Why did this have to happen? Khwezi was still young. He was a young surgeon with a bright future. And now all of that is gone."

He removes the hands and looks at me.

-Him: "Some people don't make it out of the OR. That always leaves a sour taste in the lead surgeon's mouth, but when it's someone you know it becomes worse - it becomes a whole lot difficult...Khwezi died on my table. I couldn't save his life. I couldn't."

I can see that he's getting emotional again, and all I can do is just pull him in my caring arms.

-Me: "I'm sure you and your team did everything you could, babe. But it was just not enough. You're not God, you're just another human being, and giving life is not up to you. You can only do so much and the rest is up to God. Khwezi wanted to die, he's the one who took his own

life. Let's just stop beating ourselves up about it."

He pulls back and looks at me.

-Him: "I've been hearing a lot of bad news lately, and I'm trying not to let it get to me but it's hard. This life thing is difficult. A lot of bad shit is happening in this crazy world. People are dying, some are diagnosed with horrible diseases. There's just so much worry and sorrow. Some people are lying to their loved ones. There's just so little truth and so many lies...I swear if I didn't have you, baby, I'd lose it right now. My only comfort is knowing that with everything that's happening I can always believe in you and I. Our love is the one thing I can depend on. If I lose it too, if I lose you to another man, I don't know what I'd do. I might not do what Khwezi did but I'd sure die."

I instantly feel my heart sink to the pit of my stomach, my guilt taking over, as I think about

the lies I also told him, and the infatuation I had with Nick. Lord please, don't ever let me do something to hurt this man. He'd been nothing but amazing to me. And he'd sure die or do something crazy if another wife of his could cheat on him.

-Me: "You're never gonna lose me, baby. You don't even need to think about it. I'll always be here, by your side. I love you, thando lwam, with every breath I take. Your love gave me life and I'm never gonna let it go."

-Him: "You're the only thing that makes sense to me right now, sthandwa sam. Your love is what keeps me going. In fact, as crazy as it sounds, I need it now."

He says, already kissing me with heated urgency, tugging at my clothes. No. No. I push him back.

-Me: "Baby, no. What about the kids?"

-Him: "They won't hear us. They are busy making noise with their video games. I really need you, baby. Please make me feel okay."

He kisses me again and I just surrender to him. The truth is I, too, need some sexual healing right now. He picks me up, carries me to the bedroom and dumps me unceremoniously on the bed. I let him take his emotions out on me, as I take mine out on him.

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Over the next couple of days, Khwezi's departure haunts us but we try to continue living our lives.

Friday afternoon, the twins fly back to Jo'burg, and Doc and I get to have the house all to ourselves. Of course, having them around was great but we can't deny the fact that we also



love our space. It feels great to have no one but us in the house, because now we get to make love wherever we want in the house. This is the definition of freedom. We are both free to ignore our inhibitions. Free to be as loud as we want to.

But that freedom only lasts for a day, because the very next day I also have to leave and go back to Alice. The winter break is over for all of us. It hurts to leave my man behind, to know that I now won't get to see him everyday, but I really have to go, I have no other choice.

I put my bag in my car and we get to share one final hug and kiss before I leave. Doc opens my door, I get in the car and drive off, already missing him.

I'm not going to Alice straight away though, I'm going to PE right now. I'm meeting with the tailor who's doing my wedding gown, she needs to take my new measurements.

I drive straight to her place as soon as I get to PE. And she takes my measurements with me wearing a 7-month fake pregnant belly, because I'll be 7 months pregnant when I walk down the aisle.

My body is going to change countless times between now and the day of the actual wedding, so the tailor tells me that I'm going to have to meet up with her monthly up until the month of the wedding, then bi-weekly on that month, to make sure that the dress fits just right. This is going to be a lot of work for her, but she doesn't mind because the more work she puts in means more money in her bank account. My father doesn't mind paying either, all he wants is for his only daughter to be comfortable and beautiful on her wedding day.

I know that I'll feel like a beached whale on my special day, while my bridesmaids will look perfect and skinny in their dresses, and that is

honestly hard for me, but there's no turning back. It is what it is and I've got to accept it.

After leaving the tailor's, I drive straight to my mother's house. I want to spend some time with my queen before I go to Alice. I find her sitting in front of the TV binge watching her favourite series - Revenge. I can't tell you how many times she's rewatched all the seasons but she just can't stop herself - that's how much she loves the series.

I join her and we cuddle together on the couch, just like old times. But we end up talking about my approaching wedding, instead of how classy Victoria Grayson is or how smart Nolan Ross is.

-Her: "You're not the only one getting married, you know that?"

She says, combing my hair with her fingers as my head rests on her lap.

-Me: "Who else?"

-Her: "Me. Your father proposed 3 days ago when he was here."

I literally jump off the couch, in complete shock.

-Me: "What? Dad proposed? Where's the ring?"

I ask standing right in front of her.

-Her: "I don't have one. Both your father and I didn't see the need for it...We'll get married at the venue we booked for you. We didn't cancel it, and we managed to push the date to the 30th of December."

-Me: "Just two days after my own wedding? Mom?!"

I really don't know how I feel about this. How am I supposed to feel?

-Her: "We had already put the non-refundable deposit on the venue, baby, and we love each other so we thought, why not just use the venue for ourselves?"

-Me: "I see."

-Her: "Come on, baby, don't be like that. I've found a companion, your own father. He makes me happy, Someleze, and the least you can do is be happy for me."

I guess I can do that. It's just that I didn't expect this, especially just a couple of days after my own wedding. But they sure love each other, so why not? What's the worst that could happen?

-Me: "I'm happy for you, Ma. It's just that you've caught me off guard. This was truly a surprise."

I hug her, then sit down next to her again.

-Her: "At least one of us will get to have an overseas honeymoon."

I laugh.

-Me: "Oh, great, mommy. Remind me that my dream honeymoon is now going to turn into my maternity leave. But it's okay, Thando has

promised to make it up to me on our first wedding anniversary."

-Her: "And the fact that he proposed to you on a romantic island in the Caribbean should count too."

-Me: "I guess."

We end up sitting on the floor, doing a lot of planning for both weddings until the sun sets.

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The next day, I leave her and drive to Alice to my people - Kevin and Asanda. Oh, how I missed them. It has been 3 long weeks.

But as soon as my eyes land on Asanda, I feel myself cringe. She's bigger than the last time I saw her, and to know that I'll also be this big in the next months makes me extremely nervous.

It'll be in February and I'll be in Jo'burg then, with Doc's family. I just hope that Doc's mother will be well enough to assist me then because I know for a fact that Doc himself won't be around.

We got his mother's prognosis, even though she was initially scared to discuss it with her doctor. It turned out to be good. The cancer got detected early before it could spread beyond the breast, and her doctors believe that it can be effectively treated and that she can actually survive it. We are now all hoping for the best. Losing her is just something we are not ready for.

Anyway, Kevin tells me that his mother wants Asanda to move in with her in Hillcrest so that when she goes into labour, which will be at any day this week, she would have an experienced adult by her side, someone who'll know what to do. I think that's actually a very good idea

because Kevin and I don't know anything about a woman in labour. So, with the advice of Kevin's mother, the couple will be moving out tomorrow. But according to Kevin, they'll be back when the baby is at least three weeks old, because there's just not enough space for all of them in his mother's house. That's still okay with me. I certainly don't mind having a baby in the house. Actually, I think it'll be a good thing, I'll get to have some practise for when mine comes.

The next day, on Monday, I go to campus, leaving my people packing their stuff, getting ready to move out temporarily.

On my way back I pass by Standard Bank, to withdraw some cash from the ATM. I want to pay the guy who's going to turn the third bedroom in our house into a nursery for Asanda's baby. I've talked with the landlord and he's given me the go ahead. Kevin, Asanda and



their baby are still going to stick around the house so they might as well be comfortable - and I want to help make that possible, I want to make the house feel homey for them. And using Sandile's money to do something good will make me feel good too.

"Somi."

I hear a voice behind me as I leave the ATM, walking back to my car. I turn to see him making his approach, looking really good in a formal attire. What the hell? He works here? I'm shocked. But at least I'm also seeing some good in this. I've just realised that the spell he seemed to have cast on me, which he didn't, is now no longer effective. I feel nothing for him.

-Me: "Nick? You work here? When you said you work at a bank, you meant this bank?"

-Him: "Yes. I'm still on leave though. I just came for a special appointment."

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

-Me: "Why didn't you tell me that you were talking about this bank?"

If I wasn't so shocked, I'd know that this question is ridiculous.

-Him: "Tell you? You obviously didn't look at my card. And you never asked, not that we had enough time to talk that day though. Hell, I didn't even know that you live here."

-Me: "True. But how come I never saw you here? I'm using this bank."

-Him: "That's probably because I'm not a teller, I work at the back."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "Listen, Somi. I'm sorry for what happened 2 weeks back. I didn't know that Ryan didn't ask for your permission before giving your number

to me. And I'm sorry I messaged you at that hour. Trust me, causing problems between you and your man was the last thing I wanted. And I'm sorry if I came across as a some kind of a weird stalker. I was just worried about your ankle and since you didn't want my help, I wanted to refer you to a very good doctor. That's all. I'm sorry if I caused unnecessary problems for you."

Really? He's apologising?

-Me: "It's okay. That's all in the past. Water under the bridge."

-Him: "I'm glad I got this chance to see you again and apologise. I really felt bad after receiving your message that day and realising that you had actually blocked me."

-Me: "Don't worry about it, it's all cool."

-Him: "Thanks. Now I'm relieved. Take care."

With that, he walks away, to his car - a black

Benz.

Wait, is that it? That's all there was to it? He wanted nothing else from me? Whoa!

Season 2

#11

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"Would you mind if I still love you? Would you mind if things don't last? Would you mind if I hold onto you so that I won't crash?" - Usher

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Thando

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I tap my finger against my desk in the bedroom, glaring at my watch. It's one in the morning, and

I should be in bed but I'm not. Apart from the fact that I've been sitting here reviewing a paper in a medical journal on a new surgical technique for hernia repair, there's also something else weighing heavily on my mind.

It's raining outside. I can hear the soft ping of water hitting the shuttered window behind me, a window I shuttered with my own fist this evening. I won't lie, Khwezi's departure is still working me, especially the way it happened. A life of a promising, young surgeon has been cut short because of a wife who just couldn't keep her legs closed and wait for her husband. I know how much it not only hurts but also pisses you off to know that your spouse has been making a fool out of you, sleeping with another person behind your back. I don't know, maybe if I was in Khwezi's shoes, if I had caught my wife with another man in MY OWN bed, I would have also reacted the same way he

did. I would seriously snap if Someleze could do something like that to me.

Speaking of Someleze, I really miss her. That's just another reason why it's hard for me to get into that cold bed. This is the third night since she left, and I've been struggling to sleep ever since. Fuck, this house feels so empty without her. And getting some sleep is always a struggle. This always happens for at least a few nights after she's left this house. I honestly can't wait to live with her under the same roof forever.

Closing my laptop, I drag myself up from the chair and go change into my PJs. I have a shift at 7:00, and I need my sleep if I want to be on my A game then.

Getting under the covers, I look at Someleze's side of the bed. Damn. I just can't stop thinking about her. The way she makes love to me. How she kisses me with her soft lips. Her touch.

Fuck, the images of her spreading her legs for me keep dancing in my head. And in my ears I can hear the loud moans and screams she always lets out when she comes so hard for me, turning me on like no woman ever did. Fuck! My fingers clench the soft fabric of the silky sheets where she always sleeps when here. I shift uncomfortably, highly aroused. There's no way I'm going to fall asleep like this. Rubbing a hand down my face, I squeeze my eyes shut, debating on how best to handle the throbbing erection in my PJ pants. Groaning, I debate calling Someleze, to wake her up for some phone sex. And hell, that wins. I pick up my phone and dial her number.

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Someleze

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## The Next Day

What the hell? Cursing under my breath, I bury my head under my pillow. My phone is ringing, someone is calling me, and I'm pretty sure I want to kill them. My head throbs in tempo with the annoying sound of my ringtone, making my teeth clench.

Maybe they'll finally stop, I say to myself. But no, the phone continues to ring. A ring after another. Damn!

Sitting up groggily, I rub my my hands over my face and blink the sleepiness from my eyes. Ugh! Sleeping only around 4:00 this morning, talking with Doc on the phone, in fact, f\*cking each other repeatedly over the phone, is now coming back to bite me in my behind.

I reach for the relentlessly ringing phone, to find that it's my father.



-Me: "Hey, Dad."

I answer, groggily.

-Him: "Hey, baby. Did I wake you?"

-Me: "Yeah. What time is it?"

I ask, glancing around the room as if expecting the answer to be written in air, because I know very well that I don't have a wall clock.

-Him: "Just after 7 o' clock."

What? I gape.

-Me: "No way."

-Him: "Way. Aren't you supposed to be up getting ready to go to campus?"

-Me: "It's called oversleeping, Dad. So thanks for waking me up with your call. I was gonna be late."

I quickly climb down the bed and start fixing it up, with the phone put on speaker on the

nightstand.

I only went to bed just before 0:00 last night, after spending hours and hours working on my dissertation. I thought I could still get enough sleep though but that didn't quite happen because around 01:00 Doc woke me up for an intense phone sex that lasted for three hours. So no wonder I was still out.

-Dad: "Before you run off to the bathroom, listen. Your aunt gave birth to your cousin around 05:00 this morning. A boy."

-Me: "Really? Oh wow, that's fantastic news."

But wait. Isn't she two weeks early? However, I don't ask that out loud, I just let it go.

-Him: "Yeah, it is. On Saturday I'm coming down there to see the new addition to our family. But you should go see them before then."

-Me: "What do you mean you're coming down here? Here where?"

-Him: "There in EC. In PE."

-Me: "Iviwe is in PE? But I thought she was in KZN."

-Him: "It shows that you two don't communicate much often, and that's just wrong. Iviwe only went back to Durban for a week after the wedding. Then she returned to PE to be with her in-laws. She's going to spend the rest of her maternity leave with them."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "You should go see her and her baby, sweetheart. Show her and her husband your love and support, and they will also do the same for you. That's what family does for each other. We have to..."

I cut him off, laughing.

-Me: "Yes, yes, Dad, I know. I wil go see them. You don't have to give me one of your lectures on how important family is. I know...But I can't

go see them today or even tomorrow, I'll be busy. I'll sure drive there the day after tomorrow though. It'll be a Thursday and I hate going away during the week, but I'll do it. It's like you said, it's for family."

-Him: "Good. You do that. Family is very important, baby."

-Me: "The way you keep saying it, I might just end up tattooing it on my ass."

-Him: "Hey, what kind of language is that?"

I laugh.

-Me: "Sorry, Dad. I guess I forgot who's on the other end of this call. See you on Saturday?"

-Him: "Saturday it is. Bye now."

-Me: "Bye, Dad."

I give the bed some final touches then rush to the bathroom. Dammit! I have a meeting with my supervisor at 8:00 on the dot, I better move

fast.

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After having managed to make my morning meeting with my research supervisor, who happens to be Prof Elliott, I leave the campus around 14:00.

I've just discovered that the man is now seeing Buhle again. I guess the fact that she's no longer his student has given them some freedom. But what the hell? How could Buhle take him back after everything he did to her? They say never say never, but what Buhle did is one bullshit I don't think I would ever do. But then again, I'm not Buhle. Maybe being stuck without a job or any other thing to do has knocked down her self-esteem so much that she now believes Elliott is the only man who

could ever love her. Anyway, whatever they do is none of my business. I'm just glad Buhle stood by me last year, and that the skeletons she revealed in Elliott's closet ended up being the only thing that could motivate him to fight for me so I could write my final exam - the power of blackmail.

Leaving the campus, I drive straight to King William's Town. I want to go to Game at The Mall to buy a few things for Asanda's baby and also shop for some nursery items. I've already decided that I will shop for Iviwe's baby on Thursday in PE, and I'm also planning to spend the entire weekend with them.

After getting everything I wanted at the store, two of the trolley guys help push my loaded trolleys to the parking in the basement. And they also help me load everything in the boot and the back seat of my car before they leave.

"Somi? My eyes seem to land on you a lot lately,

huh."

That deep voice that belongs to no one else but Nick, says behind me as I'm about to close the boot. I turn to see him standing by his own car, looking all kinds of handsome. Seriously, after yesterday I didn't think he would be interested in talking to me again. And I'm not going to lie, what he said bruised my ego a little. Of course, I don't want him but to know that I was the only one who was crushing on him while he wasn't even interested in me has done a number on my ego.

-Me: "Hey, Nick."

I say flatly. But my flat voice doesn't discourage him from walking over to me.

-Him: "That's a lot of baby stuff, hey. What, you're planning a baby shower for a friend?"

He asks looking at the baby stuff in my still open boot.

-Me: "Nope, no baby shower. I just bought the stuff for a friend who's going to have a baby any day now. And you? What are you doing here?"

-Him: "I came to see a friend of mine who's working at Standard Bank upstairs, then I ended up doing a little shopping of my own."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "Listen, they serve the best coffee at Archie's Coffee Shop. Would you like to grab a cup with me and just talk?"

What? He wants to have coffee with me? Really, after the way he walked away yesterday I didn't think he would ever want to have a lengthy conversation with me, let alone over coffee. But I must say, the invite makes my heart smile even though I'm not longer crushing on him like a confused school kid.

-Me: "Sure. Coffee sounds great."

I close my boot, lock the car then go upstairs



with him. It's now just before 16:00 so we still have time.

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Some minutes later, we are sitting at a table at Archie's, sipping their coffee. This is my first time having their coffee, and Nick was right, it's really not that bad.

-Him: "As crazy as it sounds, my first thought when I saw that baby stuff in your car was that maybe you're pregnant and already planning ahead."

-Me: "That's not crazy, actually. Not really. I AM pregnant. But this is still my 9th week, so I'm not showing yet."

-Him: "Really? Oh, wow. Congratulations to you and your fiancé are in order then."

-Me: "Oh well, thanks."

-Him: "And the friend you bought the stuff for, she must mean a lot to you."

-Me: "It's a 'he', actually. His name is Kevin. He and his girlfriend are about to have their first baby."

-Him: "He means a lot to you, I can tell."

-Me: "He sure does. Thing is, I grew up as the only child, so Kevin is the only closest thing I have to a brother."

-Him: "You're an only child?"

-Me: "Yep. Only child from a working class family in one of the PE townships."

-Him: "PE? And in Alice? You're only there for work?"

I chuckle.

-Me: "Work? I wish. I'm still a student, Nick. Doing my Honours at Fort Hare. Yes, I'm also

their temporary employee, a lab assistant, but I wouldn't call that a job. It does pay the bills though."

-Him: "Ummh...how old are you? If you don't mind me asking, of course."

-Me: "I'm 22. I don't have a problem with disclosing my age. What I do have a problem with though is that there's no fairness here. In the few minutes that we've been sitting here you got to know about me more than I know about you...It should be my turn to ask questions now. Starting with your age."

His dark eyes sparkle as he produces a broad smile, showing his straight teeth, with long canines that suit him perfectly. Even if vampires existed he wouldn't be one because his canines are long enough to be cute, not scary. God, this guy is truly handsome. With him looking like this, who could blame me for feeling the way I did about him?

-Him: "Why do I feel like I'm about to be interrogated here?"

I laugh, feeling a whole lot relaxed around him. Relaxed? I can't ignore how funny that sounds considering the fact that just two weeks ago this guy would make me feel uncomfortable and bothered.

-Me: "Well, are you gonna cooperate?"

-Him: "I'll be happy to. Even though there's nothing interesting to know about me. Somi, I'm just a boring 30 year-old guy, born and bred in East London. I don't..."

-Me: "Wait. You're 30?"

I just blurt the question out. My shock undisguised.

-Him: "Yeah. How old did you think I was?"

He asks, laughing.

-Me: "Honestly? I thought you were 27 or 28."

-Him: "Yah, well, I'm 30. Youngest child of three. I have an older brother and older sister, but I don't see them much often because they now live in Pretoria with their spouses and children. They work for my father's media house, making the old man proud. They are his hope, and I'm that black sheep who diverted from that perfect picture. Joining the family business was just not for me right from the beginning. Living under my old man's shadow was never what I wanted for myself. After matric I went to study finance at UCT, then...well, you know where I work now. I started from the bottom and worked my way up, and I'm still pushing. To say my father was pleased about my decision though would be the same as saying there's a true desert in Europe. But he came around eventually. We're now cool, and we have a healthy father-son relationship. We live together in EL but honestly, I'm mostly alone in that house because even though the old man's now

retired, he still travels a lot on business. He simply refuses to just sit at home, relax, and let his two star children handle the business in Gauteng."

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-Me: "I'm sure he sees his business as his baby and it's now hard to just let go of it...What about your mother? Where's she?"

-Him: "My mother passed away when I was 14."

-Me: "Oh. I'm so sorry to hear that."

-Him: "Don't worry about it. I got over it a long time ago."

I'm curious to know how she died though. But I don't want to spoil this perfect mood by asking such questions. So, I decide to change gears.

-Me: "You say your siblings are both married."

What about you? Is there a potential wife somewhere?"

I don't even know why I'm asking this. I guess I just wanted to change the subject.

Nick lets out his sexy laugh, and leans back on his chair.

-Him: "Marriage? Nah, I'm not there yet. My girlfriend of two years left the country two months ago. She got a teaching job in Dubai. And because she doesn't believe in long distance relationships, she decided to just end things before she left. Of course, that's not what I wanted, but I had to respect her decision. So now I'm riding solo, just enjoying the freedom."

Everything about this guy screams player, even the way he speaks. He looks so dangerous, attractive and...fuckable. I'm just glad I'm no longer crushing on him though. Wherever he goes I'm sure he leaves behind a trail of broken

hearts.

-Him: "Anyway, what are you studying?"

He quickly asks before I could say something about the last line he uttered. It's as if he regrets saying it at all.

-Me: "I'm doing Biochemistry. And my research project is in the field of medical biochemistry. So, for assistance and data collection I'm working with some doctors at both Victoria and Fort Beaufort hospitals. It's a lot of work but I'm enjoying it."

I give him a lengthy answer, wanting him to relax and forget about what he said.

He shows interest in my field of study and we end up going deeper into it, and into the job he does. They say time runs out pretty fast when you're having fun. And that's exactly what happens for us too. Before we know it, it's 17:00, the shop is closing and we have to go. We were



still enjoying each other's company and getting to know more about each other, but yah well,...it's time to go.

-Him: "I still have your number. Can I use it?"

He asks when we get to the parking. I'm sure that's his way of asking me to unblock him. After spending some time with him, getting to know him, I seriously don't see a problem with that. Putting aside the fact that he seems like a player, Nick's a decent guy. He's intelligent and he sure knows how to hold a great conversation. There's nothing that turns me off like an airhead of a guy. Iyadika indoda edom.

-Me: "Sure. You can use it."

He lets out that signature crooked smile of his.

-Him: "See you around?"

-Me: "Sure thing."

Still smiling, he goes to his car. I, too, get in

mine. But before driving home, I take out my phone and unblock this guy's number.

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I get to Alice just before 18:00. It's winter and it's already getting dark, but as I drive down my street, approaching my gate, I can clearly see a car parked by my gate. Wait! Is that Alex's car? But what is he doing here? Isn't he supposed to be in PE with his wife and their newborn?

I pull up in front of the gate and roll my window down.

"Alex! Hey, Alex."

I call out the window, but he doesn't answer. Is he even in the car though? From my position I can't really tell, I can't see clearly.

I get out of the car and walk over to his. Looking

through the window, I see him with his head on the steering wheel. I knock on the glass, but he doesn't answer. This guy isn't just resting his head on the wheel, he's actually sleeping. Eshe. I knock again, harder this time around. He finally looks up, and when he sees that it's me he starts the engine then rolls down the window. Jeez! He looks like death warmed over and he's drunk as fuck. What the hell is going on?

-Me: "Alex? Are you okay?"

-Him: "Hey. You're finally here. I'm sorry but when the sky started to fall I couldn't think of anyone to come to but you."

Falling sky? What is he talking about?

-Me: "How did you even get here when you're this drunk?"

-Him: "I got here a while ago, I was still a little sober then. I drove all this way just to beat you home. I wanted you to find me here when

coming from campus, but I found myself sitting here for two hours. And I ended up drinking some more."

He says pointing to an empty bottle of whisky on the passenger seat.

-Him: "I hope you don't mind that I waited right here."

Whatever's going on with him seems serious.

-Me: "Listen, I'll drive in with my car then come back and get yours. I don't want you to even attempt driving in, you're too drunk to do that. We don't want you to end up hitting the wall, damaging your car...and my yard in the process."

He gives out a drunken smile.

-Him: "You still care about me."

I actually feel sorry for him even though I haven't yet heard what's going on.

-Me: "Just stay put, okay?"

I go back to my car and drive into the yard after opening the gate. Then I come back to get Alex. I find him already on the passenger seat, that allows me to get behind the wheel and drive his car inside. After parking it next to mine, I get out and go round to get him from his side. He's too drunk to even stand on his own let alone walk, so I have to be his pillar and help him get inside the house.

Dropping him on the couch, I plop down next to him.

-Me: "Talk to me, Alex. What's going on? Is this about the baby? Is he sick? Or is he, God forbid, gone?"

He leans back on the couch and rubs his hands over his face before answering.

-Him: "That baby is not mine, Soso. Your aunt lied and used me... I know Nathi. And that baby,

even though he's still so tiny, it doesn't need a genius or an experienced adult to see that it's Nathi's. He looks exactly like him. Uzigodusile, period. And your aunt is simply a lying whore."

Wait, what?

-Me: "Wait, wait. Are you serious?"

He nods, with a sour face.

-Me: "And did you talk to Iviwe about this?"

-Him: "I did. It was around lunch time when I asked her to tell me the truth. I just couldn't hold it in anymore. I confronted her and she ended up confessing. She told me that the baby is indeed Nathi's. You know what that means? It means, to Iviwe I was just means to an end. I delivered her from the evil your father was about to throw her into. She used me and I let her. When she told me that she was pregnant with MY baby I foolishly believed her, I didn't question anything. But how could I be so stupid

and gullible? How could I?"

Oh my God. I'm literally out of words right now. I just don't know what to say. But how could I live do something like this? Alex feels so used and betrayed right now, understandably so. This was supposed to be the most happiest time of his life but now here he is, miserable as they come. If I was an unforgiving person I would be laughing right now, celebrating his misfortune. But I'm not that kind of person. Besides, I was already seeing him as family, not as an ex. And like my father always preaches, family always stands together. And right now, my heart actually breaks for this poor guy sitting next to me.

-Me: "I don't know what to say. I really don't. But I am so so sorry, Alex."

That's the only thing I manage to push out of my mouth after being quiet for a long moment.

-Him: "After what I did to you, maybe this is what I deserve. This is karma dealing with me. You were a good woman to me, Soso, but I broke your heart. I crushed it...I'm so sorry. I'm sorry."

Tears are now escaping his eyes. No, I can't watch him like this. I pull him to me and let him cry on my shoulder.

-Me: "No. You don't deserve this, Alex. Don't say that. Nobody deserves something like this. Nobody."

He continues to cry on my shoulder, and I'm pretty sure the alcohol is also playing a huge role in these tears. After what feels like forever, he pulls back and looks at me with those teary eyes.

-Him: "Soso, please forgive me. For everything I did to you."

-Me: "Dude, what are you talking about? You



apologised and I forgave you a long time ago. That's all in the past now. Yes, you broke my heart back then but hey, these things happen. You weren't feeling me anymore and you fell in love with another woman, it happens. I got over it a long time ago, and there's no need to bring it up again."

He wipes away his tears then covers his face with both hands and exhales loudly.

-Me: "Hey, come. Let's get you to bed. You need to rest. Tomorrow's a new day."

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I help him up then to the bedroom Kevin and Asanda were using. Those two aren't the cleanest people I know but they made sure that the room is clean before they left yesterday. Fresh linen and everything.

"What we had was special, Soso. I messed it up, but after I came back to my senses it was hard for me to let it go...I only married Iviwe because I thought it was the right thing to do."

Alex says as I'm helping him down on the bed.

-Me: "Just lie your ass down and stop clowning, okay?"

-Him: "My marriage is definitely ending. It didn't even last a month. What a joke."

He chuckles miserably.

-Him: "Listen, I know that yours is about to begin. But would you mind if it didn't last too, so we could get another chance? I still love you, Soso. And I need you now more than ever. I need to lean on you or I will crash and burn, I'll go crazy."

This one, I don't think he's even listening to himself. The booze has got him talking crap.

-Me: "My marriage will last, Alex. Thank God that crazy Natalie didn't come back pregnant with Thando's baby. If she did, well maybe my wedding wouldn't even happen."

-Him: "I'm sorry about that Nat thing. I really am."

-Me: "That's not the route I wanted this to take when I brought it up. Just stop apologising or even talking and just lie down. You'll wake up feeling a little better in the morning."

-Him: "You're still beautiful, you know that? Inside and out."

With that, he plops down the bed and before I know it, he's already snoring. Eshe.

I help take off his shoes, the belt and the jacket. Then I struggle to tuck him under the covers. Booze is no one's friend, huh.

When I finally manage to get him under the duvet, I leave the room.

I close the door from the outside then lean on it and exhale. I seriously feel for this poor guy. This whole thing is fucked up. And I know that it's going to get worse before it gets better. But I hope he won't do what Khwezi did.

As tragic as all the events surrounding Thabi's (Khwezi's wife) murder and Khwezi's suicide were, there's a lesson in that horrific and unnecessary chain of events. We have to be conscious when we make our choices and realise the ramifications of every single one, because they each carry with them a price that you have to be willing to pay should you choose that road. Thabi shouldn't have cheated on her husband, plain and simple. On the other hand, Khwezi may have been pissed by what he discovered but he also had a way out, a choice. He shouldn't have opted for murder then suicide, that wasn't the only choice he had. My only hope now is that he finds salvation and peace in

his new forever home. And may his wife rest in peace too.

As I'm still leaning on the door, my phone vibrates in my pocket. I take it out and read the message. It's from Nick and it reads: "Thanks for today. I had a great time with you."

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My lovies, kindly add your hometown after your comment. I'd love to know where my followers are from <3.

Season 2

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The next morning I don't oversleep, I wake up at exactly 6 AM and go for my morning jog. My ankle is A okay, in fact, since last week. And my

OB/GYN said this pregnancy doesn't have to stop me from enjoying my favorite form of exercise - jogging. She gave me the go ahead to continue. In fact, she said jogging may help me gain less weight in this pregnancy and I may also have a shorter labour. However, I need to take certain precautions to jog safely, and she provided me with those.

Forty minutes later, I walk back into my house, all sweaty. I go straight to the kitchen to leave my water bottle and also get another glass of water. With me pregnant and all, I have to make sure that I always stay hydrated.

Leaving the glass in the sink, I go hit the shower. When I'm done I put on a robe and my morning shoes then go back to the kitchen to make myself something to eat, which is basically a sandwich with lots and lots of tomato, lettuce and mayonnaise. I eat this a lot, I even crave it in the middle of the night. I'm glad I don't have

many food cravings and aversions though. So far this pregnancy is not so hard on me. Even the morning sickness, which I seldom experience in the morning but more during the day and in the evenings, doesn't get so severe. The expensive orange-flavoured PregEase tablets that I chew help a great deal, and so are the Sea-Bands that I wear around my wrists.

I sit down and eat, then I make myself some coffee. One cup a day is okay, my doctor said. And that's a good thing because there are some mornings that I don't think I can get through without my caffeine boost.

Alex is still not up yet. But with the way he was drunk last night, I'm not surprised. I really feel for him but I wish he could wake up right now and get ready to leave because, as expected, not everybody is happy about him being here. To say Doc was thrilled when I told him about it last night would be like saying the deceased

have come back to life. Unlike me, he wasn't so sympathetic even after I'd told him the entire story, and that it was already late and the guy was too drunk to leave. But eventually he was like, "All this serves him right. But it's fine you can let him sleep. Just make sure he leaves first thing in the morning, okay?" Something similar to what my father said. I called him too and told him about my uninvited guest because I didn't want him, Iviwe or anybody else to get the wrong idea. And I also didn't want it to seem like I'm taking sides, choosing Alex over Iviwe. In fact, I just want to stay out of this whole mess, I don't want to get involved. But I believe helping Alex last night was the right thing to do under the circumstances, and I won't let another person tell me otherwise.

The guy finally wakes up and drags his feet into the kitchen just as I'm finishing my cup of coffee.



-Me: "Hey. How are you feeling?"

-Him: "Morning... I honestly feel like crap. And my head is killing me."

He says rubbing his hands over his face as he comes to sit next to me on the high chairs.

-Me: "I have strong painkillers in my bathroom, I'll go get them for you. In the meantime you can help yourself with some coffee, I just made a fresh pot. And you can get anything to eat out the fridge."

-Him: "Thanks, Soso. For everything."

He says softly, looking straight into my eyes.

-Me: "Hey, don't mention it. I'll go get the pills."

I leave him and go get the tablets.

When I come back I find him sipping the coffee and I hand him the bottle of pills. He shakes out a couple then downs them with the coffee.

-Me: "So what are you gonna do about your

situation?"

I ask, leaning with my elbows on the island, opposite him. As much as I don't want to kick him out, he really has to go because I don't want trouble.

-Him: "I'm not sure yet. What I'm sure of though is that I don't wanna see Iviwe ever again. When I leave here I'm gonna drive straight to Durban. I won't go home because I know that Iviwe and that bastard child will be there. They'll be out of the hospital this morning, and even though my parents are aware of the situation they still want to let them live in their house. I guess it's because they don't want our family to be the talk of the town. Well, that's just something I don't give a fuck about. I won't present a united front with a lying bitch just because I'm avoiding to be gossiped about. People will always talk, and I don't give a fuck what they'll say about me. My marriage is not the first one to end with a

scandal and it certainly won't be the last."

-Me: "So, you're gonna go back to Durban. But, Alex, correct me if I'm wrong...isn't that Iviwe's house that you'll be going to? I mean she's the one who's working and has been paying the bills, not you. You're still a student."

-Him: "That's correct. But money is not a problem to me, I'll move out of that house as soon as I find my own place. Hopefully that would be before Iviwe comes back. I really don't want to deal with her, and I certainly don't need anything out of this marriage."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "Until then I'm at her mercy, aren't I?"

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-Him: "This just got me thinking, you know."

-Me: "Thinking? About?"

-Him: "The way I treated you last year. I didn't just leave you for another woman but I also stopped paying your rent even though I knew very well that you wouldn't be able to afford it. I knew that if you got kicked out for not paying you would have nowhere to go, but that didn't make me care enough to continue helping you out. I was happy with my own life and I didn't care about yours. But because you're the strong woman that you are, you didn't get defeated. You rose above it all. You managed to juggle work and school so you could pay your own rent on time. You were surviving, things were working out for you until I had your landlord kick you out of that flat. You'd be surprised what money can do. As long as I gave her money, that woman didn't have a problem kicking you out even if it was just for playing music. That's what I did to you, Soso. That's what I did. I hurt

you because I'm a jerk that wanted what I wanted. Yet you still found it in your heart to forgive me. And last night you didn't hesitate to open your door to me. You opened it wide and didn't only offer me a place to sleep but also a shoulder to cry on. That's the kind of person you are. You have a good heart, MaNdlovu, and I'm happy you didn't let what I did to you change who you are."

At this point I can feel tears stinging my eyes. The events of the day this man threw me out of his room in front of Iviwe keep playing in my head. I vividly remember how he roughly threw me on the floor and didn't even care how I got up even though I had landed so hard on the cold floor and hit my head on his bed. Without even considering my feelings, he told me so coldly how he never wanted to see me again and how much he loved this same Iviwe who has now played with his heart. The way my heart was so

crushed that day I never thought I would ever ever be able to forgive this man. But look at me now. It's amazing how forgiving your heart can be when you are in a good space in your life. I believe if I didn't have Thando's love I would still be as bitter as any typical ex, there's no way I would have forgiven Alex when I did. This is why I'm grateful for Thando every day. He helped me out of a broken place and freed me from that bitterness that was weighing heavily on my heart. Holding a grudge is like a stone in your heart. When you forgive and let go, you can be free. And that's when God will show Himself and fight for you. After all, He said in Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God..."

-Me: "Let's not talk about the past, Alex. Let's just leave it where it belongs."

I say, wiping away the tears that are now trickling down my cheeks. I may have forgiven him but now that he has reminded me of the

past, he has opened up old wounds.

-Him: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to remind of the hurtful past that you had already forgotten about."

-Me: "It's okay. Forget about it."

-Him: "Even though I was drunk last night, I remember what I said to you. It's something I wouldn't have had the guts to tell you if I wasn't so drunk. It's also something I know would never happen. I got my chance and I blew it. You're now happy where you are, I gotta accept that and deal with it. I don't even know why I came to you yesterday. I guess it's because I know the kind of person you are. I knew that you would be sensitive enough to show me some compassion, but also tough enough to not pity me. I knew that you wouldn't tell me that everything's gonna be okay, but you'll just be there for me. And that's what I wanted, to know that there's someone who cares about

me without being judgemental...Thank you, Soso. But it's now time for me to go. I need to deal with my life alone, far from you. I've realised that me being here is kind of inappropriate. I'm your ex and I'm sure Thando won't like this. Not to mention the fact that my wife is your aunt, so I'm very much putting you in an awkward position."

Everything he's saying is true. And I'm glad he's leaving on his own, but I just can't stop worrying about him.

-Me: "Just tell me one thing, Alex. Are you gonna be okay?"

-Him: "I will be. I don't have a choice."

-Me: "Please be, because I don't want you to do something stupid out there."

-Him: "If by something stupid you mean killing myself or squeezing the life of that bitch Iviwe, you can relax because that's not gonna happen."



I won't hurt myself or even land myself in trouble for a whore."

-Me: "That's good. And I know that you're angry but please tone down on the name calling."

-Him: "Right. Sorry. Iviwe is still your aunt after all."

-Me: "How about she's a human being? Anyway, come wash up before you leave."

-Him: "No, I'm gonna make you late. It's fine, I'll go without taking a bath."

-Me: "Don't worry, I'm in no hurry. I can't let you leave like that, as if you slept in your car."

He nods with a tiny smile on his face. I lead the way to the guest bathroom and I give him fresh towels and a new toothbrush to use. Kevin's toiletries that he left behind will also come in handy.

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While he takes his bath I go get dressed, getting ready to go to campus. When he's done, I'm done too and I walk him to his car.

"Hey, Alex. Stay strong, okay?"

I say, as he opens the door of his car.

-Him: "And you stay good, okay? And thanks for everything."

I let out a brief smile and nod.

-Him: "Listen, I've seen that my presence around you opens up some old wounds. And I hate that, I hate hurting you again. Which is why staying gone this time around is my sincere promise to you. I know that you forgave me, but I also understand that your forgiveness doesn't give me the right to just rock up at your door. People can forgive and forget. You forgave the

treachery, and now I also want you to forget the person who committed the mistake. I want you to erase me in your memory, Someleze. It's better to be completely forgotten than to be furiously remembered with all the wrathful memories. And I want your pain to be completely gone. So please forget me. I'll stay away so I could no longer disturb your balance. So I could stop making waves that might start another series of outrage emotions. So you could freely love without being reminded of my betrayal all the time. I want you to be free of me. You deserve better, and I'm giving you a space in this universe without a trace of me. I'll be far enough that you wouldn't even feel that I once circled around your axis. I want you to be completely happy. A radiant life without me anywhere around you, MaNdlovu, it's what you deserve. I'm sorry I forced my way into your family. And I'm sorry I broke your heart. I'm sorry for everything I did to you. I'm really, really

sorry."

As much as Alex apologised to me before, I never thought I'd ever receive a sincere apology like this one from him. And now that it's out I can't help but be an emotional mess. My tears are falling freely out of my eyes, I just can't fight them. Alex comes to me to give me a hug, but he then stops himself when his arms are just inches from closing around me.

-Him: "I'm sorry. And I better get going. Goodbye, Someleze."

He steps back and get's in his car. I'm still standing there as if my feet are glued to the ground when he starts his car and drives out of my driveway. I only get myself together when his car has disappeared from my eyes. Leaving the gate still open, I go get my stuff inside the house then come back to get in my own car and drive to campus. This day has sure started with an unexpected turn of events. But everything

has left me satisfied. Now I can say, without a shred of doubt, that I got complete closure when it comes to Alex.

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"Okay, guys, it's now 12:25 and that's all the time we have for today. I'll see you at 14:00 hours for your practical session."

I say to the students I'm tutoring. Since the beginning of the year I've been tutoring 2nd year Biochemistry students 3 days in a week. I'd be tutoring first years but we don't have Biochemistry at first year level. I don't even get paid for doing this. Prof Elliott just asked me to do it because he knows how good I am in this course, and I agreed to do it for free. I couldn't be a paid tutor and a lab assistant at the same time, even though I would have loved to be paid

for both.

"Sorry. Could you please explain to me once again how to correctly write a report after a practical session?"

Says one of the students, a guy sitting in the back row.

-Me: "Guys, come on, this is second year level. By now you should know how to write a good lab report. If you missed how it's done in high school then you should have grasped it last year. Even last semester, I taught you over and over again how it's done. But when marking your papers I kept noticing that it's not only Jali over there who's still struggling to get it right. What seems to be the problem, people? I seriously don't get it. But it's okay, I'll explain it to y'all once again before the practical session commences this afternoon."

They nod then get up and leave. Seriously, I

don't think I could ever be a teacher in my life. This shit is exhaustive. And I commend the teachers who keep it together out there. Repeating the same thing over and over to learners who still just won't get it requires a lot of patience, something I don't possess. I simply get annoyed when a student can't get what I'm saying no matter how hard I try to break it down and explain it in layman terms.

Even now, this tutorial ended with me just 5 seconds away from losing it. And my pregnancy hormones aren't making things easier for me either. I think this is now too much for me. And the truth is I work three times harder than their paid lecturer.

Now left alone, I take a seat and exhale loudly. Feeling drained, annoyed and nauseous. I reach for my bag, take out one ginger-flavoured Peggie Pop and desperately suck on it. These lollipops are just another thing I use to deal with

nausea when it hits.

Still busy with the lollipop, I decide to call Doc just to vent. But his phone just rings unanswered. He must be busy at work, I get that but it doesn't make me feel any better. I'm even more annoyed when I hang up. Jeez, this man. I rest my head on the bench; taking long, deep breaths.

As I'm still sitting like that, my phone vibrates in my pocket. Taking it out, I find that it's Nick.

"Hey, Nick."

I answer with less enthusiasm. It's got nothing to do with him though, it's just the mood I'm in right now.

-Him: "Hey. Are you busy?"

-Me: "Not really. Why?"

-Him: "I'd like to see you. I'm around Alice. I came in for yet another special appointment



with a special client, and what I can tell you is that it didn't go very well. I'm pissed as we speak. And I don't wanna risk driving home when I'm still like this. I could use someone to talk to, someone like you. It won't take long, I promise."

-Me: "Actually, I'm not doing so great myself. I could use some of your lame jokes before I meet with these students again at 2."

He laughs lazily on the other side.

-Him: "Lame? Did you just say my jokes are lame?"

I laugh too.

-Me: "But I love them. That should count for something, right? Anyway, where should I meet you?"

-Him: "You see the coffee bar opposite Standard Bank? That's where you'll find me."

-Me: "Okay. I'll be there now-now."

I hang up. Then grab my bag and make for the exit.

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Ten minutes later, I walk through the coffee bar and I immediately spot Nick sitting alone, busy thumbing his phone. Oh God, he looks so handsome in a black business suit and an equally formal shirt, black on black, including the tie and the shoes. Despite telling myself that I'm no longer attracted to him, I just can't deny how completely stunning he looks.

Lifting his eyes, he spots me still standing by the entrance and his lips quickly part to form a beautiful, bright smile. Wow! Dragging my eyes away from such perfection, I dig my nails onto my back to ground my racing pulse. God, but I

thought I was over this feeling.

-Him: "Come on over. What are you standing over there for?"

It takes me a few seconds to recover. I swallow audibly, clear my throat, straighten myself, and start walking towards him.

-Me: "Hey."

I say hesitantly when I reach his table.

-Him: "You look absolutely beautiful today."

He utters the words through his faltering lips as he gets up from his chair to stand in front of me. Beautiful? Me? There's no such. I'm dressed casually in cropped jeans, unbuttoned denim jacket, a white T-shirt and white sneakers. My hair is untied, and I'm wearing very little make-up.

-Me: "Thanks. I guess."

He pulls me to him in a hug. The moment his

arms wrap around me my breath suspends as I inhale his fresh scent that I now know very well. And my heart starts beating like a drum against my chest cavity. Shit! This shouldn't be happening. I quickly wiggle myself out of his embrace.

-Him: "Sorry."

I don't answer. He pulls out a chair for me and I sit down, then he goes back to his. We sit like that for a long moment, just looking at each other.

Finally, when the comfortable silence starts to become awkward, I decide to say something.

"What? Why are you just looking at me? Why aren't you saying anything?"

I ask hesitantly.

-Him: "You really look beautiful."

-Me: "Are you flirting with me, Dominic?"

I really need to know what's going on here.

His lips stretch to form that crooked smile of his then he looks straight into my eyes.

-Him: "Do you want me to flirt with you, Somi?"

-Me: "What? No. Of course not."

I answer, my lips faltering.

-Him: "Then you have nothing to worry about. I don't flirt with taken women, especially if they are pregnant. You too made it clear in that message you sent me that other week that you don't want that...So, relax. I'm harmless."

He says, that evil smile not leaving his face.

-Me: "That's good. Because really, nothing will ever happen between us."

I say, as much to myself as him.

Season 2

#13

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"Rainbow shaker on a stallion twister. Bareback rider on the eye of the sky. Stormbringer coming down, meaning to stay. Thunder and lightning heading your way." - Deep Purple

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Staring at a blank white screen on my laptop, I rub at my tired eyes. I have to resist the strong urge to hurl the depressing laptop across the room. Two hours, two bloody hours, I've been staring at this empty Word page and nothing is happening. This little line that keeps blinking every time I touch the trackpad I swear is taunting me.

My body is aching, strung out. Under normal circumstances I could use my sexual frustrations to my advantage, venting it out on the page. But this is ridiculous. I can't

concentrate. I've been staring at this new "Discussion" page of my dissertation and I can't seem to proceed.

My body craves sex like a man in the desert craves water. Fidgeting on the couch, I try to remember the last time I actually had real sex, not just phone sex and me servicing myself. I have to count on my fingers. No, that can't be right. I count again. Yup, three long weeks.

Slumping back on the couch, I mindlessly watch an episode of "Kourtney & Kim Take Miami" on E! Entertainment. I always have the TV on when I work on my dissertation, not to watch, just to listen. I just can't stand the silence.

Glancing around, I take in the house that's been feeling quite empty since Kevin and Asanda left. It is really lonely. Loneliness and frustration mix in with my raging hormones. It's a vicious cycle.

The last time I saw Doc was on Friday last week,

8 days ago. He'd surprised me with lunch on campus, but he couldn't stick around long enough to come home with me even for a quickie. He's always busy lately. If it's not work, it's research. If it's not that, he's reviewing articles in different medical journals - something he can't really put aside especially because he, too, is going to publish his research in a peer-reviewed journal. I just have to be an adult about the whole thing and understand. I've also had my hands full lately anyway with the wedding preparations and this dissertation that I need to finish and submit by October - only two months from now.

I know that three weeks ago temptation came knocking at the gate of my high-walled compound in the form of Dominic, the vibrations even reached my steel front door and the door threatened to come off at the hinges. But thank God nothing happened, my walls



didn't come crashing down and my door remained intact.

Amanda is really a godsend. She's always been that friend who would cheer for me so loudly, vuvuzela and all, when I've done something good or achieved something. The one who would pull me back on track when my feet begin to wander off. The kind who would never sugar-coat any bullshit I try to perfect. Even now nothing has changed even though we're living hundreds of miles apart. She's still that voice of reason in my ear. We may not even talk often but every time I have good news she's always among the first people I'd share with. Same thing also happens when I find my feet stuck in mud, she's one of the people I'd call on to help or offer advice, and she'd always be there for me.

But when it came to the temptation Nick was throwing my way I felt uneasy about calling her,

afraid that she would give me an earful before actually giving me the advice I needed. But then, knowing how much I needed her, I eventually picked up the phone that reminded me so much of Alex and called her. Surprisingly, she calmly painted me a vivid picture of the destination I'd reach if I proceeded down the dark alley I had already put my foot in. I knew exactly what was at stake, what I would lose should I let temptation win, but I guess I needed to hear it from someone else. After I'd talked to her I saw things more clearly. I knew what I had to do and I did it - I completely cut ties with Nick, I haven't seen or talked to him in three weeks and I'd like things to remain that way.

Speaking of dark alleys and Alex. He also took a wrong turn into a dark alley after what Iviwe did to him. It's unfortunate that it took him overdosing on drugs to realise that he was now running off track, that he needed to pull himself

towards himself and not let his life fall apart. As much as I know that what happened to him, the pain he was and probably still is going through, is possibly the price he had to pay for what he did to me, I actually felt sorry for him - but at a distance, of course. Him coming to me that night then giving me an honest apology in the morning gave me complete closure I didn't even know I still needed. After he disappeared from my sight I managed to shut that door for good. I now no longer have to have any dealings with him, especially since he's no longer even part of my family.

Two weeks ago he sent me an email though, informing me that he would soon be leaving the country. I remember when we were all together at my father's family home in Mthatha in April, he'd mentioned that his former research supervisor from Fort Hare had approached him wanting to help him apply for a full PhD

scholarship and admission at the University of Cambridge in the UK. Although he knew that it would undoubtedly be a good opportunity should he get accepted, he said he'd only do it for the old man's benefit, that he didn't see himself leaving the country. I'm guessing he didn't want to leave Iviwe and their baby behind. However, now that he knows that the baby isn't his and has already had his marriage annulled, he doesn't have any reason to let the great opportunity pass him by. In the email, he stated that starting afresh in a new place with new people is probably what he needs right now, and since he's been accepted by the university he would leave and join them for the new academic year which commences on the 1st of October. I honestly wish him all the best wherever he is right now. But according to my experience, you can never completely start over or move on without dealing with your past first. There can never be a new beginning if your

heart is still burdened with old grudges and past painful memories. In order to completely heal and move forward you need to forgive and let go of the past. I hope one day he'll learn to forgive Iviwe, and most importantly - forgive himself.

A lot has really happened in the past three weeks, but the greatest of all has got to be the birth of Kevin and Asanda's baby, Michaela. She's such an adorable, cute little girl. I don't even know why but the first time I held her in my arms I couldn't help but be a mess of feelings - one that became clearer than any though was love. I instantly fell in love with the little princess, and now I can't wait to have mine in my arms. I'm still at 15 weeks, but I'm already tired of waiting. Doc and I still don't know the sex yet and we don't ever want to know until the delivery day. But I'm secretly hoping it's a boy. I've always loved boys and besides, Doc already

has girls. Despite everything, his busy schedule and the fact that the baby will come so early in our marriage, I hope he would be a good father to him as he is to the twins, the kind Kevin also is to his daughter.

Kevin? Seeing that I'm bored and lonely right now I would call him just to hangout, but I know that he's occupied with his little princess. So maybe I should call Ryan. I've been avoiding the guy ever since he gave Nick my number without my permission. But seriously that's old news now, I have got to reach out to the guy. In one of the texts he's been sending me, most of which I have been ignoring, he was telling me that his wife was now back from the States and that her father was now doing okay even though they thought he would be pushing daisies by now. I love it when God shows Himself and pulls His people back from the mouth of the grave. Just like He's been standing by my mother-in-law's

side who is now doing okay after the breast-conserving surgery she underwent. She's even dealing with the side effects of radiation therapy better than I thought she would.

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Having decided to call Ryan, I eye my new phone on the couch. It is new because keeping the one I got from Alex just didn't feel right anymore, so I got rid of it and bought this one. I pick it up and dial Ryan's number.

"Hey, stranger." He answers with only a pintsize enthusiasm. I can't say I blame him though after the way I've been treating him.

-Me: "Hey. How are you hanging?"

-Him: "High enough to not feel low when an old friend can't even make time to answer my calls

and texts."

-Me: "I know, I know. And that's why I'm calling. I want to apologise and make it up to you, in person."

He chuckles.

-Him: "You mean that?"

-Me: "Of course, buddy. Maybe I could come by, in that way I'd also get to meet your wife, finally. Pretty please."

At this point I can hear that he's smiling on the other side. Some things never change, hey. This guy always had a soft spot for me back then, he could never stay mad at me even if he tried. And nothing has changed, so it seems.

-Him: "I'd love that. We're actually having a braai at the house this afternoon. We'll be hosting a number of people and I'd love for you to be one of those people. You can also bring your man, everybody will be bringing their partner."



Fantastic! Maybe being amidst a bunch of strangers is the kind of fun I need as a distraction right now.

-Me: "Great. I'll be there around 14:30. But I'll come alone, Thando is working."

-Him: "That's still okay. And 14:30 is fine. I'll see you when you get here."

-Me: "See you soon."

I hang up and check the time. It's now 11:30. I need to get up and get ready.

After freshening up, I put on a sleeveless, floral dress and flat sandals. It's an informal braai on a sunny day anyway. As for make-up, I don't even attempt to use it, I like my natural look. I just give my lips some loving with a lipgloss. By the time I finish brushing my straightback cornrows I know that I look effortlessly beautiful. I grab my handbag and walk out the front door. But before I drive out after getting

into my car, I call Doc to tell him about the braai I'm attending. His phone, however, just rings unanswered. I'm sure he's busy at work, so I text him instead.

But as I drive past Fort Hare farm a few minutes later, he calls me back.

"Sthandwa sam." I answer with this big goofy smile on my face. I can't believe he still makes me feel this way whenever he calls.

-Him: "Mamakhe, unjani?"

-Me: "I'm good, thando lwam. Just missing you."

I really do miss him. Yes, I hear his voice everyday because we call and text each other numerous times a day, trying to close the distance between us, but I miss seeing him right in front of me. I miss his touch.

-Him: "I miss you too, sthandwa sam. Maybe you should grace my cold house with your warm presence this evening when you leave

Ryan's place."

-Me: "Yeah? But I thought you were going to attend a patient case at Livingstone Hospital this afternoon."

He's been called in by the hospital in PE to assist during a radical bladder cystectomy procedure in a woman who was diagnosed with bladder cancer.

-Him: "No longer going today but tomorrow morning."

-Me: "Oh, great. That means I'll be with you tonight. I can't wait."

The excitement in my voice is unmissable.

-Him: "Neither can I. Have fun at the braai, okay? Just let loose and enjoy. You've been working hard lately so you deserve it. But whatever you do just make sure that you and our baby are safe, okay?"

-Me: "Of course, babe. Of course."

-Him: "I love you. See you tonight."

-Me: "Love you more."

I hang up and floor the car down the R63 route. I'd love it if I could reach my destination before any of Ryan's guests arrive. I'll hate being the centre of attention as I walk in alone.

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I don't feel the drive, I get to Gonubie before I know it. I guess it's because I've been happy all the way, singing along every song playing on Algoa FM. I love it when they play songs I know, but of course that's not why I've been happy. Obviously, I was happy because I'm finally going to be with my man tonight. The plant that hasn't been watered in three weeks is finally going to

get some water tonight. Mmmh! I get wet just thinking about it.

But I shouldn't be thinking about that right now. I need to ring this intercom staring at me at Ryan's gate. He lets me in after I've rang it and I drive up the driveway to park next to the only car parked there. I guess this means most of the guests haven't arrived yet. Great!

From the passenger seat I grab the bottle of Ryan's favourite wine and the box of chocolates that I've bought for his wife. Before driving to their gate I made sure to pass at the mall and get them this little something, umngena-ndlini. I really hope Megan will like the chocolates though, or I'll be disappointed.

"Somi, right?" She asks with a warm smile after answering the door. Oh my word, the pictures of her that I've seen don't do her any justice, this woman is much more beautiful in person.

-Me: "Yes. And you must be Megan."

I answer with a smile too.

-Her: "That's me, babe. Come on in."

I step inside and hand her the wine and the chocolate box.

-Her: "Oh my, how did you know that this is my favourite chocolate? I love these. Thank you, you're a sweetheart."

-Me: "Pleasure. I'm glad you like them."

I really am. And I'm sure it shows in my smile. I was really going to be disappointed if she didn't.

-Her: "I'm glad you came. I've been hearing a lot about you from Ryan."

-Me: "Only good things, I hope."

-Her: "80-20, I'd say."

She says laughing as she ushers me to the kitchen. She really seems like a nice person.

This day is going to be fun, I say to myself.

-Me: "At least he's honest. I can't be all good, no person is."

-Her: "His honesty is what attracted me to him."

She says smiling as we join another lady in the kitchen. I'm guessing she's the owner of the car in the driveway. Megan introduces her as Lungi, a friend of hers who's also from around EL. She seems nice too because when she sees me she immediately wipes her hands on her apron and steps away from the bowl of salad to come and attack me with a hug.

"Thank God for you, now I'm not going to be the only black around here." She says jokingly. This one is crazy.

-Megan: "There ebony goes again with her dry humour."

-Her: "You love me anyway, Meg. Somi, you better grab an apron, sweetheart. We need to be

done with these sides before the guests get here."

-Me: "I'm all for that, as long as you won't give me anything that's got to do with onions or eggs. Those are my biggest aversions."

I'm already feeling comfortable here. And this gourmet kitchen is every woman's dream. It's elegant and inviting. It's nice to be a trust fund baby, huh. And to have parents with deep pockets.

-Megan: "But before she touches anything, Lungi, I need to take her to see the boys."

With that she leads the way to the back covered patio which opens to a well manicured green garden.

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We find Ryan chilling by a built-in braai with another guy that Megan introduces as Josh, Lungi's husband. Oh, it turns out ebony married ivory. The true beauty of our modern South Africa.

Megan doesn't stay long after the introductions, she goes back inside, leaving me with the boys. They are drinking beer and I just grab a soda can from a cooler next to Ryan's chair as the three of us engage in a mild general conversation. But not long into it, I ask to talk to Ryan aside. He turns to Josh and tells him to make sure that the lamb chops don't turn into coals, then he gets up and walks with me to stand by the sparkling swimming pool. These two really have a nice house here. It is situated above the beautiful Gonubie river. And the beach is not far either. Such exquisite views. I wish Doc and I could also have something like this some day.

-Me: "Ryan, I'm sorry about the way I've been treating you. I.." But he cuts me off.

-Him: "Hey, don't worry about it. Listen, I'm sorry too. I know why you've been weird towards me over the weeks. It's because I gave your number to Nick without asking for your permission first. Yes you went overboard with the way you handled the whole thing, you should have just talked to me about it instead of avoiding me, but I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done what I did. It's just that from the way you talked to me about the guy on the day you first met him I thought you liked his work and that you wouldn't mind if he called you. But I now know that I made a mistake, and I'm sorry."

-Me: "It's all in the past, buddy. The whole thing was just stupid anyway, come to think of it."

-Him: "No kidding. Truce?"

-Me: "You got it."

We both smile, but I can't help noticing that his quickly vanishes.

-Him: "I hope you won't mind the fact that he's also gonna be here today."

Is he talking about who I think he's talking about?

-Me: "Who? Nick?"

He nods. You have got to be shitting me. Really?

-Me: "And you didn't tell me this earlier because?"

-Him: "I didn't know that he was coming either. The person I invited is the friend of mine who referred me to him when I needed help, his cousin. She only told me about an hour ago that she'd be bringing him along as her partner. And I couldn't tell her not to, not without sounding crazy or like an ass."

I don't know how I feel about this. But then again this is not my house, Ryan has a right to

host whoever he wants to host in his house. And he really had no reason to tell the guy not to come. It's not like the guy is my ex or anything like that anyway. But I was really hoping to never see him again, you know. It doesn't seem like it's going to be a great day after all, does it? But I can't leave now, I'm already here.

-Ryan: "What, you don't want to be around him? What is it with you and that guy anyway?"

I don't have an answer to that question. I really don't.

-Me: "It's okay, Ryan. I don't have a problem with Nick. We are all adults here, so everything is gonna go well."

I say the words as much to myself as him. After a few minutes I excuse myself and go inside the house to join the ladies even though I'm no longer feeling this whole thing. But then maybe

there won't be any awkward moments between Nick and I. Maybe everything will indeed go well.

I'm helping out with the instant mash potato they bought from Woolworths when the intercom phone rings. It's the other guests, I'm guessing. Megan goes to answer it then goes to wait for them at the front door.

"Ladies, meet my husband's friends, Dominic and Emily."

She says a few moments later as she walks back into the kitchen, obviously with the guests. I have my back on them, busy adding butter to the mash on the stove, but when she mentions Dominic's name my heart stops for a moment. Only for it to start racing when the name Emily sinks in, thinking about the Emily who was after my man. But then again, I guess Emily is a common name. I turn with a fake smile, ready to greet them. But that smile quickly fades as fast as it appeared when my eyes land on the

one and only Emily Marais standing next to Nick. Oh hell no! She's Nick's cousin? What is this? Have these two been playing some kind of a sick game on Doc and I? I don't know how the spoon I've been using slipped off my grip, I just hear the noise it makes as it lands on the marble floor. The storm is not yet over, is it? These two are stormbringers, and I have a feeling they won't stop coming our way until they get what they are after, whatever it is.

Season 2

#14

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"He was long gone when he met me. And I realise the joke is on me. I knew you were trouble when you walked in. So shame on me now." - Taylor Swift

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Thando

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It looks like it's going to be a long day, and I honestly have zero energy. I've been overworking myself in the past couple of weeks, and the one before that I was in Jo'burg to be by my mother's side and support her during her surgery. I don't even remember the last time I actually had enough time for myself or Someleze. But my lack of energy is more of an emotional thing than physical. All I'm trying to do now is get through the day.

After my rounds this morning I had to prepare for a surgery I had already scheduled. I stepped into the OR for my first case of the day, an appendectomy, at 9:30. I performed it laparoscopically and it went well, the patient should be able to leave tomorrow morning. Subsequently, I got summoned to the Emergency Department to see a patient who

had come in with a suspected perforated ulcer. She was in a bad state and I had to have her rushed in for surgery right away. Her surgery went well too. So, it's two down, but I don't know how many more to go. All I know is that I have one scheduled for this afternoon at 16:00, a complex hernia repair. The patient wasn't even mine though, he was my colleague's, Dr. Fandesi, but I'd rather take his surgery than go to PE. And I hope between now and that surgery I won't get a lot of calls from the Emergency Department. I'm really not feeling good.

Following my short "tea break" at 12:30, I throw the sandwich wrapper and soda can in the trash bin before making my way back to work. But along the way I realise that I've left my phone on the table I was occupying. I immediately turn back and fortunately, I find it still lying where I'd left it. Checking it, I notice that I have a missed call from Someleze and a text message, and I



call her at once. I don't, and would never, have a problem with her going out to spend a day with friends...and strangers, as it turns out. In fact, I think it will be good for her. She needs the air; she's been working a lot lately, and I trust her to be responsible.

"Have fun at the braai, okay? Just let loose and enjoy. You've been working hard lately so you deserve it. But whatever you do just make sure that you and our baby are safe, okay?"

-Her: "Of course, babe. Of course."

-Me: "I love you. See you tonight."

-Her: "Love you more."

I hang up and continue down the corridor with this strange feeling in my heart. As much as I want her to have fun I just had to tell her to be safe. I had this weird dream last night, and I couldn't fall asleep afterward. Someleze, pregnant as she is, was drowning in a body of

water and all my attempts to save her were futile. Every time I tried to haul her out I would get swept away by this strong wind until she sank below and never rose again. It was a nightmare, one that's still haunting me even now, hence I don't feel so good. I've never been one to believe in dreams but this one's different, it felt so real. But it was still just a dream, right? It was just a dream. Dreams are exactly that, dreams. They don't mean anything, right? Come on, Thando, pull yourself together, it was just a dream. Just a dream. Just a dream. In an attempt to make myself feel better, I keep repeating the same phrase in my head as I walk down the corridor, up until I feel a firm touch on my shoulder. I stop rather abruptly.

"Thando. Are you okay? I've been calling your name." Zizo says, giving my arm a tug.

-Me: "Hey, Zee. Sorry I didn't hear you, my mind was miles away."

-Her: "Yeah, I can see that, and the fact that you haven't been yourself since morning. Are you okay? Do you perhaps wanna talk about it?"

Her voice holds some concern as she wraps her arm around my shoulder for some comfort.

This one can be dramatic sometimes, but I like how much she cares.

-Me: "I can't share without sounding crazy and paranoid. So I'd rather I keep this one to myself. Hope you don't mind."

-Her: "Okay, I'll respect that. But tell me, are you gonna be okay?"

-Me: "I hope so."

-Her: "But whenever you need to talk just know that I'm here, okay?"

She says softly as she removes her arm around me. And I nod with a slight smile.

-Her: "I hear you've changed your mind about

the Livingstone case. That you're no longer going to PE but you're sending Fandesi. Why though?"

-Me: "Because I don't want to go anywhere today. I want to be with Someleze this evening."

-Her: "Soso. Is she okay?"

That concern is now back in her voice.

-Me: "She's fine, don't worry. I just want to spend some time with her."

-Her: "Okay, lemme get this straight. You've turned down this case so you could just spend time with your woman? Do you know what being part of that surgery would mean for you and that patient?"

-Me: "Fandesi is as good as me, the patient will be in good hands. As for my rep in this field, well, that's not my priority at this point. I just want to make time for my family. Of all people you should understand that, Zee. You're

married.”

Seriously, all I want is to have Someleze next to me and see that she is safe. That's the only way I'll be able to sleep peacefully tonight.

-Her: “Fine. I get it. Anyway, who will be assisting you during the surgery you’ve taken over from Fandesi?”

I chuckle.

-Me: “What, you wanna assist? Well, I already have enough people on my team. Even now I'm headed to a briefing. Just do me one thing, okay? Don't mention this to Soso. I lied to her, I told her I'll be going to PE tomorrow morning, I didn't tell her that I've cancelled. I don't want her to think I'm abandoning my job for her, you know how she can be like sometimes. You'd think she'd be happy that I've chosen to put her before my job but then be surprised when she doesn't show the desired reaction. She can be

so unpredictable sometimes.”

-Her: “Don’t worry, my lips are sealed.”

-Me: “I’m just hoping for a slow afternoon, you know. Less emergencies. So I can go home less tired this evening.”

-Her: “You and me both, buddy. You and me both.”

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Someleze

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"Somi?" The bastard Nick says, looking surprised.

-Emily: "You know her, cuz?"

-Him: "Yeah. Kind of."

I may not know what these crazy cousins are up

to but I do know that they are acting right now.

Oh God, I can't believe I let Nick kiss me. Yes, you heard that right. The day after our rendezvous at that coffee bar in Alice he called me, and against my better judgement I agreed to meet up with him. We were sitting in his car, just talking, when it happened. It happened so fast, before I knew it he had leaned over and placed his lips on mine. But to be honest, for a moment there I enjoyed it. A part of me wanted to not only return the kiss but also surrender to the paralysing feeling that had overtaken my entire body. Blood was thundering through my veins like liquid fire and I just wanted to let go. But thank God, I managed to quickly switch where the blood supply was flowing, I turned my brain back on and leaped out of that car in a hurry. That was the "wake-up" moment for me. The point where I decided to put everything aside and call my friend, Amanda. And

subsequently I decided to never get close to Nick again.

If I'd ever pictured the scene where I'd bump into him again though, it had certainly been much different than this. I get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach as if I have a giant rock sitting there when it becomes clear to me that this guy never cared about me. Even when he acted as someone who was only interested in friendship, it later became clear to me that that was his strategy to lure me in then pounce the way he did. The truth is, I was in his sights from day one. That's why his eyes were always on me the first day we met at Ryan's dance studio, he was there for me. He had found me and now all he wanted was to get me alone and draw me in. He wanted what he wanted from me, whatever it is, and he was going to take a step back immediately after getting it, leaving me high and dry. Thank God I'm the one who took a



step back first, before any of that could happen. But I'm still ashamed for letting things get as far as they did. Shame on me for letting him get that close even when deep down I knew that he was trouble. At this point I can't stop wondering what he and his cousin must be chasing. Thing is, I doubt Emily would go this far just because she wants Doc. There's definitely more to this.

Just then Ryan and Josh enter through the kitchen's back door.

-Ryan: "Hey, Ems. You made it."

-Her: "What is this one doing here?"

She asks pointing at me. In fact, she's demanding as if she has a right to do so.

-Ryan: "I invited her, Emily, don't be rude. You know her?"

-Her: "Unfortunately, I do. I'm now at Makiwane because of her and her man...I'm sorry, Ryan, but I can't be in the same space as her."

You have got to be kidding me. She's actually blaming me for what happened? Can't she take responsibility for her own actions?

-Ryan: "What, you want me to kick her out? I'm afraid I can't do that, Emily. Somi is my friend and she's staying."

Okay, I've had enough of this shit. Why do they keep talking about me as if I'm not in the room?

-Me: "It's okay, Ryan, I'll leave. I don't feel like being here anymore anyway. I'll call you, okay?"

I say, taking off the apron, putting it on the island. Megan and Lungi exchange looks.

-Ryan: "No, Somi. You're not going anywhere."

-Emily: "Fine, she can stay. Nick and I are leaving....Cuz, let's get outta here."

Ryan keeps quiet, he doesn't even attempt to stop them. They walk out and Megan follows them. To see them off and also open the gate

for them, I assume.

-Me: "Ryan, can I talk to you in private? Josh and Lungi, you don't mind, right?"

They both shake their heads no. Ryan leads the way outside.

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He goes to stand by the pool once again.

-Him: "What's going on here, Somi?"

He asks as soon as I come to stand beside him.

-Me: "That's a million dollar question. All I know is that Emily and Nick are after Thando and I for God knows what. Emily got transferred to Makiwane Hospital because she was busy seducing Thando at work and Thando reported her for sexual harassment. Nick then did the same thing with me. That can't be a

coincidence...Ryan, I've always known you as an honest person, and Megan also agrees. So I want you to be honest with me even now. Do you know anything about what those two are up to? Are you also in on it?"

He stares at me in astonishment.

-Him: "I can't believe you just asked me that. It's absurd to the point of being offensive. Somi, we are old friends. I thought you knew me. I thought you trusted me."

I don't fail to pick up that his voice is laced with hurt and anger. God, now I feel bad. But I just had to be sure.

-Me: "I'm sorry, buddy. I just wanted to be sure. I'm sorry I came across as someone who doesn't trust you. I do trust you, Ryan, I do. Believe that."

He doesn't say anything. His eyes leave my face and drift thoughtfully to the swimming pool, as

if trying to calm himself down.

-Me: "Tell me, how and when did you become friends with Emily?"

He lets a moment pass before answering.

-Him: "I got to know her in May when I started working for Dr. Pretorius. He is her stepfather...As for Nick? I don't know much about the guy, only that he helped me out when I was in desperate need of an accompanist. Before that I didn't even know he existed."

-Me: "Please tell me everything you know about Emily. Maybe I'll be able to figure out some things about her."

-Him: "Nothing significant can come out of my mouth. I don't think I know anything worth telling."

-Me: "Please let me be the judge of that."

-Him: "What I know is just general stuff. Like the

fact that she was born and bred here in EL. Her parents divorced when she was a teenager, I think. Then her mother, who's a GP with a private practice in Vincent, married Dr. Pretorius. She has a younger sister, Molly, who's 21. And most importantly she has a long-term boyfriend who's a psychologist."

-Me: "A long-term boyfriend?"

-Him: "Yes. They are even talking about marriage. Which is why I don't understand why she would seduce your man."

-Me: "She would if she wanted something more important than just getting into his pants."

-Him: "Something like what?"

-Me: "That's what Thando and I will need to figure out...Have you ever mentioned my name to that woman before today?"

-Him: "Um...maybe just a couple of times. The first time was when she came to my dance

studio for the very first time. We were talking about dance and I told her about this girl who was once my best on-stage Juliet. I then mentioned you again the morning I was telling her about my search for an accompanist. I mentioned that I had found you again and that you had just joined my dance studio, and I didn't want to disappoint you. That I wanted everything to go okay, which was why I needed to find an accompanist ASAP. That's when she said her cousin could help."

-Me: "Did you tell her what my name was?" He nods. "Did you call me Somi or Someleze?"

-Him: "Someleze. I only refer to you as Somi when you're around."

-Me: "Did she ever show interest in me during any of your conversations?"

-Him: "Not really. The first time I mentioned your name she asked what your surname was,

because apparently there was another Someleze she knew. When I told her that you're Ndlovu, she said you were not the one she knew. That was all."

-Me: "I don't know what's going on here but it's scaring me. When you told her that you wanted an accompanist I believe that's when she saw an opportunity to use her cousin to get to me. You had inadvertently presented the opportunity to her after she had failed to seduce her way into Thando's life. I'm willing to accept that everything that happened before that was just coincidence, but after...no, no coincidence. Nick went to your studio that day knowing very well that I was there. He took the gig because he wanted to get close to me. I bet he even knew how I looked like, with the availability of social media these days that is pretty easy."

-Him: "But what do they want from you and Thando?"



-Me: "I don't know, Ryan. But I think the actual target here is Thando, I was just a tool they were going to use to get to him."

-Him: "What are you gonna do now?"

He asks with some concern.

-Me: "I'm afraid I'm gonna have to leave. I need to be alone and try to figure things out. I'm sorry."

-Him: "It's okay. Don't worry, I understand. But if you need anything down the road, just shout. Okay?"

-Me: "Thanks, Ryan."

I motion for us to walk back inside. I need to say my goodbyes to Josh, Lungi, Megan and any other guests who may have arrived while we were out here. I make a mental note to tell Doc everything about Nick this evening, including the kiss. Time for keeping secrets is long gone.

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Thando

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Around 13:30. After discussing the 16:00 surgery with my team, they walk out, leaving me going through the patient's file one more time. Only to be interrupted by my pager, a summon to the ED. I drop everything and rush out. So much for that slow afternoon, huh. I was hoping for a miracle anyway, considering that it's a Saturday.

I find the trauma resuscitation suite a tightly controlled chaos, with a number of emergency doctors, including Zizo, and other medical personnel. According to Linda, the nurse who brings me up to speed, there has been an automobile accident on the N2 between Port

Elizabeth and East London. For some reason a taxi lost control, overturned and rolled to the opposite side of the road. It hit an oncoming car and subsequently caught fire. Eleven patients incoming but only 2 are critical, one of which was in the car and not in the taxi.

One of the critical patients is already here. I see Dr. Summers, the head of our department, standing at the foot of a gurney directing two doctors as they cut off the clothes of the critical patient, a female who has sustained burns when the taxi caught fire. Some of her clothing is melted and peeling away like plastic wrap. Wait a minute. Is this...Iviwe? Someleze's aunt? Oh my God, it's her. But why was she in a taxi when she has a car? My first instinct is to jump in and assist but there are already enough doctors attending to her, and there's another incoming critical patient who needs me. Shake it off, Thando, shake it off, I say to myself as I

try to focus.

“It’s time to rock and roll, sport.” Zizo says, her adrenaline rising as she, Linda and I step out to receive the second critical patient. We meet a paramedic already pushing her away from the ambulance, and she doesn’t look good.

-Paramedic: “Patient’s name is Molly. Twenty-one years old. Multiple lacerations, hypotension, gravid tender abdomen.”

I look at her lying on the stretcher, her neck stabilised in a brace, her body covered neck-to-toe in a red thermal blanket. She’s conscious, if only barely. I briefly lift up the blanket at her legs to reveal the many lacerations on her white skin perfunctorily bandaged. I also notice that she’s pregnant, and for some reason the dream I had last night about my own pregnant Soso instantly comes back to me.

-Me: “She’s pregnant, right?”

I'm asking the paramedic.

-Him: "32 weeks."

-Me: "Hear any fetal heart tones?"

Not wanting Molly to hear, he shakes his head no. I motion for all of us to transfer her onto our gurney. She looks up at me as if looking at the face of mercy.

-Me: "Try not to worry, Molly. We're going to make you better now."

Zizo pushes the gurney, surging to the trauma suite.

-Molly: "The baby...Is the baby...?"

She can't speak long enough to complete the sentence but we all get what she's anxiously asking.

-Zizo: "We'll find that out as soon as we can. For now, I need you to stay as still as possible," then she turns to me and whisper, not wanting

Molly to hear. "Her pain's got to be high. We should give her 50 of Fent."

I quickly look at her chart that I got from the paramedic and shake my head.

-Me: "No. BP's too low." Then I turn to Molly. "Can you tell me where you are, Molly?"

-Her: "P...PE?"

She was on her way to PE, she didn't get there. In fact, she was still close to East London. The wrong answer prompts me to stop the gurney and lift up the blanket to get a better look at her body, which is riddled with dozens of glass-filled lacerations, all discharging blood in drips and rivulets. Oh God, she's in a bad shape but I put in a brave face and look up at her.

-Me: "You are doing really great, Molly. Hang in there."

Now we are pushing her down the corridor, where Zizo shucks and jives, sliding under the

gurney to be on the other side and assist. I push the gurney as she runs the ABCs and Linda writes them down.

-Her: "Airway, clear. Breathing, stressed but within acceptable limits. Circulation, low, 80 over 60."

At this point I'm more worried about the baby.

-Me: "Maybe we should get a hand-held Doppler to check on the baby."

-Zizo: "All in due time. Best way to save the baby is to save the mother."

Just then a bandage covering one of Molly's abdomen lacerations comes loose, causing blood to geyser. Hell, we got a major bleeder here! Zizo tries to reach the bandage across Molly's belly, but when she can't, I hoist myself onto the gurney, straddling Molly and applying pressure on the vessel with my thumb.

-Zizo: "Always flexible, huh."

This is nothing to me. I just shrug.

-Me: "Reposition and pull this bandage over."

She does and we make sure it is pulled tight as Linda pushes the gurney and enter the bullpen of our suite.

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We find Dr. Summers doing what he does best in front of the doctors. You'd swear this guy is an orchestra conductor or a sports coach.

-Him: "All eyes on me, people. Calvary, take 'Pregnant Multiple Lacerations' into trauma One. And I need an update every 10 minutes on the 'Third Degree Burn Woman' in Trauma Five. Let's move, people."

He takes Molly's chart from Linda and just briefly scans through it before handing it to a



trainee.

-Him: "I need 50 of Fent in her, like Caster Semenya fast."

-Me: "That's not gonna happen. This is my patient. And I'm saying 50 is too much for her. You didn't even read her chart."

-Him: "Your patient, my department. Don't defy me."

This old man is full of shit. And I'm not in the mood for taking any of it today. In fact, I'm going to address it right now.

-Me: "You know what, Dr. Summers? I'm tired of your crap. You don't see me at all. You started by pushing for Dr. Emily Marais to be transferred to Makiwane Hospital instead of facing the consequences of the sexual harassment complaint I had filed against her a month ago. What the fuck is your problem with me? Huh? Tell me, if the roles were reversed, if

it was Emily who was at the receiving end of the harassment, would you have done what you did? If I was a woman, I'm not even gonna mention the skin colour, would you have stood by me instead?"

-Him: "December, you are way out of line."

I'm aware that this word-exchange is being monitored by a dozen pair of eyes, but I don't care.

-Me: "Am I? Really?"

-Him: "I had nothing to do with Dr. Marais' transfer. I'm not the CEO of this hospital or even high up in the management, I don't make such decisions."

-Me: "Don't you dare patronise me. I know for a fact that you're the one who pushed for that transfer to happen. Like you keep reminding us, this is your department. And since Emily was working for your department, you had a say in

what happened.”

-Him: “Listen here, Dr. Marais went to Makiwane because that’s where she was supposed to do her training right from the beginning.”

-Me: “What do you mean?”

-Him: “She wasn’t supposed be a trainee here but she made a special request. That’s what I mean. Keep throwing these accusations around and disrespecting me in front of everyone, December, and you’ll be out of here before you can even say Christmas.”

I don’t pay his threat any attention, my mind is stuck on what he just said about Emily. She wasn’t supposed to do her training here? She made a special request? Why? What does that mean?

“Guys, this is not the time or the place for your squabbles. What matters now are the two critical patients on this ward. Thando, let's go.

Dr. Summers, please assign us a trainee to work with."

Zizo says as she starts to push Molly's gurney to Trauma One.

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In there, my team and I remove the glass riddling Molly's body then press and stitch her up, with her mildly sedated. But when we're cutting the last stitches, she regains consciousness and starts thrashing anew, having gained some strength due to the work we have already done on her.

-Her: "Where...Where am I? My baby? Is the baby...?"

-Zizo: "Molly, you need to stay calm."

But no, Molly thrashes even harder, her sutures

tearing. This is not good.

-Her: "The baby's dead, isn't he?"

-Zizo: "No, the baby's not dead. Just stay calm."

Hell, the baby can't be dead, not when I'm here. I grab a portable Doppler and try to get the baby's heartbeat, as I instruct the trainee to hold Molly still. He's trying but Molly continues to fight us.

I try to get the baby's heartbeat but I'm hearing nothing on the Doppler. I try again, still nothing. Molly continues to thrash. She's bleeding and alarms are going off. Zizo quickly turns to the trainee.

-Zizo: "Her pressure is better. Gimme 100 of Fent to knock her down a bit."

The trainee grabs a needle, but I quickly stop him. I can't have that. I need this baby to survive.

-Me: "No. The sedative we've already given her

is already too much for the foetus.”

Zizo whispers close to me, with some urgency in her voice.

-Her: “Well, no mother, no foetus. And without the Fent she’s going to continue to fight us and open everything back up again. She’s gonna bleed to her grave.”

I get her point, but there has to be another way to calm Molly down without giving her that much sedative. I snatch the Doppler again and put it on my own wrist without Molly seeing, catching my own heartbeat.

-Me: “Hear that, Molly? Your baby is fine. No need to get all worked up.”

The heartbeat is too slow for the baby, but Molly hears what she needs - hope. She thanks me then goes quiet. Mission accomplished. Zizo gives me an appreciative smile. And we continue to work.

About twenty minutes later we're done, and I exit Trauma One satisfied because we've finally managed to get the baby's true heartbeat. Now I need to go find out how Iviwe is doing. A part of me wants to call Someleze and tell her but then I stop myself. No, I'll tell her later when I have all the details, plus I don't want to ruin her day.

I find Dr. Summers exiting Trauma 5, where Iviwe is. I know that we had an altercation earlier but that won't stop me from asking about my in-law.

-Me: "I think we've got a handle on Molly's bleeding. What happened to Iviwe, the burn patient?"

-Him: "She had airway issues, almost asphyxiated and died, but the team established a surgical airway. They are still working on her, you can't go in there."

Not wanting to argue with this man, I retreat. At least I know she's still alive.

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Just when we think Molly is doing much better, that we've had a handle on all her lacerations, we realise that she is still bleeding internally. We suspect a joint fracture and after we've taken her to angiography we manage to close up the last two bleeders.

Now with everything looking good, we can get her to a room where she can recover.

Linda wheels our semi-conscious patient out of the OR and to the elevator. She wheels her inside, then we all climb aboard. Zizo and I lean back, it's finally over. But then Molly starts to moan.



-Linda: "We have a problem here?"

Zizo and I both look at Molly.

-Her: "My right ear. I can't...hear anything."

She's increasingly upset now. Zizo and I step around the gurney to see blood trickling out of her ear and staining the white sheet on the gurney. As I'm still looking at that...

-Zizo: "Um...Thando..."

She's alarmed. And I see why. Molly's nostril is dribbling too. She is leaking and blood droplets begin to pool. Oh damn, this doesn't make me happy.

Zizo and Linda try their best to stem the bleeding while I'm busy in Molly's ear with an otoscope. I learn that one of her crash wound lacerations has opened back up again. I inform Zizo who quickly grabs the otoscope, wanting to confirm.

-Her: "Not possible. I closed the Eustachian wound myself and it was solid."

As she peers into Molly's ear another sutured laceration, which is located on the side of Molly's neck, begins to bleed. Molly is now anxious, and she keeps asking what is happening to her. The truth is, we honestly don't know yet.

-Linda: "B.P is way up. 160 over 95."

It doesn't make sense. If she's opening up her blood pressure should be going down. My eyes jump back and forth on her body, then it hits me.

-Me: "The baby."

-Molly: "What about the baby?"

-Me: "The baby is fine, Molly, but it may be putting a strain on your system. Zizo, check for contractions."

She moves toward Molly's lower half to check

for contractions which could send her B.P through the roof and cause the wounds to leak.

-Her: "Yep. We've got contractions."

At this point Molly becomes hysterical, screaming that it's too early for the baby to come.

-Zizo: "We take her over to OB, fill her with Terbutaline to stop the contractions. They are probably just Brixton Hicks anyway."

But I have other plans. It doesn't matter what the contractions are, Molly needs as few stresses on her system if she and the baby are to make it. At 32 weeks the baby is viable. And I'm not going to waste another minute, by the time we get to OB it could be too late. We are going to have to deliver this baby ourselves. I tell Zizo, and even though she doesn't fully like the idea she compromises. I send the elevator back to the OR hall. And when it opens we

quickly get Molly off and surge ahead to the room we used to close her joint fracture. Luckily we get there just as the nurses are starting to turn the room upside down, and we stop them. The lag has actually worked to our advantage.

Molly's bleeding is now intensifying; we really need to get this baby out, NOW. Zizo and I quickly prepare for the C-section, as Linda calls in for reinforcements.

We finally get to pull the baby out, but he looks lifeless. I try to clear the airway passage, but nothing...nothing...just nothing. I'm now frantic, desperate to get him to breathe. If he dies on me I'll be in trouble. Plus, for some weird reason, I feel like I would have failed again, just like I failed to save Someleze and our baby last night in my dream.

-Me: "Come on, baby. Come on, breathe. Breathe for me, please."

Still nothing. The baby is dead--, but then a wave of relief washes over me as I see a twitch, a little feet squiggle, and hear a weak cry escaping his mouth. The baby is alive, he's alive! I finally exhale as Zizo gives me a smile of relief.

-Her: "Next time remember to never take any case personal. It clouds judgement."

She's right, I took this case too personal because of the stupid dream I had last night. But now that I've saved the baby and knowing that Molly is also going to be okay, I feel like I've reversed the outcome of the dream I had. Am I going crazy?

Season 2

#15

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"Suddenly I was in another room. Terrified, cannot scream, cannot move. Paralyzed with fear. Where am I? Is this the end?" - Hypocrisy

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Someleze

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I'm not being paranoid, I know for sure that Emily and Nick are up to something sinister. And I'm willing to bet my pathetic month's salary they won't stop until their mission is accomplished.

My grip tightens around the steering wheel as I think about all the drama Thando seems to always attract. I know that he never asks for it but still, we could use some peace and quiet in our life. Geez, is that too much to ask? This whole thing is draining, and I always get sucked into it. As my car moves forward I mull over the various possibilities of what he has attracted this time around and how dangerous it is.

Pulling up at the entrance of the small complex

he lives in, I press my palm down on the horn for the security to open up for me. I would let myself in if I had the remote to the automated gate, but I left it in Alice. The only key I have in the car's glove compartment is for the house.

The security comes out of his quarters and when he catches a clear view of me, he lets me in. I greet with a forced smile as I drive past him to park in the parking area.

I can't believe that just a few hours ago I was excited about being with Thando tonight, but now I'm only filled with apprehension. How is he going to react when I tell him about Nick? Oh God please let it not be ugly.

I get inside the house and go throw myself on the couch. Laying there, I rehearse how I'm going to break the truth to Thando. I try to string words together to convey how ashamed I truly feel about my own actions in the whole thing. He has to know everything. If we are to figure

this Emily-Nick thing out, I have to be completely honest with him.

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Thando

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"Thando, wait for me." Zizo says as we walk out from the handover. We are both already carrying our bags, ready to leave these walls.

I stop and she catches up to me.

-Her: "I looked for you before the handover but I couldn't find you."

-Me: "I was outside. I needed some air after my last surgery."

I say as we continue down the hallway.

-Her: "This was one long day, hey."



-Me: "Long? Nah, try weird."

-Her: "Weird?"

-Me: "Remember me telling you that I know the burn patient from the taxi?"

-Her: "Yeah. Soso's aunt, you said. Did you tell Soso about it? Did you call her?"

-Me: "I was wrong, as it turned out. After my last surgery I went to the ICU to check on her. She was obviously out of it, she couldn't talk to me. But I checked her chart to see how bad she is, and guess what I saw in there. The name she gave out when she was still conscious is not Iviwe, and the listed emergency contact is someone I don't even know."

-Her: "For real? So what does that mean?"

-Me: "I don't know. All I know is that that's not Iviwe in there. After the confusing discovery, I called Soso but she didn't answer so I decided to call her mother in PE. Her mother told me

that Iviwe was sitting right next to her as we spoke, breastfeeding her baby. Yes that was shocking but it answered the question I had when I first saw that patient lying on a gurney: why was Iviwe in a taxi when she has a car?"

-Her: "So that means the patient we have is just someone who looks like her?"

-Me: "But how can two strangers look so alike, Zee? I also talked to Iviwe herself, and she said she had no idea who that person could be because she has no twin or even a sister. Confirming what I already knew."

-Her: "This is indeed weird."

-Me: "Tell me about it. But at least now I know that my in-law is safe at home, uninjured."

-Her: "Yeah, it should be a relief. Anyway, on a more lighter side: Molly's mother wanted to see you when she got here. She wanted to thank you in person for saving her daughter and her

grandson. But unfortunately, I had to tell her that you were in theatre."

-Me: "Good thing she didn't find me. You know that I'm not good with praise, Zee. What's the big deal anyway? I was only doing my job. My salary at the end of the month is all the thanks I need."

-Her: "Point is, Molly and her son are alive because of you. Take the credit, sport, it's all yours."

-Me: "We both know that a surgeon is only as good as his or her team. I didn't do it alone, you were there and so was everybody else who was in our team."

-Her: "Come on, you're the one who fought for that baby, Thando, when all I cared about was saving the patient I could see - Molly. You did great in there, man. Even took a risk...Of course, we do not wear capes with superhero names,

we don't even appear on daily news all glamorous and fancy but what I do know is that we value human life. When Molly came in, she had so much faith in us and you made sure we gave her good results. You can give yourself a pat on the back, buddy, it's allowed. And please adopt a new attitude when you talk to Molly's mother tomorrow. She still wants to meet you and please don't run, I know you."

-Me: "Well, in that case I guess I'll see her tomorrow then."

She gives me an approving smile. But just then her phone rings. She takes it out and glances at the display.

-Her: "It's Bhongo. I gotta take it."

-Me: "Well, I guess I'll see you tomorrow too. I won't wait until you finish talking, I gotta get home to Soso."

-Her: "Please kiss her for me."

-Me: "I'll do more than just kiss her."

Her eyes go wide as she gasps naughtily.

-Her: "Too much info, dude. Just get outta here."

This one and her dirty mind. I laugh and wave her off as I walk away. Leaving her answering her call.

I get to my car and pace it home. I honestly can't wait to get there. Yes I may not have meant what Zizo's dirty mind jumped into but I sure am looking forward to a night of passion with my woman. I can never be too tired for that, not when it's been this long.

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Someleze

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Startled by the sound of the front door, I jolt upright in the couch but my eyes only land on Thando walking in. Oh my, it's already after 19:00? I must have been really tired after over-indulging in that Hawaiian pizza I ordered earlier, and that exhaustion must have pulled me into a deep sleep. That's no surprise though, lately I'm always tired because of this pregnancy.

Thando flips the switch and light illuminates the room. Putting his bag on the end table by the door, he walks over with a smile. That smile usually makes my heart smile too but not today. Now all I feel is trepidation.

I suck in a gulp of air and a cold clamminess spreads its way across my palms as I force my bare feet to move across the tiled floor to meet him halfway.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam."

He says opening his arms and pulls me into an

embrace. Oh God, this is going to be difficult. For a moment I resist the temptation to surrender, but his embrace is electrifying as always and I find myself passionately returning his affection. His personal scent that I missed so much captures me and I completely melt in his arms. With him holding me like this I feel my anxiety levels dropping significantly. This man always has this effect on me, no matter the situation. Pulling back, his smouldering eyes gaze into mine and his hand gently brushes the little bump that is to become his son or daughter as a broad smile adorns his handsome face.

-Him: "Are you two okay? I tried to call you earlier but you didn't answer."

-Me: "Sorry, I didn't hear it, I fell asleep on the couch. But we are okay, especially now that you're here. Just a little exhausted though."

I answer with a smile.

-Him: "Are you exhausted even for this?"

He leans in and softly captures my awaiting lips in a passionate kiss. With common sense seeming to have deserted me and my heart ready to burst I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him even closer. This seems to make his desire grow and he deepens the kiss. Our tongues dance to a single rhythm, igniting my longing after so many dry weeks.

Even with the few kilos I've gained I'm still light enough for him to pick up and carry. He picks me up and I wrap my legs around his waist as he carries me to the couch, our lips still joined. He gently puts me down on the L-shaped couch and continues to to kiss me. We are tugging at each other's clothes when I finally switch my brain back on and stop him.

-Me: "Baby, wait. We need to talk first."

-Him: "Ha.a, babe. Can't it wait?"



He asks leaning in to kiss me again. I can see that he can't hold himself and I can feel his hard erection rubbing against me, but I gently push him back.

-Me: "No, it can't wait, sthandwa sam. It's important."

He groans, frustrated, then draws back to sit on the other side of the couch. I ease myself next to him into the soft cushions and pull my legs into an Indian-style position. Perspiration breaks at the back of my neck as my anxiety levels skyrocket once again. I feel my stomach turning as I narrate the story to the man sitting next to me. I can't help but kick myself for letting Nick that close.

It's only when I'm done talking that I manage to look at Thando who's been quiet all this time. For a moment I find his face unreadable. And when I finally get to read it, the only emotion I get out of him is not anger but hurt.

He quietly looks at me for a long moment, and my palms get slippery with sweat while my heart beats like a drum against my chest cavity. What is he going to say?

He gets up from the couch and sits on the coffee table right in front of me, his eyes boring into me.

-Him: "So what you're telling me is that you made out with another man while you have my ring on your finger and my baby growing in your belly. What is that, Someleze? What happened to your principles?"

His voice is strangely calm, demonstrating not even a hint of anger.

-Me: "I didn't make out with him, baby. He's the one who kissed me. But I'm sorry."

-Him: "Don't. Please don't do that. From what you just told me, you had feelings for the guy, probably still do, and you entertained him. You

wanted him to kiss you, you enjoyed it."

-Me: "No, Thando, I didn't say that. I didn't want him to kiss me. Yes, I did feel something for him but it certainly wasn't love, and it's long gone by now. It was just a stupid crush that didn't mean anything. I was lonely, I felt neglected, you weren't there, he was, that's why I found myself entertaining him. I was vulnerable."

-Him: "So you're blaming me for this?"

-Me: "No, no. I'm not. I'm just..."

-Him: "Save it. Just tell me, Someleze, are you even ready to get married? Did I maybe move too fast for you? Are you ready for a commitment? Do you even know what that is?"

Yoh, what a low blow.

-Me: "I uhh...I understand why you're talking like this. But this is what I need you to know: if I didn't want to commit to you I wouldn't have

said yes when you proposed. I didn't have to, 'no' was also an option. Yes some doubts made rounds in my head when you popped the question, reasons to say no, but the reasons to say yes outweighed those doubts. Thando, I may be young and inexperienced but I know what I want, and that's you - spending the rest of my life with you. I was sober-minded when I said yes to you, I didn't make a mistake. The only mistake I made was to entertain Nick. It's a mistake..."

He cuts me off.

-Him: "It's a mistake you'll repeat, isn't it? I'm not going to stop working, Someleze. Yes, I'm gonna cut down in the near future but I'm not going to stop. So tell me, what's going to happen the next time I'm busy working, the next time you feel 'neglected'? There will always be a lot of Nicks out there. Are you gonna run to one of them for a kiss and God knows what else

every time you feel lonely? Do you want us to end up like Khwezi and his wife?"

Yoh, the last line creeps me out to a point where I feel like my arm hair is standing at attention like an army of obedient soldiers. Would he really do what Khwezi did?

-Me: "It's not a mistake I will repeat, Thando. It's a mistake I learned from. I stopped Nick and got out of there not only because it was wrong but also because I respect and love you. I couldn't betray you like that, I would never betray you like that. You and our baby are my life. I don't want to lose you, Thando, and I mean that."

He keeps quiet, just looking at me.

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-Him: "You say you think this Nick is working with Emily and they were going to use you as a channel to get to me?"

He says finally. He's now changing gears to what matters the most at this point. I don't know if he believed any word I said, and I don't even have time to ask. It's time to talk about what's important.

-Me: "Yes. Do you know what they possibly want from you?"

-Him: "No idea at all. But what you're saying makes sense. Today I learned that Emily was deployed to rotate at Makiwane Hospital in preparation for her Intermediate exams, not at Frere. She was to join our stable at a later stage in her training but she made a fully motivated request to the Department to join us and her request was acceded to. My guess at this point is that she made that request knowing very well that I was there. It may have taken her a few

months to get close to me but she finally did."

I go unplug my phone from the charger and look for Nick's photo.

-Me: "You said Nick's name didn't ring any bells to you. What about the face?"

I ask showing him Nick's picture. He grabs the phone from my hand and looks at the picture intently.

-Him: "No, I don't know this guy. But his face does look familiar."

He says after staring at the picture for a long moment.

-Me: "Familiar? Like you've seen him before?"

-Him: "No, as in I've seen someone who looks like him before, but I'm sure it wasn't him."

-Me: "Who was it then? And where did you see him?"

-Him: "That's just the thing, I can't remember."

-Me: "Please remember, sthandwa sam. We need answers."

-Him: "I will. But now I need to go take a shower."

He absently hands me my phone back and get up from the coffee table.

-Me: "Should I join you?"

I know I'm pushing it right now, but a girl has got to try.

-Him: "No. I'm tired and I'm gonna go straight to bed after."

He says walking away. I know very well that he's not tired, if he was he wouldn't have jumped me the moment he walked through that door. He just doesn't want to be with me. I'm definitely not getting any tonight. But I can't really say I blame him.

I'm left sitting on the couch, absently watching



the TV.

It's only an hour later, when I'm sure he's already in bed, that I get up and go to the bedroom. But instead of finding him in bed, I find him sitting at his desk, behind his laptop.

-Me: "I thought you'd be sleeping by now."

-Him: "There's something I need to check online first."

This man was definitely not tired. I nod even though he's not even looking at me. Not feeling myself, I drag my feet into the en-suite bathroom to take a shower too. When I come back I find him still in that same position. I don't say anything, I just get my PJs out of the closet, put them on and get into bed. It helps that I keep some of my clothes here.

I lie awake under the covers, waiting for this man to at least come join me, but he takes his time. It's only after eleven that he finally puts

whatever he was doing away and comes to bed.

"Goodnight." he says as he slides into bed next to me. Obviously, he can see that I'm still awake but he doesn't even attempt to touch me. He just gives me his back. I don't move, I don't even return his "goodnight", I just lie there motionless. He tosses and turns beside me, unable to fall sleep, until my own transport to slumberland comes to pick me up.

Despite the situation, I sleep soundly until I get woken up by him in the morning. I open my eyes to find him sitting next to me on the bed, already ready to go to work.

-Him: "I'm going to work. Have a great day with the little one. I've made you breakfast, it's in the kitchen. And I'll see you in the evening."

His voice might as well be coming out of a freezer.

-Me: "Thanks. Have a great day too, and work

well in PE."

He gives me a peck on the lips then walks out. I'm sure he just did all of this out of a sense of obligation because he's still as cold as ice towards me. I hope he'll come around soon though. I can't stand this tension between us even though I'm the course. But at least now he knows everything. Emily and Nick can never use that card against me.

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Thando

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I can see my car moving forward but I don't feel myself driving it. I'm not feeling myself at all. I can't believe I cancelled my surgery in PE yesterday so I could be with Someleze, only for

her to ruin my entire week by telling me about her feelings for another man. Was I angry when she told me that? You bet. But my anger got overshadowed by hurt, disappointment and feelings of uncertainty. Yes, Someleze loves me but love and commitment are two different things. Love alone is not enough. Maybe she is not ready for marriage or commitment. She's still young and inexperienced after all. She probably still wants to explore. But where does that leave me? Why did I move so fast anyway? I probably shouldn't be asking myself this question but I just can't help it. Maybe it's time we went for that premarital counselling I've been putting off all this time. I see the need for it at this point.

I pull up at the parking lot at work and drag myself out of the car and into our facility. I'm feeling even less energetic today than I was yesterday. What's making it all worse is that I'm

not being haunted by a dream but a sour reality today.

"Morning, sport. Don't forget to smile when you meet Molly's mother later, okay?"

Zizo says laughing as she meets me at the entrance. Smile? I don't even know what that is right now.

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Someleze

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It's now around 11 and I've been sitting on this couch for some time now, trying to figure out a way to make things right with Thando. But then I get disrupted by the ringing of my phone.

When I check the display I'm surprised to see that it's Prof Elliott, my research supervisor.

What does he want from me on a Sunday? I answer curiously, only for him to tell me to email him Chapter 5 of my dissertation right now so he could start looking at it today and be able to give me feedback tomorrow in the afternoon. Oh no, this is going to be a problem. Putting aside the fact that the chapter he's asking for isn't finished yet, the problem is it is saved nowhere else but in my laptop's hard drive in Alice. This means I'll have to drive to Alice right now then come back in the evening because Thando and I still need to talk. Then in the morning I'll have to repeat the same drive all over again, I'll have to drive back to Alice so I could go to campus. This up and down is going to cost me time and money. But I don't have a choice, I have to do it, Prof won't take anything else.

I call Thando to inform him but he doesn't answer, he's probably busy, so I text him

instead. Then I leave the house and go get in the car with only my phone and keys.

As I leave East London behind I notice something weird behind me, a white Dodge Journey that seems to be following me. I could swear I saw this very same car parked across the street when I was leaving Thando's complex. So has it been following me since then? But why would anyone follow me? Aren't I being paranoid right now? I probably am but I don't stop checking the rear view mirror frequently as I drive up the N2 road between East London and King William's Town. The suspicious Dodge doesn't seem to drive past, but the driver doesn't close the gap between us either. Maybe it is not following me, maybe I need to lose this paranoia that seems to be getting the better of me.

However, I quickly swallow those words as I distantly approach Breidbach, a suburb of King

William's Town. The Dodge quickly closes the gap but still doesn't drive past. Oh hell! This is really creepy, I'm not being paranoid here. With the road less busy at this time of the day I step on the accelerator, flooring my car. The Dodge easily keeps up, getting dangerously close to me. Both our cars barrel up the road. What the hell is going on here? I'm now freaked. And I don't doubt that this car is after me. But why? Hell, I can't wait to find out, I need to do something, I need to call Thando and let him know about this situation RIGHT NOW. I press his number and put the phone on speaker but again, the guy doesn't answer. Fuck! This doesn't surprise me though, he doesn't always pick up when he's at work. But I still need to tell someone that I'm being chased. And I choose that someone to be my father even though I know very well that he's all the way in Jo'burg and can't exactly do anything to help me at this moment. I also have him on speed dial, just like



Thando, and I dial him with my foot still all the way down on the accelerator. I can't afford to slow down, not when this mid-size crossover SUV is still chasing me. Unfortunately for me though, his phone doesn't even ring, it sends me straight to voicemail. Oh God! He's probably busy at some golf course with some potential clients. Dammit! Who do I call now? Who do I call? It's not like I can call the 10111 call centre, there's no time for that anyway. I'm panicked right now, losing my mind. I know that I can't call my mother either because she's in church right now. So what do I do?

Kevin. Yeah, I should call Kevin. I dial his number panicking, with one hand on the steering wheel while my eyes keep going up to check the rear view mirror. Unlike the two men I've already called, my brother from another mother answers on the first ring.

-Him: "Hey, S. I'm at work and my battery is

about to die."

-Me: "Listen, Kev. I'm approaching Breidbach and there's a car that's chasing me. It's a white Dodge Jour..."

I don't finish the sentence, the annoying 'end call' tone beeps. I'm sure Kevin's phone has just died. Oh God! Why am I being chased anyway? And by whom? As I'm still frustrated but Kevin's phone dying on me, I miss noticing the Dodge zipping past me. I only see it when it swings back onto my lane, right in front of me, almost giving me a heart attack. Then it makes an immediate stop. What the fuck?! To avoid the collision, I instantly slam on the breaks. Tyres screech and a horn from the car behind me blares. My German machine, however, doesn't come to a stop before its bumper smashes into the rear of the Dodge, throwing me forward. The whole thing happens so fast. My head crashes into the steering wheel, as my body is held back

by the seatbelt. Dammit! Where the fuck is that airbag? Doesn't this crash warrants its deployment?

I sit stock still for a moment, feeling dizzy, my forehead probably bleeding. Shit! When I manage to lift my head up, my door opens and two unfamiliar men, obviously from the Dodge, roughly haul me out of my car. What the hell is going on? Who the fuck are these people? I try to fight them off but they are obviously stronger and they overpower me. But even though they've overpowered me they still suffocate me with chloroform when they are about to throw me inside their Dodge. As I drift into unconsciousness I wonder if this is the end of me and the baby I'm carrying. Why is this even happening to me? That's the last question I ask myself, then it's lights out for me.

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I couldn't type because I broke my arm while participating in King Monada's Malwedhe Dance Challenge. [LOL. Just kidding]

Season 2

#16

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"I've been caught up in someone else's mess up. But now I got a hunger in my eyes to fight the fire." - Layla

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Thando

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"Emily is your daughter? But I thought she was a Marais and you and Molly are both Pretorius."

I ask stunned as I come to a halt by the ER exit.

I don't even know how I got the dozen and a half words past the bile rising in my throat. I've been walking and talking nicely with this woman following her visit to her daughter's ward. I also paid Molly a visit in the ward this morning during my rounds. She's recovering well and her son is also a strong, little fighter in that incubator. I thought her mother would want to have them transferred to a private hospital but I guess not. They are doing okay here anyway. Everything looks good. But this woman just had to spoil my mood by telling me that she's also a mother to the woman who's hellbent on being my enemy - Emily. What the hell?

-Her: "I remarried. My youngest daughter, Molly, changed her last name to that of her stepfather while Emily retained her father's."

-Me: "I see."

So I actually saved the life of Emily's little sister yesterday. The same Emily who's plotting

against me. I guess that's life for you. I'm just glad I didn't have this piece of information yesterday though. Who knows how it could have affected my professional judgement as a doctor when I was treating Molly? We are professionals who are bound by ethics, we are not supposed to use our emotions when treating patients, but sometimes lines get blurred and it becomes hard to not take things personal. We are still human after all.

Had I slipped up yesterday, if something had gone wrong, I would have given Summers exactly what he's been looking for. The man has something against me. He would never cut me any slack even though he did give Emily a pass after I had laid a complaint against her, a complaint I wanted to be dealt with internally in the disciplinary hearing by the hospital - and he took advantage of that. If I wanted I could still take this whole thing, especially how he and the

management dealt with it, to the Eastern Cape Department of Health, but I don't have time for that hassle. I'm just glad Emily is no longer around this hospital to cause trouble for me.

"Here's my card. Should you need anything, anything at all, don't hesitate to call me. I mean, we're both in medicine so I may be of help to you some day, we can never know. I know that saving lives is our job as doctors but still, I'm grateful you saved my daughter and my first grandson."

This woman's sing-song voice sounds so sincere. I could actually believe her.

As a doctor I never expect or get drunk in any form of praise from my patients or their families, that's just me. But things could be different with this woman standing beside me right now, only if she wasn't Emily's mother. Now that I know that she's her mother I can't help but wonder if she's also got ulterior

motives. She probably doesn't because when looking at her I see a woman of integrity, someone who's honest and trustworthy. But being cautious won't hurt. I won't even let my feelings show, I just fake a smile and accept the card.

-Me: "Thank you, ma'am. But right now I gotta go. Back to work."

-Her: "Of course, of course. I need to get going too, my practice is waiting."

I nod then turn and walk away, putting the card in my pocket. I won't throw it away, just in case I need it some day.

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"I told you that Molly's mother was sweet." Zizo says as I meet her by the nurses station. I want



to tell her that she's also Emily's mother but she doesn't give me the chance.

-Her: "Anyway, have you seen the message on our WhatsApp group? More details about Sbu's launch party?"

Sbu, the IT guy who once helped me get into Nat's computer, is launching his startup cybersecurity company this coming Saturday. He's my friend and I'm really happy for him, but I no longer think I'll be able to honour the invitation.

-Me: "No, I haven't seen it yet. I don't even think I'll be in attendance maan, Zee. I need to make time for my family."

-Her: "Your family? Is your mom okay?"

She's now concerned.

-Me: "My mom's coping, don't worry about her. I'm going to see her next week, but for now I'm talking about Someleze, assisting her with the

wedding preparations."

The truth is Someleze and I need to sort out a few things in our relationship before showing up as a happy couple at any event, but I don't want to tell Zizo that.

-Her: "Oh, I understand. The wedding is drawing near. I'm sure you're both feeling the pressure now."

At this point I search for my phone in the pockets of my scrubs to contact Sbu and turn down the invitation before I forget. But I don't find my phone anywhere in my pockets.

-Me: "How could I see the message? My phone is not even with me. I probably left it in my office or the break room. I have this tendency of just leaving it lying around lately. Not on purpose, of course, I just forget about it. I would sit down, take it out, use it, put it down, then forget to take it with me when I leave."

-Her: "And if Soso calls? Dude, she's pregnant."

-Me: "You heard the part of not doing it on purpose, right? Zee, there's just a lot going on in my head lately, including my mom's treatment, I guess that's why I'm now forgetful. And it's also of this very reason that I always ask a scrub nurse to count then recount all instruments, sponges and other tools before I close a patient up in the OR, I do not want to make mistakes where people's lives are concerned. As for Soso, she knows to call the front if there's an emergency, and I'd be paged down."

-Her: "I've noticed that in the last couple of days you haven't been yourself, Thando. You walk around these corridors with this dejected expression on your face, and I know that it's got nothing to do with your mother. Yesterday you didn't want to talk about it but today I'm not walking away until you talk to me. What's going on?"

I know that she means it. She won't let this go until I talk to her. And I also know that she's doing this because she cares.

I take her hand and pull her to the side, to sit down on the bench.

-Me: "Zizo, as someone who knows me too well, do you honestly think I'm ready to become someone's husband again? Thing is, I don't want to fail for the second time."

-Her: "Where's this coming from now? You just said you want to help Soso with the wedding preparations. Now what are you asking me? Don't tell me you're having some doubts. Cold feet?"

-Me: "Just answer the question, please."

-Her: "Well, only you know the answer to that question. And I believe you knew it before you even proposed to Soso. The only thing I'm going to emphasise one more time is that you

deserve to be happy Tee, and Soso does make you happy. Moving on was the best decision you could have possibly made for yourself. And don't you dare let your bad experience with Busi get in the way of what you currently have with Soso. Soso is not Busi, Thando. She won't do to you what Busi did. And don't tell me you still believe that you're the reason things didn't work out between you and that woman, that you're the reason she cheated. Hell no, Busi made that decision all on her own. Let it go now and stop putting pressure on yourself."

-Me: "Here's the thing, Zee. I feel like history could easily repeat itself. I get busy, Soso also gets busy, and we'd go maybe two or three weeks without being together, if you know what I mean. Yes we'd talk everyday and see each other maybe once or twice a week but not actually 'be together'. At the beginning I used to try to make more time for her, you too know this.

I'd sometimes ask you to cover my shifts and I'd also turn down some projects just so I could accommodate her. And I wanted to try even harder but she asked me not to. She was like 'I know and understand that you get extremely busy sometimes, so don't feel guilty about doing what you need to be doing, what you should be doing. I do not want to be the one holding you back in your career because I know how important it is to you. I also get busy sometimes, and I wouldn't want you to ask me to neglect my research project for you. My studies are very important to me and I wouldn't want you to hold me back in them either. So if we do not want to end up resenting each other let's just do what we're both supposed to do to better our lives as individuals, freely.' That's what she said. I should have known that women don't always mean what they say, because last night she told me how neglected by me she sometimes feels, as though she had forgotten

what she said with her own mouth. I didn't even attempt to remind her, I just didn't see the point...You know what else she told me? That with me unavailable she found herself attracted to this other guy, but apparently it didn't go further than just a simple 'meaningless' kiss. Seriously, is that supposed to make it all okay? If I'm being honest, Zee, I'm now left feeling uncertain about the future. I mean what's gonna happen the next time I'm unavailable and she meets another guy? Won't the available become desirable? Can I really trust her? Ain't it possible that we took our relationship to the next level too soon? Are we really ready to get married? I mean, I know what I feel and what I want. I want Someleze. I'm in love with her. Crazy, passionately. And I know why I'm marrying her. But is it possible that I moved on too quickly after my divorce, before I could even completely deal with the scars Busi left me with? Is Soso even ready for a lifetime commitment? Does

she even mean anything that comes out of her mouth?"

Zizo keeps quiet for a long moment, probably trying to figure out what to say next.

-Her: "I uhhh...I don't know what to say. Do you think she only agreed to marry you because she felt compelled to?"

She says eventually.

-Me: "Would I be off the mark if I thought so?"

-Her: "I wouldn't know. Did you talk to her about all of this?"

-Me: "No, not yet."

-Her: "I think you should, the sooner the better. Sit her down, tell her how you feel, ask the questions you want answers to, share your fears with her and encourage her to also open up to you. Moreover, I recommend that you see a professional. I can hook you up with a



premarital counselor, the one who helped me and Bhongo before we tied the knot. She's really good. She'll help you two put things into perspective before the big day, and that's really important."

Talking with Zizo always strengthens my spine and lends me calm.

-Me: "I was also thinking the same thing, that Soso and I need to see someone. Thanks, Zee. Thanks for listening."

-Her: "Always. I may not always offer advice but I'm always willing to listen."

-Me: "I know and I appreciate you. Now let me go look for my phone. Maybe I've already missed a lot of important calls."

-Her: "Go find it. I'll see you in our meeting in a few minutes."

Sure thing. We have a multidisciplinary team discussion with Pathology and Oncology in a

few minutes, but I need to find my phone first. I get up and make my way to my office, hoping that I'd find it there.

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Thank God, I find it on top of my desk. Upon checking it I realise that I have 8 missed calls, 2 of which are from Soso. I immediately open my WhatsApp because I know that Soso usually leaves me texts or voice notes on WhatsApp when she can't get hold of me. I get her text saying she's going to Alice because the hard-headed Prof Elliott insisted on seeing her dissertation today. But there's no message after the second call. Why is that? I call her back immediately but her phone sends me straight to voicemail. I don't understand. She called me 10 minutes ago, and now her phone is off? I don't

know but I have a bad feeling about this, a strange feeling that something has happened but I

don't know what. And recalling the dream I had two nights ago only makes things worse, I panick. Hell, I'm going home right now to check if she's not there still. If she's not, then I'm going straight to Alice.

I quickly take off my scrubs and change into my street clothes. Then I gather my things and hurry out of the office to the meeting Zizo was talking about. I scurry down the hallway, almost running, wanting to get there in no time. I want to talk to Summers and I find him amidst the other doctors, already 'preaching'. This man loves hearing the sound of his own voice, it's not even funny. I request to talk to him in private and he hesitantly agrees. We step to the side and I tell him that I have a family emergency and that I need to leave at once. He

understands and wishes me well, surprisingly. Before walking out I signal for Zizo who's standing across the room, to let her know that I will call her later.

As I rush out of there my phone rings, and it's Kevin.

"Kevin. I was about to call you, man." I was about to call him and ask if Soso didn't say anything to him.

-Him: "What's going on, Thando? Soso called me less than 15 minutes ago, hysterical. My battery was about to die but I heard what she was trying to tell me. She said she was approaching Breidbach and was being chased by a white Dodge Journey. I couldn't ask her any questions though because my battery died. I'm at work and I had to have them plug it in for me inside and wait a few minutes for it to have some power before calling her back. I just called her back now but her phone's now off.

What's going on?"

He is speaking fast, as though he doesn't even have time to breathe. He's evidently shaken, just as I am. I feel my physical energy leaving my body and I stop walking and reach for the wall on my left for support. Oh God, my worst fear is now confirmed. Soso is indeed in trouble. The dream I had has just become a reality. But I swear, it won't end the same way it did that night, not if I can help it.

I feel bad about not answering when Soso called, but deep down I know that it wouldn't have changed anything, the outcome would still be the same.

-Me: "Thank you for letting me know, Kev. I'm not sure what's going on but you've shed some light. Now I need to do something about this."

-Him: "What kind of trouble is Soso in? Are you gonna call the police?"

-Me: "Like I said, I'm not sure. And no, I won't call the cops. Leave this to me."

I say firmly, with more confidence than circumstances allow.

-Him: "Are you sure you can handle this if you don't even know what it is about? Thando, I'm worried about Soso here. She's like a sister to me."

He sounds really worried, depressed even.

-Me: "I know that you care about Soso but like I said, leave the cops out of it. I'll ring you when I have something pertinent to tell you. But rest assured, Soso will be okay."

After that I hang up and pull myself together. Soso needs me. I rush down the stairs, anxious to get to my car. Is she really going to be okay though? I don't even know what I'm dealing with here, but I have a pretty good idea who. There's not even a single shred of doubt in my mind

that it's Emily and that Dominic guy. I'm sure they now have Soso. But what do they want exactly? Well, I still don't know the answer to that question. Last night I laid awake trying to figure it out but I couldn't. Whatever it is though, I'm realising now that it is more serious than I initially thought. I may not know what they are after but I know that I will find Soso, or I will die trying.

I get to my car and pull the door open. As I settle behind the wheel I can't stop wondering if my actions of the past may have been the trigger that has set the present events in motion. But what did I do? What do these people want from me? Honestly, I would never forgive myself if something bad happened to Soso and our baby because of me.

From the centre console of the car I take out Ryan's card which I got out of Soso's purse this morning while she was still sleeping. I wanted

to talk to the guy myself and ask him some questions about Emily and Dominic, hoping to be able to figure out what they could be after. I know that Soso said the guy doesn't know much either. But sometimes to get the right answers you need to ask the right questions.

I dial the number and cross fingers as the phone rings unanswered on the other side. Lord, please let him answer, I say under my breath. Some people don't take calls from numbers they don't know, but please let him take this one. He answers on the 6th ring, just as I'm about to hang up.

"Hello." He sounds like someone who doesn't want to talk but I'll make him.

-Me: "Ryan, it's Thando. Someleze's fiancé."

-Him: "Oh, Thando. I've been hearing a lot about you but I haven't had the pleasure to meet you yet."



All of a sudden his voice sounds welcoming, upbeat.

-Me: "We'll get to meet some day. But listen, this is not a social call. I need your help."

-Him: "Oh? What do you need?"

-Me: "I believe you already know that Emily and Dominic are up to no good, that they are after me and Someleze for God knows what. Now what I want to know from you is, does either of them drive a white Dodge Journey? I'm asking because a car like that has been following Someleze and I can't think of anyone who could follow her but them."

I don't have time to go into details. This is enough. This is all he needs to know anyway.

-Him: "They are following her? Now this is getting creepy. And yes, one of them has a white Dodge Journey - Nick. The black Mercedes he sometimes drives belongs to his

father."

That's the answer I needed. I don't care about the extra information he's volunteered, I didn't even know that this Dominic sometimes drives a Mercedes.

-Me: "Thanks, Ryan. That's all I needed to know."

-Him: "Where is Someleze now? Is she okay?"

How I wish I knew.

-Me: "I'll call you later and let you know. Right now I gotta go."

I hang up then scroll down to the number of the next person I need to call - Soso's father. I know the kind of man Sandile is, he is going to want to handle this himself. And that's the major reason why I didn't want the police involved.

But before dialling his number I take a moment to think about how I'm going to tell him that his only daughter has possibly been abducted.

Won't he be an avalanche down on me for not protecting her? I know how hectic that man can get. But whatever happens, he needs to know. I anxiously dial his number, but it sends me straight to voicemail. Oh God!

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Sandile

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For comfortability I shift on the couch, but that doesn't work. So I open my jacket and reach down to adjust the piece of steel, a Beretta PX4 Storm Compact, holstered to my waist. That's better. Now I get to comfortably lean back on the couch, just across from the Toses - the weird family that wanted my sister to be married off to their son. Mr Tose, the evil prophet, and his fake prophetess of a wife are

sitting on one couch, while their son Nathi is seated on a single couch next to theirs. They are now all staring at me with fear written all over their faces. Okay, it must be the gun they are seeing.

I got to their home in one of the Mthatha villages about 20 minutes ago, and I've been trying to reason with them but to no avail. However, I guess now that they are seeing a gun they'll be motivated to assimilate every word that comes out of my mouth.

For a man like me 'carrying' is a norm, for protection more than anything else. Even now I didn't come here with the intentions to use this weapon in any way, not even to threaten these pathetic souls. It's only attached to my waist because that's where it belongs.

-Me: "I've been talking nicely with y'all but now you're pushing me. Nathi, I'm gonna say it again, stay away from Iviwe. Stay away from my sister.

When I told you this very thing last year I thought we understood each other, but it turns out I was wrong. Well, if I hear that you were anywhere near her again I won't warn you for the third time, I'll just act. Do you understand?"

This is no threat by any means, I mean every word.

-Him: "I can stay away from Iviwe. But how do you expect me to stay away from my child?"

-Me: "Listen here, pal, I don't care what you've heard on the streets but that baby is not yours. And I'm not gonna say it again. Just stay away from my sister and her baby or you and I are going to have a big problem."

-Mrs Tose: "Mfana, that is our grandson, we know it. Both God and my ancestors showed me the truth."

-Me: "Mama, woah, wait. I'm still coming to you and your ancestors. I still need your son to tell

me that he got what I just told him."

On Friday Iviwe called to tell me that Nathi was in PE demanding to see the baby, even talking about going to court. A lot of bullshit. I didn't want to do anything about that up until Mandisa, Someleze's mother, called yesterday with some shocking information. There's a young woman who looks just like Iviwe who's a patient where my son-in-law works. He took pictures and sent them to Mandisa, then Mandisa sent them to me. I saw the pictures. The breathing tubes connected to that woman couldn't hide the resemblance between her and my sister. In fact, I felt like I was looking at Iviwe because they look exactly the same. Hell, there's no way that's just resemblance. I know in my heart that that woman is my sister. Mrs Tose is just going to have to tell me how she got separated from Iviwe at birth. That's the major reason I left Jo'burg last night and drove down here but I

also saw an opportunity to address this Nathi issue - killing two birds with one stone.

-Me: "Did you get what I just said, Nathi?"

Eyeing the gun on my waist, he nods.

-Him: "Fine, fine. I'll let it go."

I'm not stupid, I know he doesn't mean that. He's just seeing the load on my waist.

-Me: "Good. Now you, Ma. 26 years ago you and your husband said you'd help my parents protect their next baby following the passing of 4 of my young siblings. When my mother fell pregnant a year later you ordered her to come stay with you so she and her unborn baby could be protected from the 'evil spirits'. You said you'd help her with everything and that she didn't even need to see a doctor. You made her believe that doctors were useless, they couldn't save her last 4 children anyway. Later that year she gave birth in your house, you were her

midwife. She gave birth to Iviwe who indeed lived past her first birthday and grew up to be the woman she is today. But what you didn't tell us was that Iviwe had an identical twin. You stole her twin and gave her to someone else to raise. Now tell me, did your god and ancestors tell you to do that?"

It is at this point that Mr Tose jumps in.

-Mr Tose: "Young man, this is my house. We serve God here. How dare you come here and accuse us of stealing babies? We are no baby stealers, dammit. We didn't steal any baby."

The nerve of this old man is just too much for me to comprehend.

-Me: "Tata, don't do that. Don't take me for a fool, I'm too busy to be playing games. You didn't hear me asking whether you and your wife stole that baby or not, did you? That's because I already know that you did it. You



stole my sister when she was still a baby. And now she can't speak, she's lying in ICU in East London following a taxi accident she got involved in when she was travelling from Port Elizabeth. The only thing I want to know from you two is, who did you sell or give her to? You tell me that and I'll walk out of here quietly, I give you my word. But if you continue playing games with me you'll regret it... Now, are you ready to tell me what I wanna know?"

-Mr Tose: "Young man, we don't know anything. We don't know what you're talking about."

-Me: "You sure you wanna do this? You sure you wanna push me?"

My voice has been calm all this time but now I'm certain that it's another kind of calm, the kind that's not only intimidating but also sends chills down one's spine. And I'm sure the gun on my waist is amplifying their fear. The quivering Mrs Tose looks at her husband and they

communicate with their eyes. Then they both turn to me.

-Mrs Tose: "Fine, we'll tell you what you want to know. We took the other twin and gave it to my cousin who couldn't have children. She raised Milani in Mdantsane and that's where they still live."

-Me: "Milani? That's my sister's name?"

-Her: "Yes. That's the name my cousin gave to her. She raised her as her own child, she loves her. Please don't do this now, don't tell Milani the truth. My cousin will be broken."

Whatever she's smoking must be A-grade. And I don't have time to entertain her.

-Me: "Nathi, go grab a pen and paper. I want your mother to write down her cousin's name and address in Mdantsane. That's where I'll be headed when I leave here."

The guy hesitates but he eventually gets up and

walks towards the kitchen.

-Me: "Hey, don't even think about doing something stupid over there, okay? In fact, come back and put your phone on the coffee table."

-Him: "This is ridiculous, it's not like I'm gonna call the police on you. There's not even a signal here."

-Me: "What do you mean there's no signal?"

-Him: "I mean exactly that. There's no cellphone signal here."

I pull my phone out of my pocket and check it. Indeed there's no signal. Some places, huh.

-Me: "Well, that doesn't change anything. I still need to see your phone on the table."

He follows my orders then go get the pen and paper. When he comes back his mother writes what I've asked her to write then hands me the

paper.

-Me: "I hope for your sake this is a correct address. And if I were you I wouldn't even think about calling your cousin to warn her...Now, this is what's gonna happen. You're all gonna stay away from my family and I'll forget this ever happened. But if y'all give Iviwe any problems you will go to jail for stealing a human being, keeping her away from her real family for 25 years. And that would be the lightest punishment you could ever get for stealing 25 years of my sister's life, for robbing us time with her. My parents died not knowing that they have a daughter out there, all because of you two. You don't even deserve to go to jail for what you did, you deserve far worse than that...Whatever plan you were thinking of executing, Nathi, you better abandon it. Or going to jail would be the least of your parents' worries. Be an extreme pain in the butt and I'd be the judge and

executioner."

I get up from the couch and walk out without saying anything more. God, I'm glad my sister didn't get to marry into this evil family.

Now I need to pass by my home in Mthatha Central to see if the housesitters are still doing okay over there before I drive to East London. I couldn't get the chance to go home earlier because I wanted to deal with these people first.

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Shortly into my drive my phone rings, I guess there's signal in this area. In fact, that's obvious. I've been hearing messages pouring in on my phone but I haven't checked any of them, not while I'm driving. I don't want to take this call either, but I decide to check who it is before ignoring it. It's Thando. My son-in-law never just

calls unless there's a very good reason to, so there must be one even now. Maybe he wants to update me about my newly-found-sister's condition in hospital. Maybe she's passed away. I need to answer.

-Me: "Talk to me."

-Him: "Mashiya, I've been calling but your phone's been off."

-Me: "There was no service where I was. What's going on?"

-Him: "Umh...I'm afraid I don't have good news. I have reason to believe that Soso's been taken, abducted."

What? What did he just say?

-Me: "Say that again."

-Him: "I believe it happened less than an hour ago when she was driving to Alice. The last person she talked to says she said she was

being chased by another car, thereafter she became unreachable. The tracker in her car puts the car exactly where she said she was when she was being chased..."

At this point his voice just echoes in my ears, I don't hear any other word he's saying. I'm thrown. Who the hell could have taken my daughter and why? Whoever they are though they are going to regret even breathing in her direction. Trust me, they do not want to bear the brunt of Sandile's family love. It looks like this Beretta is going to be put to use after all. I don't like being tested. The monster inside of me is now running wild.

-Me: "Thando, listen, I'm in Mthatha right now and I'll be in EL in less than 4 hours. Hold it tight."

I hang up and press my foot down on the accelerator, taking corners on two wheels, generally pushing city driving to the hilt. Going

home can wait, I need to get to get to EL.

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Someleze

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When I come to I'm lying on a bed in a room I don't recognise, staring up to a ceiling with exposed beams. Where the hell am I? When I remember what happened, I spring off the bed and run to the door. Please God, help me get out of here, help me get out of here. I repeat the short prayer in my head as I frantically twist and turn the knob even though I can see that the solid wood door is locked. Defeated I feel like screaming but I can't afford to draw the attention of whoever is on the other side of this door. Why didn't they tie me up anyway? Maybe it's because they know that there's no escaping



this place. Oh God, the thought of that is enough to drain every little bit of energy in my body.

I look at myself for the first time and notice that I'm still wearing my clothes - my black leggings, white top and white All Star sneakers. These people didn't hurt me in any way but for some reason I feel a little woozy, with a slight headache. My eyes move to a clock on the wall and I realise that it's been 3 hours since I got dragged out of my car. I hope Kevin got what I was trying to tell him so my family could at least have an idea of what happened to me. What do these people want with me anyway? God, I need to find a way to get out of here before I find the answer to that question. I move to the only window this room has and I yank the curtain off to the side. But, of course, the window has a burglar. Even if it didn't have one though, even if I could jump out of it, where

would I go? It looks like I'm in the middle of nowhere, all I see beyond this garden this wooden cabin is set in is an open veld with scattered acacia trees and gradual hills. Oh Lord, where am I? And who's keeping me here? Will Thando and my parents ever find me again? As I think about the possibility of that not happening my headache multiplies in an instant, and I feel an itchy spot on my neck as I try to massage it with my hand. I go stand in front of a mirror in the corner of the room to check the itch. There's a small bruise on the surface of the skin of my neck, just below my right ear. This sure looks to be an injection site. Those guys must have injected me with something. That would explain why I feel slightly woozy and why I was out for this long - because I know from Chemistry class that chloroform wears off in less than an hour.

Whoever has abducted me though still has a

heart because they have cleaned and dressed the small cut on my forehead with a band-aid. As I'm still standing there, looking at myself in the mirror, I hear the door behind me open. Frightened, I quickly turn around to see who it is. Only to be met with a familiar face. What the hell?

-Me: "Dominic? I should have known. What the hell do you want from me?"

-Him: "I'm glad you're awake. They didn't hurt you, did they?"

His calm voice and demeanour as he tucks his hands in the pockets of his pants makes me sick.

-Me: "Just answer my fuckin' question! What the hell is this about?"

I'm angry and that's evident in my voice. But Nick doesn't seem to care. He slowly walks over to the bed and sits down. Then he motions for

me to join him.

-Me: "I don't want to sit down. Just let me go home."

-Him: "You're not going home, Somi, not before I get what I want. And if you really want to know what this is about you'll come sit down and listen."

He is still calm and collected, annoying the hell out of me. Lacking any other choice, I take a deep breath and go sit on the bed, but I make sure not to sit next to him. He's by the headboard and I take the opposite end.

-Him: "You want to know what this is about? Well, it's about revenge. Avenging my mother's death. You remember me telling you that my mother died when I was 14, right?"

-Me: "Yes. But what's that got to do with me?"

-Him: "You never asked how she died. Well, she died giving birth to my half-sister who ultimately

passed away too. A biracial bastard child fathered by the mighty Mbulelo December."

What? Mbulelo December? But that's Thando's father. He impregnated another woman while married? Whoa!

-Nick: "Yeah, that's right. Your precious soon-to-be father-in-law was having an affair with my mother and he impregnated her. I only got these details last year in November after years of my father avoiding to tell us the truth. And you know what I thought after that? Had Mbulelo not done what he did, had he not impregnated my mother, she'd still be alive today...That day in King William's Town I told you that I was now fine, that I'd gotten over my mother's death a while ago, but that was a lie. No one ever gets over the death of their parent."

-Me: "Listen, Dominic, I'm really sorry about what happened to your mother, I really am. But it's got nothing to do with me. Why are you

keeping me here?"

-Him: "You remember what you said to me that day when I told you about my father who doesn't want to completely retire and let his children run his business? You said he probably sees his business as his baby and now it's hard for him to just let go of it. Well, guess what? I'm pretty sure that's how your fiancé's father also feels about the construction company he built from the ground up. If he loses it he'll feel like he's lost a huge part of himself. And that's exactly how I want him to feel. I want him to feel the pain of losing what he loves, just like we also lost our mother. That's worse than dying, trust me...He and his partner, the co-founder of the company, sold 40% of that company to 4 shareholders when they opened the Cape Town branch. And then they were each left with 30% stake. His partner then sold 5% out of his own 30% two years ago. And last

year in January Mbulelo signed 10% of his own shares over to his only son, your fiancé, when he quit his job as a surgeon. I guess that was his way of getting him to clean up his act and join the family business, but we both know that it didn't work."

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This is news to me. I had no idea that Thando had a stake in his father's company. He never mentioned it to me, not even once.

-Me: "Let me guess. Now you want Thando's 10%. A foot inside his father's stable so you could wreck havoc from the inside."

-Him: "I always knew you were smart. My brother and I want those shares but Thando won't sell. My brother approached him in December last year, wanting to buy. He made

him a very good offer but Thando turned him down. He wouldn't budge."

Oh, this is it. This is why Thando said Nick looked familiar last night. He once met up with his brother.

-Me: "So you resorted to playing dirty?"

-Him: "Desperate times call for desperate measures, Somi, you know that. And my cousin, Emily, was happy to help me."

-Me: "And by helping you, you mean she was to seduce Thando, sleep with him, then what? Cry rape?"

I can't believe this guy.

-Him: "She was going to have physical proof of their encounter. And with Thando's history of sexually assaulting his subordinates, a second complaint was not going to look good for him. It was going to ruin his career."



-Me: "Hey wena, Thando never sexually assaulted anyone. That nurse lied and that complaint never even reached the HPCSA because it was false, just like Emily's was also going to be."

-Him: "You and I both know that, but the department and the council work with evidence. And I doubt Thando would have wanted to let things go that far. He wouldn't have gambled with his career like that."

-Me: "So you were going to blackmail him. If he didn't want to gamble with his career he was going to have to sell to you."

-Him: "That was the plan. But I guess from that first accusation he learned to be cautious, so our plan didn't work."

-Me: "And that's when you decided to change your strategy and use me instead."

-Him: "The opportunity presented itself and we

grabbed it."

-Me: "What was your plan exactly? To sleep with me, then what? Blackmail me with a sex tape? Threaten to post it online? And what good was that gonna do you? I don't have any shares. I don't have anything."

-Him: "But you have someone - Thando. Someone you wouldn't have wanted to know about your side shenanigans. Forget the internet cliché."

-Me: "So you were going to threaten to expose me to him if I didn't...what? Convince him to sell to you?"

-Him: "You're smart indeed."

-Me: "You're probably right on that one because I didn't fall for your stupid tricks."

-Him: "But what's important is that you're here with me now. We were still back to the drawing board, devising another plan, when you saw me

and Emily together at Ryan's. From there we knew that you and Thando would put two and two together and we'd never get a chance to act again, so we decided to act now before the window of opportunity closes. You are here because we've improvised. And don't worry, no one's gonna hurt you here. Be comfortable, you're safe. We just want what we want and once we get it you'll go home. But if we don't get it things will get very rough for you."

-Me: "So you're gonna call Thando and demand ransom. The shares."

-Him: "For anything we offer him, probably half the market value. Let's both hope he cares for you enough to give up his family legacy. But if he doesn't, I'm sure the precious cargo you're carrying will be motivation enough for him to care."

-Me: "You're sick, you know that? You're sick!"

-Him: "The only person who's sick here is the man who impregnated another man's wife. My brother and I have already acquired 40% of his precious company. We've anonymously bought the shares from the Cape Town shareholders. If we get Thando's 10%, guess who's going to be the major shareholder of that company? Guess who's going to be calling the shots? With his 20%, Mbulelo won't have a deciding voice and that's going to kill him. Even with both his and his initial partner's portfolios they would still be standing at 45%."

If I could say I saw this coming I'd be lying. I didn't know that this whole thing was about shares I didn't even know existed. About avenging something I knew nothing about. I can't believe I'm now in this position because someone else messed up before I even knew him. I guess loving Thando isn't easy, huh. He's always surrounded by drama and I keep getting

sucked into it. But there's no way I'm going to let these people use me. No way.

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Thando

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I pull up in front of Mrs Pretorius' private practice in Vincent. I used the card she gave me earlier, I called her and asked to see her urgently, stating that it's a matter of life and death. Fortunately for me, she didn't give me the run around, she just asked me to come meet her here. If she's the honest woman I think she is she won't have a problem shedding some light on where her daughter might be keeping Someleze. She promised to be of help to me after all, and now it's time for her to deliver on that promise. I'm just taking a chance though. I

know that most parents would never sell out their children no matter how wrong they are.

I get out of the car and walk inside feeling a little unsure. I don't know how this is going to go but I don't have a choice, I need to try. I need to get this information before Sandile gets here. He and I need to find Someleze and bring her home. I can't believe the last time I saw her, which is this morning, I was ice-cold towards her. Now I might never get to see her again. And the whole thing that happened between us seems so stupid right now.

"Doctor December. I must say, I didn't expect to receive a call from you so soon."

Mrs Pretorius says as she comes out of the consultation room to meet me in the waiting area.

-Me: "Trust me, I was hoping I'd never have to make the call."

That's me being too honest.

-Her: "Don't worry, just follow me."

Season 2

#17

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"Ndizakubamb' egxeni mihla yonke yokuphila kwam. Ndizakukhuthaza nob' izinto sezibhek'ecaleni. Umlingani ngowani na xayengasoz' akupholis' amanxeba. Ntombi ndiyabulela zang' undishiy' enyanyeni. Ndiyakuthembisa ntomb' entle ndizabalidwala lakho kude kuvalwe." - Ntando

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Thando

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Mrs Pretorius covers her face with both hands

after hearing the reason for my visit. Is that good or bad for me? I guess I'll have to wait and see. It takes her a long moment to remove the hands and look back at me.

-Her: "I wish I could say I'm surprised by what you just told me, but I'm not. Not really."

What is she saying? She better not be saying what I think she's saying.

-Me: "Meaning what exactly? That you've known about this all along? Even when you were being nice to me this morning? Are you...?"

She breaks in before I can finish.

-Her: "No, no. That's not what I meant. What I mean is I know Dominic very well, he's my late sister's son. I know what he's capable of. I won't say he's always been problematic but when he wants something he would do anything to get it, I mean anything. Kidnapping a pregnant woman sounds exactly like something he would do."



And Emily? Well, she's my daughter but I don't always agree with the way she does things. That's why even now we don't see eye to eye. She prefers her stepfather over me because he has a very soft spot for her. I'm even sure that he's the one who helped get her request acceded to when she wanted to rotate at Frere Hospital. He's also a medical practitioner and he knows people at the Bisho office and the National Department. I can't say Emily's spoiled because of him though. She's always been like this. She and Dominic have always been close, he's always liked her and I guess that's because she's susceptible to his manipulations. So I'm not surprised to learn that they are both involved in something this horrific."

I wasn't expecting a fat paragraph about the history of these two psychos. But hearing it is enough to freeze my blood. If they are capable of anything then what does that mean for

Someleze? They may go as far as taking her life. Oh God, no. Please don't let that happen. But why are they doing this? What do they want exactly? The way I'm so scared for Someleze and our baby I just turn into a carved god of Egypt in my chair; I can't speak, I can't move.

-Mrs Pretorius: "You say you have no idea why they are doing this but I'm positive that Dominic wants something from you. And I believe you'll find out soon enough what it is that he wants when he calls for ransom."

How typical. She's now shifting all the blame to Dominic, away from her own daughter.

-Me: "Ransom? How sure are you that they'll demand ransom? What if they only want to hurt me by hurting my woman?"

I finally manage to push words past what feels like a block of ice stuck in my throat. Images of them hurting Someleze keep playing in my head,

and I just lose it. I jolt off the chair, kick it back and start pacing around this woman's office. The way I keep scratching my head I swear if I do it one more time it'll bleed. I stop, turn, then charge towards Mrs Pretorius. My motion is as quick as it is violent. I grab her, lift her off the chair and pin her to the wall with my forearm wedged under her throat.

-Me: "I don't want to involve cops just yet, so you better tell me where your bratty daughter and nephew are keeping my woman, right now!"

-Her: "Hey, I'm on your side here. I'm on your side."

That's not the location. I press deeper into her neck even as she rattles off the details of her campaign for release.

-Her: "Come on, my...daughter and grandson are alive...because of you. So I'm also willing...to help you...save your family. Let me...call Emily."

She struggles to speak but she manages to get her message across. I push off her and she stumbles to a safer distance. Looking at her coughing I realise what I've just done. I can't believe I just did that, I can't believe I went that far. In my life I've never been violent to a woman and now that I have, it scares me.

-He: "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, I didn't mean to do that. I just lost it."

She looks at me with unreadable eyes then shakes her head as her fingers gingerly touch her now reddish neck.

-Her: "I'll call Emily. She's still my daughter, I can get through to her. I can convince her to give up your wife's location before this goes too far. I also don't want to see her get into more trouble. She's still my daughter."

-Me: "Go ahead. Call her and put the phone on speaker."

She does but she doesn't ask her anything, she only requests her to come to her office right away. Emily replies by saying she'd be on her way because she wasn't doing anything anyway, that she was just chilling at home since it's her day off.

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About fifteen minutes later, which felt like eternity to me, she arrives. But when her eyes land on me in her mother's office she goes wild.

-Her: "What is this, Mom? What is he doing here?"

-Mrs Pretorius: "He's here because his fiancé's missing." She answers with a calm voice.

-Her: "So? Is this a police station? We open missing person's cases here?"

-Mrs Pretorius: "Emily, I know about what you and Dominic have been up to. And Dr. December here believes that you two have now abducted his fiancé. Baby, I need you to tell me where she's being kept. You can still get out of this before it gets ugly. Abducting an innocent, pregnant woman would never look good no matter how you look at it. What were you thinking getting involved?"

-Her: "Why do you always think the worst of me, Mom? Do you honestly think I'd be involved in something like this? You believe what this man is saying about your own daughter?!"

Such disrespect! She's not talking she's shouting, at her own mother.

-Mrs Pretorius: "I believe that Dominic put you up to this. But you can still get out before things go from bad to worse, before you get into more trouble. Plus, we owe it to Dr. December to get his fiancé back to him unharmed. Your sister

and your nephew are doing okay now because of this man. They made it because of this man's dedication and willingness to go an extra mile."

Mrs Pretorius' voice is calm but her words have definitely made their mark because Emily now calms down and looks at me with...appreciative eyes?

I'm still in awe of Mrs Pretorius' gratitude, you know. I don't get this often. As a doctor I've been saving lives for some years. Earlier there was a sense of fulfillment because patients would express gratitude. But now that sense is lost. Saving life isn't anything great for our society. It has become a mechanical job expectation from doctors, just like a paid service of a machine.

-Emily: "You are Molly's doctor?"

-Mrs Pretorius: "How could you have known? You haven't even been to the hospital to see

your sister. But that doesn't matter now, what matters is that poor woman out there. Where is she, baby? Where is she? Speak up, put an end to this madness. Don't let Dominic drag you down with him again."

Emily sits down on the only available chair in the office, the second chair facing her mother's desk, right next to me. Then she turns and looks at me with a soft face.

-Her: "I wasn't part of this abduction, Dr. D, I swear. Yes, Nick told me about his new plan yesterday after we left Ryan's place but I tried to talk him out of it. I thought it was extreme and unnecessary, but he obviously thought otherwise. He said he'd go ahead and do it without me if he had to, and I guess he did."

-Me: "Is that so?"

I definitely don't trust her.

-Her: "It is. But I may have an idea where he



could have taken her. His friend's family's game farm in Adelaide. It's isolated and ideal for this kind of thing."

For some reason I now believe her. I don't know if I'm being gullible or what but I can see the sincerity in her eyes and I can also hear it in her voice. I'm about to ask her why they have been doing all of this but my phone distracts me when it rings. Maybe it's Someleze's father wanting to tell me that he's now in EL.

-Emily: "I'm sorry for everything I've done to you, Dr. D. And I'll make things right by taking you to the farm."

She says as I take my phone out of my pocket. My heart stops when I realise that it's not Someleze's father, that the call is actually coming directly from Someleze's phone. I know that it can't be Someleze who's calling, not after I've seen her car with a wrecked bumper surrounded by cops near Breidbach less than

an hour ago - before I came here. I know that it's Dominic and this can't be good, I feel it in my blood with a sudden mean certainty, a sense of things falling miserably into place.

"Who's this?" I answer anxiously.

"Definitely not your bitch. But don't worry, she's okay and she'll remain this way if you follow my instructions."

A man's voice answers on the other side. I'm not familiar with this voice but I know that it's that Dominic. I feel my temperature rise as my anger builds up.

-Me: "Dominic, if you hurt her..."

But he quickly cuts me off.

-Him: "You'll do what? Haven't you heard what I've just said?"

-Me: "What do you want? What do you want from me?!"

-Him: "Simple. Your shares of your father's company. My brother tried to get you to sell, remember?"

Oh, now it dawns on me. This piece of shit looked familiar on that photo Someleze showed me last night because I met up with his brother last December. He and his lawyer tried so hard to convince me to sell to him but unfortunately things didn't go their way. I couldn't just sell a portion of my father's company, a company he worked so hard to build. Those shares belong to me only on paper. They are being controlled by my father, he has my proxy, I'm not in any way involved in the company. I'm not even taking the dividends. And that's because I never wanted to be part of that company to begin with, my father just forced the shares on me because he was trying to 'bribe' me to join the business after I'd quit my job. But his strategy obviously didn't work. I don't want to lie though, learning

that this whole thing is about the damn shares has just thrown me to the land of disbelief.

What is it about those shares really?

-Me: "Listen, I need to know that Someleze is okay before I do anything you say."

I hear some shuffling on the other side then I hear him telling who I presume is Someleze to talk to me.

"Thando, don't do it. Don't give him what he wants." Someleze, the woman who means so much to me, speaks fast but without any hint of fear in her voice. That sends a wave of mild relief my way. However, that wave quickly recedes and sinks into the sand when I hear what sounds like a slap on the other end of the phone, followed by Someleze's painful scream. What the hell? Did he just slap her?

-Me: "What have you just done? What have you done, dammit?!"

I don't know how I got up from the chair but I find myself on my feet in an instant.

-Him: "Get the share transfer process in motion, my brother will contact you. Do that and you'll get your woman back. Don't do it and I'll make what you've just heard seem like a tickle. You know what else, Thando? I've always loved your profession, I've always wanted to be a surgeon. But the thought of studying for so many years before I could be registered as one discouraged me. However, my love for the profession is still burning inside me. And I might just practise on your pregnant bitch if you don't get me what I want. I'd sure love to grab a scalpel and cut her belly open then watch her blood pool up on the floor as I pull the foetus, YOUR blood, out. I'd love to watch her bleed to death. Just like my own mother died giving birth to your half sister."

I hear the last sentence but it doesn't register, all my mind can do at this point is imagine the

graphic ruthlessness this asshole has just painted with words. I feel like I'm coming out of my skin. And him hanging up immediately after saying that shit doesn't help either.

-Mrs Pretorius: "Was that Dominic?"

She asks as I put my phone back in my pocket, but I don't answer. I just start toward the door, pushing Emily, who's now also standing, out of the way. As she babbles self-righteous speak I just turn and face her mother.

-Me: "Just make sure your daughter doesn't leave here."

Then I pull the door open and walk out. I fucking need some air.

When I get into my car I let out a loud scream, ropes of spit shooting from my mouth. Love and rage in equal quantities. My scream probably shreds the birds from the trees and echoes into the streets of Vincent, but I don't

care. I just want to let it all out.

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Someleze

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Now frightened of this monster I once thought was handsome I draw my knees to my chest, the bottom of my chin grazing the tops of my knees on the uncomfortable bed. I can't believe that the man I once thought was nice and funny has not just abducted me but he's also just saw it fit to raise a hand to me, giving me a hot slap that has caused my nose to bleed. Dominic Walker is one sick bastard, that much is now clear to me.

After the blood chilling picture he's just painted for Thando on the phone he hangs up and looks

at me with that signature crooked smile of his.

-Him: "I'm sure by now you hate yourself for once having feelings for me. See, I know how you truly felt about me, Somi. I know what you felt for me. You wanted me but you were just scared and in denial."

Add being a mind-reader to the list of everything I already think he is. Looking at the blood stains on my white top I feel so disgusted at myself for once feeling something for this pig.

-Him: "Don't worry, you weren't the first one to get weak at the knees at the sight of me. I have that effect on women."

Disgusted mostly by the grin that accompanies his words, I find myself dry-heaving twice. This piece of shit is so full of himself.

-Him: "Just don't fool yourself by thinking because I once kissed your lips I won't hurt you when I have to. If you and your fiancé try to be



little heroes you'll both pay with your blood. The blood that has come out of your nose is nothing compared to what I'll do to you if you pull another stupid stunt."

-Me: "You're a fucking psychotic sadist, you know that?"

-Him: "Maybe I am because trust me, hurting you would be so much fun for me. Easy too because I don't even like you that much. Pity you once thought I did. The truth is, I don't do your kind, sweetheart."

-Me: "My kind?"

-Him: "You're the wrong race."

-Me: "Fucking racist. I'm sure you flipped when you heard that your mother died giving birth to a baby fathered by a black man. That's why you're doing all this, be honest with me and with yourself. If she had an affair with a white man you wouldn't be doing this. Well, news flash,

your mother loved that black man because I don't recall hearing you say she got raped. She fell pregnant for him because they loved each other regardless of their races or their marital statuses. Now why should Thando and I pay for your mother's adultery, betrayal, whoredom, and immorality?"

I soon regret saying that when Nick strides towards me and grabs me by the throat. My eyes widen in horror as I see no mercy in his.

-Him: "Say my mother was a whore one more time and you'll regret it. Hear me?!"

His big hand presses deeper into my throat as another pulls me by the hair. My eyes are now probably bulging as I try to get free from this barbaric monster. He eventually lets go of me and pushes me to lie on my back on the bed.

-Him: "Bitch, you are at my mercy in this remote place, so you better play nice if you want to still

be breathing when you leave here."

His eyes are blazing with anger and I shrink in my position, trembling and coughing. Oh God, please let my family find me before things get worse in here. With everything in me, I'm hoping Kevin got what I was trying to tell him on the phone and passed it to Thando. If he did, then I'm positive that my father will turn this province upside down until he finds me.

Nick seems to have done some research on Thando but he forgot one crucial aspect, doing some background check on me before deciding to execute this kidnapping. I'm sure all he knows about me is that I'm from a middle-class family headed by a single parent in PE. Well, he's in for a surprise. He thinks he's boss, but let's wait until my father finds him. Him brutalising me like this has just earned him a spot in my father's kill list.

I brace myself for anything that may come next

as he hovers over me. But he just yanks off the diamond pendant hanging on a chain around my neck, the queen chess piece Thando bought for me.

-Him: "This looks real."

Real enough to be his, evidently, because he sticks it in his pocket then steps back and walks out of the room, banging the door behind him. Oh, thank you, Jesus, he's gone...for now. I let out a huge sigh of relief as I say a short prayer in my heart, asking God to protect me. That pendant means so much to me, not just because it is expensive but because of its sentimental value. However, I won't even try to get it back, my life is even more valuable than it.

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Thando

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Having sent my location to Someleze's father after he'd called to say he's now around EL I lay on the bonnet of my car in front of Mrs Pretorius' surgery, waiting for him. I'm looking up at the sky, my hands tucked under my head. Wind is now blowing and the pillow-like clouds that have been adorning the sky are now replaced by big, dark ones. It looks like it's going to rain at any minute and I can't help but feel like this sudden change in weather is a bad omen. I cannot shake the feeling of impending doom that is threatening to overcome us. Tears trickle out of my eyes as that one horrible, ear-piercing scream from Someleze keeps echoing in my head. I'm sure I look pathetic right now, but I don't care. The thought of Someleze being hurt just breaks my heart. I'd do anything and give up everything to avoid that from happening again, even give up those shares - my family's

legacy. I've made up my mind, I'm going to give these people what they want and get my wife back. Yeah, I'm doing this.

Still mulling over how I'm going to tell my father, I hear a sound of screeching tyres. I spring off the bonnet in an instant only to see Sandile's car 180'ing about 10 feet away from me.

Feeling embarrassed, I quickly wipe away my tears as he leaps out of the car and walks over to me, leaving the car door behind him open. I guess he's got no time to shut it.

"Where's she? Where's this Emily who knows something about my daughter's kidnapping?"

He asks, his eyes burning with anger. I brought him up to speed when he called but he just lost it and hung up on me before he could even hear the decision I've made.

-Me: "She's waiting inside the surgery. But please don't be too harsh on her, I don't think

she's involved in the kidnapping."

-Him: "Let me be the judge of that."

He turns and starts to walk toward the entrance of the surgery, but I try to stop him.

-Me: "No, Mashiya, wait."

He stops and turns to me.

-Him: "Listen here, son..."

Just from the tone of his voice I can tell that annoyance is rippling through his entire body as he comes to stand right in front of me. I won't lie, every time he calls me 'son' I find it weird considering the fact that he's only 9 years older than me - the things we do.

-Him: "My daughter is out there, kept against her will. Who knows what they are doing to her as we speak? Every second we waste talking is one second too long for her."

-Me: "But they won't hurt her if I give them what

they want. I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to give up those shares to get my love back."

My father-in-law reacts to that by taking a step closer, he's now too close, our faces only an inch apart, his eyes boring into mine. We hold the look for a long moment before he finally speaks.

-Him: "Are you losing it, Thando? Because I don't have the time or energy to clean up another one of your messes, not when my daughter's safety is concerned."

-Me: "I'm not losing it. What are you talking about?"

-Him: "Then why would you want to give in to their demands? People like that, kidnappers, are sociopaths that can't be trusted. You don't make no deal with people like that. How certain are you that they'll release my daughter once they get what they want? I won't even talk about



their weird demand."

-Me: "I'm not certain of anything."

-Him: "Exactly. So you're not giving them anything. We're going to get Soso out of there ourselves, right now. Stand your ground like a man, Thando."

I get his point, it's just that I'm scared, I'm scared for Someleze.

-Me: "It's okay, we'll do it your way."

-Him: "Good. Now go get this Emily so we can be wheels up."

Like an obedient son, I nod then walk away to get Emily.

Her mother easily lets her leave with me, and Sandile instructs us to get in my car and follow him to his house in Nahoon Beach - around EL. When we get there he tosses me a set of handcuffs to cuff Emily's hand to a steel post in

the lounge.

-Me: "Is that necessary?"

I mean, I believe that Emily is willing to help us. If we treat her this way, won't we destroy this already fragile alliance?

-Him: "It is necessary, I don't trust her...Do it then take her cellphone and follow me upstairs."

He says already taking the stairs. I've studied my father-in-law very well since I got to know him. I learned that he's used to giving out orders and he always wants them followed. He wants things done his way all the time, and if you want to be in his good books you better not argue with him. Even now I don't exchange words with him, I just do as he says.

Leaving Emily cuffed to the post, I go upstairs and find him in his vast bedroom. From his safe comes a .45 automatic, two empty clips and a

box of Glazer ammo.

-Him: "How good is your precision, son?"

-Me: "If you're asking if I've ever carried a gun before, the answer is yes. For years I used to hit targets, bullseye, at a shooting range with my father. It was just a hobby, but my precision is pretty good. However, I've never carried a gun outside of the shooting range and I've never hit a human target."

-Him: "Well, there's a first time for everything. When you get a shot on that farm don't do what you see on TV, don't hesitate or talk, just point and pull the trigger. Shoot first, ask questions later."

-Me: "Are we gonna go into that farm hot? Guns blazing? But won't that put Someleze's life in danger?"

-Him: "Are you being serious right now? No one ever goes to war unarmed, son, or your blood

will decorate the grounds. Just take the gun. You're a man."

He already thinks I'm soft and he obviously doesn't trust me enough to be able to protect his daughter, but I'll show him. I'll show him how much I love his daughter. I'm willing to do anything to get her back home safely. If it means taking a life for it to happen, so be it.

I take the weapon with pleasure. I check the action, and heft it for weight. Then I begin loading the clips. When I'm done I take one loaded clip and slam it into the butt of the .45. I jack the slide back and let it slam home - chambering a round.

-Me: "Ready?"

A slight smile tugs at his lips, then he checks the magazine of his own weapon before holstering it back to his waist.

-Him: "I am. But the clothes you're wearing

won't do."

I look at myself still wearing the same formal clothes I wore at work, I couldn't get the chance to go home to change.

My father-in-law opens his closet and pulls out a neatly folded pair of jeans and a T-shirt, then a jacket from the hanger and hand them to me.

Okay, we now wear each other's clothes? To me, this means he doesn't blame me for what's happening to his daughter.

-Him: "I'll wait for you downstairs."

He says, then walks out. I quickly change into the clothes then follow him down.

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All three of us ride in his car and we get to Adelaide 2 and a half hours later, just after

19:00. It's spring but it's already getting dark, I guess it's because of the rainy weather. And the way I see it, it's probably raining in most parts of the Eastern Cape.

Probably out of fear more than anything else, Emily gives us the directions to the farm, saying it's situated about 10km from the town of Adelaide, in the Smaldeel.

I notice that Sandile is finding the going on the steep gravel road difficult because it's muddy and slippery. And the deeper we go the more the vehicle starts to slip and slide, but he is able to control it and keep it moving at a steady but slow pace.

I keep quiet along the way, just staring out into the dark beyond the headlights. I'm worried about what will happen when we get to the farm. And thinking about the kind of man we are chasing, the things he's capable of doing and what he did to Someleze while I was listening

on the phone, makes me wish I could just jump out of this car and run and run until I catch up with that scum, tear off his cock, stuff it into his mouth and choke him with it until his eyes pop out of their sockets.

"How far, Emily," I finally break the silence "to the farm?"

-Her: "We're almost there but we better leave the car at the gate and hoof it from there. We don't want to run out of luck and get spotted."

That's exactly what we do, we leave the vehicle behind, but with Emily inside, cuffed to the steering wheel. We just can't afford to go in with her.

Now on foot, we don't follow the direct road, we jump over the fence and walk through the veld, past established game species as well as a few hundred pecan trees before we get closer to the farm house. We are now drenched, but at least

we make out flickering lights shining through the windows of the house. My mind is numb and my thoughts are going round and round like a Ferris-wheel: is Emily's intel correct? Is Someleze really here? If she is, will we find her still okay? Will we be able to save her or we'll just make things worse and put her life in danger? I would never forgive myself if the latter happened. I love that woman and I would not know how to live without her, that much is now 100% percent clear to me.

"No gung-ho stuff, Thando. But remember what I told you."

Sandile says, derailing my train of thought. I respond by pulling down my baseball cap that I took from my car before I left it in EL, then we both loosen the guns in their holsters and start a careful approach, moving from tree to tree. Getting closer we make dark shapes of two cars in front of the house. Then as we get even



more closer I notice that one of the cars is a white Dodge Journey and the other a black Mercedes Benz. Ryan did say that Dominic sometimes drives a Mercedes, right?

"Looks like we've hit a jackpot. We're at the right place."

I murmur with hope. And I'm about to charge straight up to the house when Sandile puts a restraining hand on my arm.

-Him: "Hey, what did I just say about gung-ho stuff? You can't help anyone getting yourself killed. We have to check out what's going on inside first, without alerting them."

He's right, I just got excited. We carefully make our way towards the front of the old farmhouse. Avoiding the porch, we press ourselves close to the peeling cement walls, Sandile walking right in front of me.

Lifting his head carefully, he glimpses through

the window by the front door and take in the situation with one look. Then he moves away and motions for me to follow. We both silently retreat into the cover of the acacia trees.

-Him: "Two men are in there, busy playing cards."

He whispers.

-Me: "Looks like it's good time to go in."

He nods then we cock our guns and proceed to the front door with caution. Now caution aside, Sandile kicks the delapidating door open and we charge in with our guns trained. The two tall, heavysset thugs who were playing cards jump off their seats, trying to reach for their guns on top of a sideboard by a TV stand. Stupid guards, getting too relaxed on the job.

-Sandile: "Uh-uh. I wouldn't do that if I were you."

He says cockily, stopping the two in their tracks before they could even lay their hands on their

weapons.

-Him: "Or you wanna bet whose bullets would leave the chamber first? I'll paint these dirty walls with your grey matter before you can even put a finger on those guns."

His own finger now moves to the trigger and mine also does the same. The two morons now realise that if they try to move forward they'd be signing their death warrants, so they retreat back to the couches.

-Sandile: "Good. Now where's she? Where's my daughter?"

But none of them answers.

-Sandile: "Oh, we're mute, aren't we? Well, let's be motionless too. Cuff yourselves together."

He says tossing them another pair of handcuffs with one hand, still holding the gun with the other. Without wasting any time, Dominic's lackeys do as Sandile says. Then he motions

for me to search all the rooms of the house while he keeps an eye on our hostages.

Someleze is possibly guarded by Dominic himself in one of these rooms, I just have to figure out which one before he shows himself.

With my gun trained, I start at the kitchen then carefully proceed to check all 5 bedrooms of the house, but it seems like luck is not on my side. There's no sign of Someleze or Dominic anywhere in here. What the hell? Where are they? I drop the gun and slide down the wall of the last bedroom until my behind reaches the wooden floor as every bit of hope I had quickly vanishes. However, my pathetic ass gets woken up by a gunshot coming from the lounge, where Sandile and the thugs are. I spring off the floor, ready to go check what's going on, but a cry I recognise as Someleze's stops me in my tracks. It's not coming from inside the house but from the back. I take a couple of long strides to the

bedroom window and peering through it I spot a log cabin out in the back. That must be it! That must be where the bastard is keeping my wife. I don't waste any time, I don't even go check on Sandile in the lounge or even inform him about my move, I just jump out the window and land on my feet on the ground, then rush to the cabin.

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Someleze

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Shortly after I've heard a gunshot coming from outside, Nick barges in from an adjoining bedroom and grabs me by the arm, pulling me down from the bed.

-Him: "What did I say to you about your man trying to be a hero? Looks like it's gonna be

lights out for you too."

His eyes and rasping voice are threatening. Lights out for me too? What does that mean? That Thando came for me and is now dead? Oh God, no! Was that gunshot taking him out? No! Not my Thando. Not him! My hope is now gone and my first instinct tells me to run outside and see Thando's body instead of falling down and crying like a child here. I rush to the door and fumble with the bolt but I don't get it to open before I feel a hand grabbing my hair, hauling me brutally back, lifting me up and throwing me down. My arms move instinctively to protect my belly before I land on the floor. I hit my head hard on the corner of the bed, and through blurred vision I can make out Nick walking to the door. He opens it then slams it shut and shoots the bolt. He then turns and smirks at me.

-Him: "Do you believe in coincidences, Somi?"

He asks, waving his gun. I don't answer, I just

look down, nursing my throbbing head.

-Him: "Life is about perfection. Every incident that happens, no matter how colossal or small, is an aspect of a divine plan that works to the end. There is no such thing as coincidence in God's scheme. Anything and everything that happened leading to this day has been His plan. And, according to His will, this is how it will all end."

He cocks his gun and points it at me. But he doesn't get to pull the trigger even if he wanted to because just then the door breaks open and a familiar face walks in, armed, prompting him to quickly pull me off the floor and use me as a shield, his gun pointed to my head.

-Me: "Thando? You're alive."

For one second my eyes light up and the thought of 'He came for me, he really loves me' goes through my mind. But then remembering

the brute of a man standing behind me with a gun, I freeze.

-Thando: "Drop it!"

-Nick: "No, you drop it or I'll drop her."

I've seen Thando angry before but not this much. Rage is burning brightly and clearly in his eyes. I don't know whether it's due to that very anger or a bolt of fear, but I notice that his hands are trembling around the gun he's holding. However, before I know it, a gunshot thunders through the room, and quicker than I could even blink or scream I feel Nick dropping behind me. Instinctively, I jump to a safer distance and look at what has just happened. I see Nick's body lying motionless on the floor, bleeding from a hole in his forehead. He's dead, that's for sure. I guess there was no wisdom in using someone who's shorter than him as a shield. Thando aimed higher and planted a bullet in his skull without even thinking twice.



Thank God, I'm now safe, it's over. I turn to look at Thando who remains rooted at that same spot, by the door. Our eyes connect and we hold the look for a couple of seconds before he drops the gun and moves to meet me half way as I take strides to him. He pulls me into a warm embrace and I bury my face in his chest and let my tears fall. I used to see scenes like this in movies, but never have I thought it would happen to me. I can't believe Thando is here, I can't believe he came for me, or that I thought he was dead.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, are you okay? Are you hurt?"

I can't get the words out, I just continue to cry on his already wet chest as he gently brushes my back. I don't even ask how he got to know my location. I'm just happy he's here.

-Him: "I'm sorry, sthandwa sam, I'm really sorry. Don't cry, I'm here now. I'm here."

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"Is she okay?"

An all too familiar voice prompts me to pull back from Thando and look to the door. There he is, standing just beyond the broken door, in the adjoining room.

-Me: "Daddy!"

I scream in excitement and rush out the broken door to his awaiting open arms. I bury my face in his neck like a child as his caring arms wrap around me tightly in a warm embrace. Just like Thando, he's also wet, but I don't care.

-Him: "Are you okay, baby?"

-Me: "I knew you'd come, Daddy. I knew you'd come for me."

He pulls back and starts patting my torso for

any injuries. I'm sure he's seeing the blood on my top.

-Him: "Did they hurt you? Are you injured?"

-Me: "No, Dad, I'm fine. It was only a nose bleed."

-Him: "I'm glad you're okay."

His eyes now move away from me and to Thando who's still separated from us by the broken door. His body soon follows his eyes and he ends up right in front of Thando. But he first takes in Nick's dead body on the floor before saying anything to him.

-Him: "He's stopped breathing?"

-Thando: "Yeah."

My father nods and gives my man a pat on the back as if to say "good job". Thando also returns the same courtesy.

-Him: "What about those two guys?"

-My Dad: "Still breathing, and hog-tied. I aimed low and took a knee from one of them, he was trying to pull a stunt on me."

-Me: "What do we do now? Run and leave everything as it is?"

-My Dad: "No. Running would be the worst move. We call the cops and wait for them to arrive."

-Me: "Cops? Thando has just killed a man, Dad."

-My Dad: "In a clear case of self-defense and the cops will establish that. They will obviously have a problem with the fact that we took it upon ourselves to find you but no one is going to go to jail, not if I can help it anyway. However, the fact remains: someone has lost his life and that won't look good next to your name, Thando. But I, on the other hand, don't mind."

-Thando: "Meaning what exactly?"

-My Dad: "I'll bear the cross, you take my daughter to safety. The gun is mine, it's

registered under my name, so I'm the one who did the shooting while saving my daughter. Simple."

-Thando: "No. I won't let you do that. In my life I've never ran away from my responsibilities or from facing the consequences of my actions. I took the shot so I'll face the cops."

-My Dad: "You sure about that?"

-Thando: "Of course. And it's not something to be discussed."

I see a slight smile playing at the corners of my father's mouth before he gives Thando a nod of approval. I guess he's impressed.

-Him: "Okay then, let me call the cops."

-Thando: "And I'll talk with Soso in private."

He takes my hand and walks me outside. We stand in the rain at the front of the cabin that's illuminated by the light coming from inside.

Thando turns his face to the dark and forbidding sky, rain pouring down on him as if washing away the sin he's just committed. After a moment he looks at me.

-Him: "MaNdlovu, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I dragged you into this. I'm sorry you..."

But I cut him off.

-Me: "No, thando lwam, stop. None of this was your fault."

-Him: "Of course, it was my fault. The shares they wanted are in my name. And I'm sorry I never told you about them. Thing is..."

I cut him off again.

-Me: "Thando, I said stop."

I tell him the whole story, the story behind Dominic and his brother wanting the shares.

-Him: "I'll be damned. So we are here because of what my father did almost two decades ago?"

His adultery?"

-Me: "See? You did nothing wrong. This wasn't your fault. Your father just had an affair and impregnated a married woman with sick racists for children. That's why we're here."

-Him: "But still. You've gone through all this because of my family. Baby, I'm sorry."

-Me: "Don't be. I'm just glad you came to my rescue. It shows just how much you care about me. How much you love me."

He leans closer and kisses my lips. We kiss as the rain showers us with the water from the skies. It's a little cold but none of that matters, we are in our own little world.

-Me: "About what happened between us last night, about me and Nick, once again, I'm sorry. I didn't..."

But he jumps in before I can finish.

-Him: "Don't worry about it. It's all behind us now... I just want you to know that I'll forever stand by you as your pillar of strength and protector. You must have been so frightened, and this traumatic experience you've just endured will possibly have after-effects, it's gonna be rough but I want you to know that I won't leave your side. As your man, your partner, I'll support you all the way. It's my job to."

I smile through the rain.

-Me: "I love you. And I promise to also support you through anything that may happen following tonight's events."

-Him: "I thought you'd want to leave me after this, but I'm glad that thought didn't even cross your mind. Thank you."

I chuckle.

-Me: "Leave you? For this? Come on, babe. I know that I act crazy sometimes but there was



no way I was gonna leave you for this."

-Him: "I love you, mamakhe [baby mama]. So much. I don't ever want to lose you. My worst fear was leaving this farm without you or with you in a body bag."

-Me: "None of that happened. I'm here, safe and sound. And it's all thanks to you."

He pulls me to him one more time and kiss my lips, pouring his entire soul into it. The worst is over.

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Sorry for the wait, everybody. I didn't do it on purpose, believe me.

Season 2

#18 [+18SNL]

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"I want to be your dominated love slave. I want to be the one that takes the pain. You can

spank me when I do not behave. 'Cause I love feelin' dirty. And I love feelin' cheap." - Green Day

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Thando

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"I wish I could be the one leaving, hey." Zizo says as my shift ends, hers beginning. It's 7:30 in the morning, I was on-call last night and now I've just updated the day shift team on a patient injured in a car crash who required surgery last night to remove a ruptured spleen, and a ballistic trauma victim who also needed an emergency operation.

-Me: "I wish I was heading home but I'll be in my office preparing for that self-assessment exam."

I say as we both step aside, away from the rest of the team.

-Her: "It's a good thing you're not leaving then. I'd like to seek your input on the best approach for my elderly patient who's scheduled for a colostomy reversal."

-Me: "Okay, come to my office when you're done with your rounds and I'll be happy to help."

I have a vast experience when it comes to a case like this and Zizo knows it. With a team like ours, there's always someone who has seen a similar case and can provide advice. It's what we all do - we usually consult each other as colleagues.

-Her: "Thanks...You know what else, Tee? I really admire your strength."

Okay, what is she talking about? And what's it got to do with anything?

-Me: "Huh?"

-Her: "I mean you're moving on with your life. You're not letting what happened on that farm or the murder charge hanging over your head hold you back or affect your work."

It's now Friday, 5 days after I shot a man dead, and Zizo and her husband have been very supportive...to me and to Someleze. I don't want to lie though, I was nervous before I pulled that trigger, but I knew that if I didn't do it I'd be sending Someleze straight to the grave. That psycho was going to shoot her. Seeing her at his mercy, the barrel of his gun pressed to her head, blood stains on her top, I immediately knew what I had to do. It was evident that the bastard had been rough with her and that he would be happy to go all the way. He had said it, that he would drop her. And looking into his eyes, I saw a merciless monster who didn't seem to be bluffing. A monster befitting the ruthlessness he had said to me on the phone

earlier. I had to do what I had to do to save Someleze and our baby. That's all that mattered to me at that moment. And after she was safe, I felt a wave of relief washing over me. But when it sank in my head that I had actually taken a man's life, cold clamminess spread its way across my palms and my knees began to wobble. I was completely shaken by the act I had just committed, but I just had to act strong, for Someleze's benefit. In my life I never thought I would ever kill a person, but I guess some situations force us to do things we never thought we could possibly do. Do I regret what I did though? The answer is a definite no. To protect the love of my life I would do it all over again. Pity I'm now facing a murder charge. I can't say I'm surprised though, in our country the law is on the side of the assailants, every time. You have to jump through a lot of legal hoops to reach the point of justifying lethal force, and the burden of proof is on you. It's just

sad.

When the police arrived that night they arrested me, I got questioned like a murderer down at the police station and then I got charged with murder. On Tuesday I appeared in front of a magistrate and I'm now out on bail as the guys in blue are still 'investigating' further. I wish the charges could just be dropped, you know. But I'm seriously not counting on it, hence I got myself a good criminal lawyer. However, I think my father-in-law has another plan. When I asked him about it though, his only response was, "You're not going to jail, son. That's all you need to know. And I'll also be the one dealing with Dominic's family." I honestly don't know what he meant by that, I guess I just have to wait and see.

-Me: "The going is probably still gonna get tough, Zee. My career could be another casualty, but I'm not letting the whole thing phase me."

-Her: "Good for you, Hlubi. I'm sure the quidnuncs around here already have a lot to say about the whole thing."

-Me: "Actually, a lot of people are on my side. So it's all cool."

Last night was my first time walking through these doors after the shooting incident, and I thought I'd have the other staff whispering behind my back, gossiping, because news travels fast, but that hasn't happened...yet.

-Me: "Really? Now that's great. Really great...Listen, we'll chat a little later, okay? Time for rounds. Just stay strong, buddy. Stay strong."

She pats my shoulder then walks away with her group.

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Walking into my office I throw myself in my chair behind the desk and take a deep breath. Just thinking about the man I've respected and idolised for so many years as my father is now enough to make me want to puke. He is still my parent, my father, but he now repulses me, and that's me being frank. I can't believe I've been so blind for this long, not seeing his adultery ways. And my mother sure knows how to cover and make excuses for him, because there's no way she's been in the dark all this time. My sister, Anathi, wasn't. She told me that she's always known about our father's affairs, including the current one. A current affair?! I couldn't believe my ears when I heard it. My mother is sick for goodness sake, she's going through the most right now but her husband of 35 years, a whole 55 year old man, still has the time to go around pursuing an affair instead of



being by her side. He'd use business as an excuse for being away from home but, as it turns out, the only business he's been taking care of is between the legs of a woman he never made vows to. I'm also a man but I would never understand that part no matter how hard he tries to justify it. Not that he would though, because when I talked to him on the phone on Tuesday he showed not even the slightest remorse, even after he'd found out that his pregnant daughter-in-law got kidnapped because of his ways, and that I'm now facing a murder charge all because of him. It's like he doesn't care. The support I'm getting from Sandile is more than I can hope for from him - my own father.

The way he angered me, after that phone call I made up my mind: I no longer want to have anything to do with him. I don't even care how he will fight to get his company back from

Dominic's brother who's already a majority shareholder - owning 40% of it. The way I'm so pissed at him I'm even considering dropping his surname and take that of my mother, then stay as far away from him as I possibly can. When Someleze heard me speak like this she said I'm being overly dramatic and that I just need to calm down, but I don't think I will ever change my mind when it comes to this. Someleze is only speaking that way because she didn't hear how that man spoke to me, she didn't hear how stinging his words were.

Speaking of Someleze, I should text her and tell her that I'll be home a little later than she expected. After that fateful night she came straight here, in EL, to stay with her father who decided to put everything else on hold and stick around to have time for his daughter and also support me, while creating a bond between him and his newly-found sister who's slowly but

surely recovering in our hospital. Someleze's mother also came to be with them. But when I got released from custody two days later Someleze moved back to our townhouse and that's where she still is even now. She hasn't been to Alice yet but Kevin, the man who also played a role in getting her back home, brought her laptop so she could still continue with her paper and also send the required chapter to her supervisor. He's truly a good friend, and I've never had a problem with their friendship.

A number of people helped us bring Someleze home, including Emily, surprisingly, even though she flipped after learning that I shot her cousin dead. I'm now keeping my eyes peeled for any stunt she or the rest of Dominic's family might want to pull next. At least her mother doesn't seem to be singing from the same hymn sheet as her. I really didn't know that treating Molly would work for me to this magnitude.

Anyway, I take my phone out and start typing the message to Someleze.

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Someleze

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Waking up in an empty bed, I get some time to think about what the future holds for Thando. But I trust my father to come through for him. In fact, I'm certain that he'll do whatever it takes to help him. I trust him to take care of Nick's brother too before he embarks on a journey of avenging his brother's death.

Nick's brother? I haven't met the guy but I believe he was also at that farm at some point, after those two men I didn't recognise had thrown me into that cabin. I reckon he was

there because I heard Nick talking with someone he referred to as "brother" in the next room after he'd strangled me and yanked my pendant off my neck. I also suspect that the pendant is now with him wherever the hell he is because we never found it on Nick or anywhere in that cabin, the farmhouse or Nick's cars.

Still ruminating on that day's events, which still haunt me, my phone vibrates - a WhatsApp message coming through. It's from Thando saying he's going to be home only around noon. Oh no, I was hoping he was already on his way. I was already anticipating what he'd do to me once he walks in. I really miss him, I miss him fucking me. Of course I love lovemaking, but that's all we've been doing lately and now I seriously want to be fucked...hard. I need my man to fuck me into oblivion, and maybe I'll feel better about everything afterwards.

Almost instinctively, my hands drift south, and I

sigh deeply as I open my legs; raising my knees and parting my thighs to allow my fingers entry under my underwear. Simply opening myself is so erotic. I think of Thando's eyes on me, watching closely as he commands me to spread myself open, stretch my pussy lips open to his inspection, to pleasure myself, to bring myself to climax, to fuck myself so that he can watch and enjoy, and to take me when he wishes. I think about his fingers probing my juicy core or his tongue licking long, slow strokes up through my glistening folds, delving deep or lightly, barely brushing skin. I think of his eyes, dark in the glimmering candlelight, intense with desire, brilliant in lust, looking at me, as he instructs me in his wishes. I am to have no secrets. He must see it all. And I respond and obey, my arousal rising sweet and hot from within under the power he has over me when he's in his dominating mode.

My fingers slide through my folds as I think about the father of my baby tonguing me to a quivering orgasm before bending me over and fucking me from behind, ball deep inside me, to his own climax.

He hasn't done anything like that to me in a while and I now miss it. My fingers slip past to my nub as I wonder if he would like me to wax anew. I know that he likes my pussy smooth and naked for him so that he can see my slit, there for him, glistening with moisture as juices trickle down my thighs.

My pussy juices flow at the thought of his mouth around me, sucking me. A flash of heat stabs up through my sex and I feel my flow starting again, my slit swelling and my breath quickening. I work my clit, rubbing and circling, slipping back the hood to reach the sensitive bud within. As I flick it, I think of his tongue encircling it, probing with the tip, exploring my

pink folds, lapping slowly at my pussy juices, tasting me as he slides fingers inside me and probes me within. My heart begins to pound and I wish that I had a vibrator to use. I want to feel something inside me so bad. One hand still playing with my swelling nub, the other slides inside, one finger, two, then three. I want my man inside me, but this will have to do. I reach in and up, stretching fingers for my g-spot, massaging hard. I think of Thando bending me forward, to take me from behind, his cock testing and teasing my slit, gently seeking inside me, an inch only, against my entrance, making me twitch and moan and shudder before ramming into me, hard, and turning my moans into screams.

Rubbing hard at my inner walls, electric arousal sparks flames in my head. I can feel my thighs wet and hot, and the bed damp under me. I am moaning again now. My pulse is racing and I



am sweltering under the sheets. I throw off the covers, and lie naked and writhing, sleek with sweat as I plunge my hand deep into my cunt. Again and again, I try to bring Thando within me, taking me with his cock, filling me hard until I can see nothing but him, feel nothing but him. I want him in my pussy. I want him in my mouth. I want to feel him judder and spasm as he cums, spurting his load into me and on me. I want him to orgasm over me, over my face and breasts and pregnant belly, into my aching pussy, into my mouth, letting me milk him, lick his cream from my lips and face.

Harder and harder I work myself, plunging my fingers in, as deep as they will go, desperate for a substitute for my man's dick inside me. My hand is slick from fucking my own saturated pussy, its lips hot and swollen, pulsating with need and the desire for release.

Fuck! I won't come. Orgasm just won't arise

within me. I need more. Running into the kitchen, I grab a thick, green banana and rush back to my bed. It will do.

Grabbing the banana I slide it inside me. My aching cunt welcomes it as I plunge deep inside, fucking myself hard, again and again. The banana is now slick with my juices, but I ram it home, over and over. At some level, I am conscious that the headboard of the bed is clattering against the wall, but I don't care. No one will hear. Now my orgasm builds, tension mounts, blood pounds in my ears, my body arches rigid, thighs shudder and tremble in my search for climax. With an unquenchable heat, orgasm takes me. My pussy sends pulsating spasms through my body. My thighs and stomach throb and clench in a rhythm that takes me completely, and I cry out, still working the banana inside myself, making the ecstasy last as long as I can. Pumping away at myself, I

hold onto the crescendo as long as I can, before it becomes unbearable and, with a gasp, I whip the banana out of my still spasming cunt and lie gasping and panting on the mattress. The climax was good but I'm still yearning for the real thing, and I can't wait until Thando comes home, he'll probably come back tired anyway. So I'm going to him. If he can't bring his delicious dick home, I'll take my wet pussy to him.

I quickly climb down the bed and rush to the bathroom to take a bath.

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Thando

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For some reason my head is now quite at peace

and it's a good feeling, it gives me time to think about my woman who has just sexted me. I wish I could be by her side right now, to feel that she's with me in the same space, under the same roof. Feeling that I have her near. After what happened I don't feel good whenever I'm away from her. But if all that has happened has taught me anything it would be to not take her for granted. She ended up being lured in by Dominic because I was unavailable, and that has now become a serious wake up call for me. As Bongo said, difficult situations impact relationships in one of two ways: they either tear people apart or strengthen their connection, binding them together tightly. And for us the latter has become true. But we are still going for that premarital counselling, our first session is Tuesday next week - after I come back from visiting my mother this weekend.

I reply to her sext with fire emojis then try to

concentrate on what I'm working on so I could quickly leave these four walls and go home to be with her. If I could work from home I'd leave right now but she's too much of a distraction, I won't do any work there. I try to focus and clear my mind of her image but it does not disappear, when all of a sudden, I hear a knock at the door.

-Me: "Who is it?"

But no one answers. I stand up, about to go open when the door pushes open, and then I see that smile that always captivates me. It is her - Someleze. She has never surprised me at work looking all kinds of sexy and I'm about to ask her what the occasion is, but I get tongue-tied and I instantly smile as she seductively walks over to me and gives me a passionate kiss on the lips.

She looks beautiful as always, but a little provocative. Not that I mind though because I know that it's all for me. She looks extremely

sexy in a short skirt and a white blouse that she has opened down to her breasts to alter my morning. And her high heels complete the look. I know that I'm now being corny but each and every day I spend with her I find her more beautiful.

-Me: "You look beautiful."

-Her: "Thank you. I've decided to pass by because I simply couldn't wait until you got home."

She says, licking her lips. I smile, already seeing where this is going.

-Me: "Is that the reason you've locked the door, making sure no one could get in?"

The answer I get is a smile and her right hand further opening her cleavage. She sits on my desk, and it's a good thing there isn't any clutter on it. It is tidy. I'm not one of those people who have to check ten times if they've locked the

door and turned off the stove, but my space has to be in meticulous order. I always keep my desk and my entire office tidy and organised. That's discipline. And I believe I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for discipline.

Before I can say anything more she grabs my hands to put them on her waist. Then she undoes the the buttons of my shirt so that her hands can freely caress and fondle my chest and abs with her masterful sensual movements. She is starting to excite me and I worry that someone might come knocking, but I release my fear when she slowly takes my left hand and bring it up to the space between her thighs, under her short skirt. I find that she's wearing no panties and I open my eyes in amazement. Then she slowly brings her mouth up to my ear to whisper something, I presume.

-Her: "I left my panties in the car."

She says while she caresses me, and that

excites me even more. I cannot wait and I start stripping her body of all the remainder of the clothes she is wearing, covering the beauty of her nakedness. I leave her totally nude on my desk and before making any other movement I keep gazing at her for a long moment. And my cock hardens in response to the erotic sight before me. Her body is perfect. Even her small baby bump is making her more sexier. I love it, although I can tell that it makes her a little bit self-conscious every time she's naked in front of me. I adore it because it is what makes her more of a woman to me.

I let my lips run through her skin, kissing through her back, all the way down, biting her softly.

-Her: "Please don't stop."

She says with a ragged voice. With every bite I fall for her all over again, her skin charms, bewitches and captivates me.



She pushes me and I fall sitting in the chair that I have behind. Then she starts undoing my pants, roughly pulling them down together with my boxers and my erect cock springs free, the head already glistening. I see her fierce eyes in this very moment. In the quietness of her pleasure, she pushes me back but this time I fall to the ground and she sits on top of me. The floor is cold, my back feels it, but the hot moisture coming from between her legs makes me ignore it. I don't know what I'd do if someone could see us right now but I don't care. At this point I don't care if someone could somehow walk in on us or if the planet is round or square. In fact, doing this here is all the more exciting, giving me that adrenaline rush.

Soso parts her legs and slides down on my rock hard cock. I don't feel like I have an upper hand with her at all today, but I like it. My cock burns as the muscles of her hot pussy grip me tightly.

Harder and harder she rides me until I think my balls will burst.

I push her up, off of me, then bend her over the desk to take her from behind. I know she likes this.

-Her: "I want you to fuck me hard."

She says, sending a burning sensation down my already hot crotch. I direct my swollen appendage into her awaiting wet pussy, entering her slowly. Then I up my pace, going faster and faster. Her moans are now getting louder, driving me insane, and for a moment all my thoughts stray, because all I can hear are her moans. But then my thoughts come back and I remember where we are, that I can't have her making too much noise. I cover her mouth with my hand so no one could hear us as I ram harder inside her.

Soon she reaches the finish line. She squirms

and her vaginal walls tighten around my cock as she releases her juices. She spears endless moans under my hand as I continue to move inside her, prolonging her climax while building my own.

Not long after her, something great happens. She takes me to ecstasy and I start to buck as I empty myself into her, finding it hard to restrain my groans. Spent, I fall on her naked back. I remain still for a few seconds, quiet after so much pleasure. Then I pull out of her and turn her around to give her the biggest kiss. In the kiss I deliver all the love I have and feel for her in my soul - a soul that has her name on it.

-Me: "This was a nice surprise."

I say, smiling at her.

-Her: "I'm glad you've enjoyed it as much as me."

She bends over to pick up her clothes from the

floor, but suddenly there's a knock at the door. Damn, that was close. We hurry to get dressed. Now ready to pull the door open, she puts her hand on my crotch and stop me from opening the door, only to give me a kiss then step behind the door to hide like a school kid. How I love her.

I pull the door open to see Zizo standing there. She's here because I asked her to come. Jeez, I had already forgotten about that. Aware that the office now smells of sex, I step outside to speak with her while walking down the corridor - also giving Someleze a chance to walk out. While I attend to her, the smell of Someleze's body lingers on me, it does not let me concentrate. I just want to go home. To be with my woman, to be inside her again and again. And whisper in her ear how much I love her and always will. My wait won't be for long though, I just need a couple of hours and I will be done

here.

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When I walk back into my office, I find my phone with a message from Someleze.

"I know that you are into hardcore BDSM even though you always hold back with me. But when you come home today I don't want you to hold back, I want to give you full control of my body. I want you to do anything you want to and with me, to give me sweet pleasure that comes mostly from pain." The message reads. What? I feel my member hardening just from the thought of it all. I sure love to kinkily dominate my woman in the bedroom, but I never wanted to go all the way down that route with Someleze. She's just too delicate and fragile for that kind of stuff. Especially now that she's pregnant.

"Are you sure you wanna do that? Baby, you're pregnant." I reply.

"I've never been more sure. I want you to punish me then fuck me hard. Don't worry about the baby, we'll play it safe enough not to hurt him in any way." She types.

Him? She thinks it's a boy, and I'm hoping it's a boy too, but we want to be surprised when he or she arrives.

"I guess I'll have to go do some shopping then before I come home." I reply already excited. She replies with multiple fire emojis. I smile then put my phone aside and go back to concentrating on my work. When I'm done, shopping is indeed where I go.

The way home becomes tortuous. Unbidden images of Someleze naked for me invade my mind, but I have to concentrate on the road. More than once I get brought back from my

reveries by the honking of cars behind me. I feel ashamed at first but then chuckle, thinking that I should probably pay more attention to the red lights changing to green if I am so anxious to get home.

It's so not easy, unfortunately.

I get to another red light. And Someleze appears in my mind again, kissing my lips, pressing her whole body against mine, her hand sliding down from my chest to my abdomen, down to my crotch, rubbing my hard cock with the palm of her hand. Someone honks behind me. Shit, I've done it again. The light is green but I'm still not moving.

"Sorry." I say as if the driver behind can hear me. I better step on the accelerator and get home as fast as I can.

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Happy 2019, everybody. Let's all enjoy sex

responsibly this year. Sihule sijongile.

Season 2

#19 [+18SNL - Read at own risk] [Unedited]

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"I want to be your dominated love slave. I want to be the one that takes the pain. You can spank me when I do not behave. 'Cause I love feelin' dirty. And I love feelin' cheap." - Green Day

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"Voila!" I exclaim as I put the perfectly baked lasagne on the kitchen island. Thando loves lasagne but I've never prepared it for him and that's because I didn't trust myself enough to be able to, at least not the way he likes it. But today I've managed to pull it off. It is just the way he prefers. This is going to be a perfect



lunch, I say under my breath. Satisfied, I carry it to the dining table. It was the only missing piece in this perfectly set table for one.

Thando is probably on his way now, and that means I better go get ready. I rush to our bedroom then straight to the en-suite. Wriggling out of my sweat pants and T-shirt takes only a moment and my moist and sticky panties follow. I turn on the shower and step inside. The water feels wonderful on my skin, taking sweat and tiredness with it. Stepping back I scrub my body, the lather slippery and smooth. I massage my breasts, getting them ready for my man's touch. My hand moves down over my pregnant belly, gently caressing; sending the heat throughout my entire body. My fingers find my clit and begin stroking gently as fingers from my other hand enter my steaming pussy and slowly do the fucking. At the feeling, my legs begin to tremble but I will not allow myself to cum, not

before Thando gets here. I'm finding the torture exquisite. I want to cum but I know I shouldn't, it's my man who will take me there.

My shower finished, I step out and dry myself off, stroking gently so as to not destroy the excitement I have created for my man. I want today to be really special for him. I want him to eat then I will satisfy his wild sexual fantasies. I've known that he's into BDSM for a while now but I've been too shy to do anything about it until today. I kind of suspected last year, the day he said he would never take it any further with me after he had tied me up in his bathroom and played with my body before fucking me into oblivion. Then I became sure when I used his laptop three days ago and came across some information. He should really clear his web history if he doesn't want anyone who borrows his laptop to know that he sometimes watches porn, or the type of porn he watches. I've always

known that once in a while he indulges in porn when I'm not around and feels like fapping, he told me, but he never told me the kind he watches - which is hardcore BDSM. I probably should have felt some type of way after invading his privacy and discovering that, but I only felt burning pleasure taking over my body and I began to feel wetness between my legs - just as I'm feeling right now.

Now dry and lotioned, I put on nothing but a black apron with white frills around the edges. I hope Thando likes role playing or has a thing for maids, otherwise I will feel really stupid for doing this. All done, I go wait on the couch in the lounge. My ears strain for a sound of a car driving into the complex or the click of the door latch opening. But ten minutes passes without any of that happening, and my nervousness increases. I want to peek out the window, see him drive up, watch him walking up to the door

but I decide to sit and wait quietly, hands clasped in my lap and legs clenched tightly together. Sitting here I wonder what he has planned for me. I yearn for his touch, his kiss and the sound of his voice.

My heart jumps when I finally hear footsteps coming up to the door. That must be him, and I quickly get up from the couch. Grabbing the broom, I pretend to sweep the floor. I position myself so that he won't be able to see my exposed ass as he comes in, but once he reaches around behind me, I know that his hands will find it.

As the door opens, I look up from the floor and meet his eyes with mine. I see them change from surprised to intrigued. And a devious smile comes across his face as he closes the door behind him, making me feel a little embarrassed to be dressed like this, but I know it will be worth it if it will please him.

-Him: "Well, hello there, beautiful. Who might you be all alone in my house?"

Oh, great. He gets that this is role playing.

-Me: "Sorry, sir. I'm the new maid."

I answer innocently. He sets his bag down and tosses his jacket on the end table by the door. I love how he has untidied his look; his shirt unbuttoned all the way down from the neck to the end of the sternum and the sleeves rolled up to the elbows. I wonder what he has in that bag. He said he would go shopping and now I wonder what items has he bought from the adult shop and how he will use each of them on me. The anticipation of the pleasures that will soon follow makes me all wet down there.

I avert my eyes and play the part of a shy little maid, just here to do my duties. He walks over to me and grabs the middle of the broom to prevent me from sweeping.

-Him: "Did my fiancée hire you?"

I bite my lip and remain quiet, my heart beating as he claws at my bare back. He moans with a surprised delight as his other hand comes around behind me to meet my bare ass.

Tossing the broom to the side, he pulls my body up against his. I can feel my arousal building some more as he commands my actions and slides both his hands slowly down to my ass.

-Him: "You are one bad maid, walking around my house half-naked like this? You are here to tempt me, aren't you?"

Still, I don't answer. I avoid eye contact, but I can feel the heat of his stare as he exerts his dominance. Slap! One of his hands lands hard on my ass then leaves it for only a second before he brings it back down again...hard. The strength of his hand on my tender ass forces out a tiny whimper from between my lips.

-Him: "Tell me, dear. Are you here to tempt me?"

-Me: "I can't say." I reply quietly.

Slap!

-Him: "Why's that?"

-Me: "I... can't say."

-Him: "You are an uncooperative little tease, aren't you?"

Slap! My ass stings more and more with each of his firm spanks. I can feel the juices building up between my legs already as he takes control. My body is loving this pain.

-Him: "Do you know what I do to girls who don't cooperate?"

He asks as he digs both hands into my burning ass cheeks.

-Me: "No."

I whimper. He leans in close, his breath hot on

my ear.

-Him: "I guess we're going to find out then."

He whispers. I can feel my knees getting weaker as his fingers intensify the stinging sensation on my ass. I surrender all of my power to him as he spins me around and bring my butt up against his bulging cock. He rubs himself against me before he leans back down to my right ear.

-Him: "Does this give you a better idea? Is this what you had in mind when you decided to strut your naked ass around here for the man of the house to see?"

He growls but I remain quiet, something that earns me another hard spank on my ass.

-Him: "I asked you a question."

-Me: "Yes. Yes."

I whimper, my ass burning.



-Him: "Yes what?"

Slap!!

-Me: "Yes, sir."

Damn! I'm sure he's about to give me one of the most electrifying experiences of my life and I am becoming more excited in anticipation.

Before I know it he turns me around to face him. I can see the lust burning in his eyes, firing me up with desire too. In a stern and demanding tone, he menacingly whispers into my ear.

"Strip! Slowly."

-Me: "But, sir, I've prepared some food for you. Won't you eat first?"

-Him: "I said take it off."

His hand reaches from behind and lands on my ass so hard that I let out a loud whimper.

Obediently, I now comply. He sits on the couch, watching my apron drop to the floor. Naked, I

face him, bow my head, and quietly declare, "Sir, do as you wish with me. Make me your pain slut. I deserve it. I've been a very bad maid."

No response from him. He just sits there, seeming pleased with the effect of having his eyes feast on my naked body. My body has slightly changed with this 4-month baby bump, and in any other day I would feel self-conscious about standing naked in front of him but not today, right now I find it all so erotic. I stand before him, head lowered, eyes downcast, hands clasped behind my back, and legs spread wide. Several more minutes pass and my anxiety increases. Did he hear me? Why is he just sitting there? I am horny as hell and need to be fucked. He hasn't even kissed me. What is he planning?

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Finally, he gets up and steps closer to me. I gasp as I feel his hands touch my bare back again. He kisses my neck, creating goosebumps along my skin. Then his lips move to mine and kiss me as his hands gently caress my breasts. As I'm still enjoying that, he pulls back and I exhale as I feel his warm breath against my ear.

-Him: "You look absolutely beautiful, you know that? You are a temptress."

He whispers and I smile to myself at the compliment. He steps away from me and commands me to bend over and hold the arm of the couch, displaying my ass. Submissively I obey, dropping down to rest on my elbows on the arm of the couch, head well down so that my naked buttocks are presented for him.

-Him: "Good girl. Now stay there."

He strides to his bag and extracts a paddle in red and black leather. I immediately know what's going to come next, it's pain but I already know that, for some reason, it excites me. He walks around me, stroking me with the paddle; sliding it over my spine. Lightly, he taps a bare buttock with it and I quiver in anticipation.

-Him: "You like that, huh?"

The rhetorical question is followed by a spank to the other buttock, harder this time, making me yelp.

-Him: "Be quiet."

He commands as another hard spank follows. A tingle runs down my spine as I feel my body's response to the spanking. Biting my lip, nonetheless, my pussy juices flow, trickling down my thighs.

-Him: "I can see that you're enjoying this. Now.... a question for you. I can either fuck you from

behind, or face-fuck you. Which is it to be?"

-Me: I don't mind, sir. You choose."

With a thwack! that makes me gasp, the paddle slaps across my rear one more time.

-Him: "Wrong answer, little maid. Now, do I shove my cock up your cunt or do I shove it down your throat?"

My ass smarting.

-Me: "My pussy, sir. My pussy.

Thwack! The paddle again, but this time even more harder and I yelp.

-Him: "Your pussy? What about your pussy?"

-Me: "Shove your cock in my pussy, sir. Fuck me hard."

The paddle drops to the ground beside me and this time, instead I feel his hand slap across my butt, hard this time, really hard. I yelp in pain, but he is not fooled because my throbbing

pussy gushes.

-Him: "I still think you're enjoying this, little maid."

His fingers ram inside me, pumping in and out of my wet pussy.

-Him: "Ask nicely. If you want me to fuck you, ask nicely and tell me what you want me to do."

-Me: "Please, sir. Fuck my pussy hard. Make me cum."

-Him: "And then?"

Thwack! This time the hand slaps not my buttocks, but my aching and streaming cunt. It really hurts and I almost rise up from my position. But as I start to rise he pins my head low again.

-Him: "Did I tell you to move?"

-Me: "No, sir."

I answer, gasping. He continues to work me and

soon I feel my orgasm building. The sheer scale of the stimulation is beyond bearing and I am about to cum uncontrollably. But he stops, obviously feeling my building orgasm. By now I am almost delirious with the desire to cum and my legs are trembling, head still bowed.

-Him: "You said something about food?"

-Me: "What?"

I raise my head to look at him. Is he really suggesting that we stop so he could eat?

-Him: "Not that I answer to you, but a man's gotta eat."

I stare unbelievably. What the hell?

-Me: "You can't be serious. After all this, you want to just break off and I'm supposed to...."

He interrupts.

-Him: "I'm not going to give you what you want. I'm not going to fuck you just yet. Orgasm

deprivation will be your punishment for being a bad, little maid. And a good fuck will be your reward if you behave...Now the food?"

Fuck! This is torture. My pussy is throbbing, I want to be fucked, I want to cum. But what can I do?

-Me: "It's okay. You'll get what you want, sir. The table is already ready."

-Him: "Good. But first things first."

He reaches into his bag and pulls out a pink object that is shaped like an egg. I have no idea what it is but in a moment I hear a low buzz, then a high buzz. He is actually controlling it with a little, matching pink remote in his hand.

-Him: "Just something to keep you occupied while I eat."

He says and pushes the vibrating egg up inside me. He does it slowly, sliding it along my engorged pussy lips and up past my aching



pussy muscles so that I feel every inch of movement. It is small and I'm wet, so there is no resistance at all, but I can't keep the small gasp from exiting my lips. Not at the size of the egg, no. Because it is nothing compared to what I'm used to - his dick. It is the vibrations the vibrator sends up much deeper than the vibrator itself can reach. I bite on my bottom lip, standing still and silent for a moment after he has put it in place.

-Him: "Now get me something to drink before I eat. Something strong. Whisky.. on the rocks."

-Me: "Yes, sir. I'll go get that for you."

But shit! How am I going to walk or even make it until he finishes eating with this thing inside me if I can barely stand a few seconds? Still, I find a strange sense of excitement in thoughts of feeling this way for several minutes - having to walk around the house, serving my man, all the while being pleasured between my legs.

-Him: "Hold that vibrator in, grip it, don't let it slip out. And don't you dare cum unless I give you permission to. Disobey and you will be punished."

Oh no! I hold back moans beneath my breath, having a feeling that I'll be doing this a lot until he takes this thing out of me. I walk slowly over to the mini bar, naked and being stimulated. Already, I can feel myself nearing an orgasm. The small vibrator between my legs continues to vibrate vigorously and my wetness is already spreading down the insides of my thighs, I can feel that much. Every step I take I can feel the toy moving slightly within me. I keep my eyes down, trying my best not to show Thando that I'm already nearing an orgasm.

I pour him the whisky, put in the ice then walk back to him. He is still seated on the couch but now sprawling a little, arms raised, hands clasped behind his head, eyes not leaving my

naked body. As I'm walking I can feel it; the tensing up of my lower muscles, something brewing in my abdomen. And suddenly, a wonderful feeling of release. I fight off the urge to moan as I come to a stand still. Shit! I've just orgasmed without Thando's permission and that means there's a punishment I'm going to have to endure.

Lifting my eyes I find him still looking at me, a naughty smile painted across his face. I feel so embarrassed right now, and my juices are running down my thighs, making me even more embarrassed.

I have to wait a few moments before I can continue walking. And as I do, I can feel my juices still rushing down around the vibe in my pussy. What am I doing? This is crazy. I consider simply pulling the thing out, but if I want Thando to finally fill me up with his delicious cock and give me an amazing orgasm

I have to obey, I have to keep this thing in.

-Him: "Just put it on the coffee table for now, then come here. Stand in front of me."

He says as I hand him the glass of whisky. Again, I obey, placing the glass on the table and myself before him, his face level with my hips.

-Him: "Closer. I want to be able to smell you."

I move closer, my dripping sex now almost brushing his face. He leans forward, one hand caressing my hip and thigh as he inhales deeply. His warm breath against my pussy sends goosebumps all over my body. I close my eyes, anticipating his tongue on me, to lick my juices off, but it doesn't come. I only feel him slightly pushing me back and getting up from the couch, and that's when I open my eyes.

-Him: "While I eat you are going to kneel on the floor by the table, with your back to me and bend forward so that your face and tits are on

the floor with your ass in the air. You will keep your knees wide apart but still holding the vibrator inside. That's your punishment for coming without my permission."

What the hell? But obediently, I do as I'm told. Keeping the egg inside is so hard with my thighs spread wide like this but I try. My drenched cunt and ass hole are displayed for him as I keep clenching my pussy muscles around the damn egg that keeps assaulting my wet hole with its vibrations. He continues to eat at the table, occasionally commenting on how wet and juicy my cunt is, how greedy my ass looks and generally what a dirty, little cock teasing slut of a maid he has found. This is shameful and humiliating, but it is this humiliation and feeling cheap that turns me into a wild horny mess. Knowing that he has his eyes on me in this embarrassing position has me delirious with lust. Lust is ruling my universe

and is driving me to perform unspeakable acts. My mouth and cunt are drooling with oceans of liquid in anticipation of being used.

I feel another orgasm building and I ask for permission to cum, but he doesn't grant it. What the hell? My hips squirm, trying to fight the orgasm off little by little. But my attempts seem to be futile, I'm about to succumb to my second orgasm. I bite down hard on my lip, tightening my fists on the cold tiled floor, trying so hard to stop it. If I cum now I can forget about receiving his cock, he will punish me by denying me a good fuck, that much he's made clear.

Seeing that I am struggling, he comes to me and reaches inside my love hole with his fingers then pops the damn thing out of me. Shaking and panting after being brought back from the verge of an explosive orgasm, I let him help me up from the floor.

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He carries me to the bedroom and gently puts me on the bed, then he leaves me all alone, wondering what he has in store for me and when he will finally fuck me. A few moments later he comes back with his bag and takes out two pairs of fluffy handcuffs and cuff my wrists to the legs of the square leather headboard. Now with me bound, he takes out a silk scarf and uses it to blindfold me. I am now lying there, blindfolded, my arms stretched wide above my head, chained to the bed. I'm stark naked, there's not even a partial barrier to my flooding pussy. My legs are spread and between them, kneeling I think, although I cannot be sure because I cannot see, or even move very well, is the father of my baby who is now taking me to another world, a world I've just been fantasising about. And I'm willing to let him have his way

with me, I'm willing to give him whatever he wants, whenever he wants it.

I think he is still clothed. I feel the fabric of his designer pants rubbing against my open thighs, his erection pressed against my pregnant belly. His lips are suckling at my left nipple. His tongue manipulating and kneading it, sending electric currents of desire, shockingly, down through my stomach, hips and aching cunt. He switches to the other nipple, and I feel him forcing my legs further apart with his knees, arranging me to his satisfaction. His hot breath on the sensitive skin of my breasts is making me flush and sweat, and I feel his tongue trail along my cleavage, licking me dry. My breath is rapid and shallow, and as his tongue rides back to a nipple, he bites, not hard, but enough to startle me and I half gasp, half yelp at the almost-pain of his nip.

-Him: "Hey, no noise. This time I want you



completely silent."

This is going to be difficult. He bites the other nipple and I arch my back and shudder, trying, obediently, to be silent through my panting. One hand slides across my breast, pinches a nipple, then tweaks and teases until I know that it is a solid, erect bud, crinkling rose against my pale skin. The other nipple gets the same treatment, and I writhe under him, my hips beginning to judder with the need to have him inside me. So far, he has touched only my breasts, belly and neck, not yet venturing near my streaming pussy and swollen clit.

-Him: "Tell me, dirty little maid, what do you want?"

He asks in his deep, rich voice. What does he expect me to say? I want him to plant his mouth over my slit and suck me dry. I want him to fuck me until I can't stand. But all I can do is moan incoherently. I hear a buzz, then feel a sharp

pain in one nipple, then the other, as he clamps what I figure are nipple vibrators to my small, firm nipples. This is too much and I struggle against the handcuffs, trying to escape the electric arousal spiking through me. My pussy gushes and I moan, trying to thrash against or into the sensation.

-Him: "What do you want? Tell me. You have to tell me."

-Me: "I want... I want... Oh damn! I want you inside me. Please. I want you inside me."

-Him: "That's better. Go on."

Lust is driving me insane, I can barely think straight.

-Me: "I want you to fuck me. Please just fuck me already. I've been a good girl, I've obeyed."

I cry out.

-Him: "How do you want to be fucked?"

I am not sure how to answer, and I hesitate, my panting growing ragged.

-Him: "I asked! How do you want to be fucked? Tongue? Finger fuck? Or do I get myself ball deep inside you and pin your pretty brains to your skull?"

The image this question conjures up is too much and I moan again. It is about the only thing I can do, bound and blindfolded.

-Him: "Enough noise. If you can't ask nicely for what you want, I think I'll shut you up."

After a moment I feel his fingers pry my mouth open, forcing something inside and then tying around at the back of my head. A ball of some kind? It is soft and rubbery against my tongue but my mouth is held open against it. This is ball gag. I am effectively gagged and now my helpless moans are muffled.

-Him: "You look good like that, with your mouth

held open. I might have to think about what else I might put in there. But now, a little more stimulation, I think."

After another moment, I feel a sharp pain in one nipple and then the other. I try to yelp, but cannot. Then my already sensitive nipples start to vibrate, gently at first. I am just beginning to handle this exquisite sensation when the vibrators increase violently. I convulse, my hips bucking, my urgent cries blocked by my gag. I try to speak, but cannot.

-Him: "Too late now. You had your chance to speak."

He lifts my left leg by the knee, passing something under it. A rope? A belt? A cuff? Blinded as I am, I cannot tell. Then he does the same with my right knee. Suddenly I find both legs being spread and parted at the knees, lifting me from the hip and displaying my throbbing pussy. For a moment, my weight is

suspended, quite painfully, as my knees are pulled back and towards my face, but then he pushes something under my hips, a pillow or cushion, supporting me and the pain subsides, I'm now comfortable.

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I lie, almost crucified on the bed, blindfolded, gagged, arms chained and legs pulled apart widely, pussy splayed.

-Him: "Not quite wide enough."

He says. And the ropes pull my knees further apart. He adjusts the cushion under my hips making sure I'm comfortable, but I'm sure my dripping pussy is now even more exposed.

-Him: "That's better. Now I can see you properly."

I am so ready for him. Frantic with arousal, crazy with lust, I just want him to plunge his cock inside me and pound away at my core. Instead, I feel the lightest of touches. Fingers part my pussy lips, stretching them wide. His face is so close to me, I feel his warm breath over my swollen and pulsating labia, then his tongue curls around them, over and around, continuing on to my pussy 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, tasting my juices. His whole mouth fastens around me, and he starts chewing at my me, tongue working me all the time as I heave and struggle and squeal against my bonds, the gag, the exquisite pleasure-pain of it all. I try to scream against the ball-gag in my mouth, but it fights against me and only muffled cries escape.

Then he withdraws, leaving me shaking and

shuddering, hips jerking and bucking against my ties. My pussy is hot, drenched, engorged and I am desperate to have him inside me. Suddenly, he removes the gag.

-Him: "Anything to say? Any requests yet? You know you have to ask for it first."

My mouth dry from the gag, jaws aching from being held open, I have trouble speaking.

-Me: "Inside me. Please, sir, inside me."

-Him: "That's better. You are learning nicely. I'll take your training a little further after today."

Oh, we are going to do this again? Honestly, there's nothing I'd love more.

Suddenly I feel him slip something inside me. That vibrating egg. He slides it easily against my slick pussy lips and for a moment, it simply sits inside me. Then it starts to vibrate to a pulsing rhythm. I convulse again, but still I am pinned.

-Him: "Calm down. We've barely started."

He probes with a finger inside me, pushing the vibrator in deeper, pressing it in as far as it will go.

-Him: "Now, I want to hear you yelp for me."

He turns the power up, 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 at my swollen bud. I struggle and wriggle, trying to escape the sensation overload but at the same time glorying in it. The combination of vibration on my nipples and inside my pussy, pulsing from within, and his mouth clamped over me, tormenting-pleasuring me is irresistible. From within, orgasm swells and rises. But he instantly takes his mouth away from my clit, then inserts his hand and flicks the egg out of me before pulling the clamps off my nipples. Suddenly the blindfold is ripped from my face and I see him



shirtless, and undoing his straining belt.

Unbuttoning his pants, his erection bulges from the fabric, standing upright as he releases it, rigid against him.

He climbs onto the bed and uncuffs me from the headboard. He commands me to be on my knees on the bed. I obey, and he takes out a locking wrist and ankle spreader bar from that bag. He securely ties my ankles apart so he could give himself easy access to my dripping pussy. With my face pressed against the mattress, ass up in the air, he gently pulls my arms under me to tie my wrists to the wrist straps on the spreader bar that is holding my ankles apart. Then as a final touch he pulls the blindfold over my eyes once again.

My legs spread-eagled by the bar, my pink and swollen sex open and displayed to him, he settles between my knees, the tip of his penis kissing my pussy lips which are still twitching

with the effect of coming so close to an orgasm. At this point I can't stop begging him to fuck me, even crying. I just can't take this torture anymore, I need him inside me, I need to cum.

As he touches me, my inner muscles convulse again at the thought of his thick shaft penetrating me. With his fingers he opens my pussy wider then his erection presses against my smarting lips before thrusting inwards. I moan at the satisfaction of finally having him inside me. I am slick and slippery. There is no resistance as he pumps into me, hard, meeting my inner walls. But I want more of this, I've been aching for it for so long.

-Me: "Harder, please. Harder!"

My wish is his command because I feel him grasping my buttocks, holding me still as he fucks me harder. Over and over again, his shaft spears me. I cry out in rhythm with his thrusting, again and again as he plunges deep inside me. I

cannot move. I cannot see. Blind and spreadeagled, all I can do is scream in response to the pain and pleasure of him fucking me. Climax wells up from within, mounting and building, threatening to take me completely. Then in a shattering crescendo, my heart pounding and pulse racing, orgasm overwhelms me and my cries turn to screams at my body's release. Still he pounds inside me, prolonging my climax. Then he withdraws and unties me, steadying me as I stand a little uncertainly on the floor. He removes the blindfold. My breathing is still quick, and he is flushed and panting, sweaty and disordered.

-Him: "Don't move. You haven't finished. Kneel in front of me."

I do as he tells me. He draws level with my face and seize hold of my straightback cornrows, pushing my head toward his still erect cock.

-Him: "Open wide and finish me off."

I open my mouth and he pushes inside. But I pull back only to ask him a question.

-Me: "May I use my hands as well, sir?"

-Him: "Yes, you can massage my balls while you lick me clean, then suck me off."

One handedly, I massage his balls, tight and crinkled. With the other hand I support his huge erect penis as I lick away my own juices and his. With one hand kneading his balls and the base of his erection, caressing and stroking, fondling and rubbing, I can feel the growing throb and cadence of his rising climax. His hips start to quiver, and then, as I feel he is going to spurt into my mouth, I slide the tip of my tongue into the slit of his penis, tickling, probing and stimulating at this, his most sensitive moment. In response, he exhales with a gasp, leaning forward and pulling me by my cornrows deeper in. He spurts into my mouth in a creamy cascade, then pulls my mouth free of him and

finishes his climax over my face, his stream surging over my eyes and lips, dripping down into my breasts. As he shoots his cum over me, I lick and suck where I can, taking what he gives, as he rubs his cock and balls and cum over my face. This is exactly what I wanted.

Both spent, he helps me up from the floor and carries my satisfied body to the bathroom. He runs me a relaxing bath with scented bubble bath, bath salts and a couple drops of essential oils. We get in the tub together and he washes me, gently caressing my body. He's now my loving Thando and I'm his Soso, no more roleplaying.

-Him: "I love you, sthandwa sam. So much."

He says after helping me out of the tub.

-Me: "I love you too, thando lwam. You have no idea how much."

-Him: "Today was special, amazing. Thank you."

His arms envelope me as his lips take mine in a passionate kiss. Breaking the kiss, we dry ourselves, get dressed in nothing but PJs then move back to the bedroom. Getting in bed, I immediately doze off in his arms. Who could blame me though? I'm tired.

I only wake up when he calls my name. Opening my eyes I see him sitting next to me on the bed, already ready to go to work. Checking the time, I notice that it's already around 7 in the evening, meaning I've been out for 4 hours.

-Me: "No, baby. Why didn't you wake me up sooner?"

-Him: "So you could do what? You were tired, sthandwa sam, you needed to rest."

He's sweet, isn't he? My smile broadens when he tells me that I won't even have to cook supper, that he has already prepared some for me, a treat I deserve for making him a perfect

lunch earlier. Isn't he sweet?

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The next morning, on Saturday, he comes back from work and immediately gets ready to fly to Jo'burg to be with his mother for a few days. We part ways as I also get in my car and drive to Alice. I got the car back from the garage yesterday, and the bumper that was wrecked is now perfectly fixed. I pace it to Alice but when I pass Breidbach, the spot where I got roughly hauled out of it by those thugs, I feel my body cringe and I slow down without even realising it. What happened still haunts me, I was so scared, I thought Nick was going to do the worst to me. But Thando came to my rescue and he has been supporting me ever since, just like he said he would.

If I could say I saw it coming that he would kill for me without even thinking twice, that would be a false claim. Of course I knew that he loved me but I didn't know that I meant that much to him. I didn't even know that he would easily stand up and be willing to face the consequences of what he'd done. But he showed me, once again, that he is a real man who's never afraid to stand up for himself or his woman. Once again, he proved to me that he's all for me, that every time he tells me that he loves me he means it. If there was ever any doubt in my mind about marrying him, all that is now gone. I'm certain, in my heart and in every fibre of my being, that I have found myself a real husband in Thando December. He may not have any kind of armour but he's still my knight. He even got me a trauma therapist to help me deal with what happened. My first session was yesterday and I'll continue seeing her until I see some change. I know that it won't happen



overnight though, but I'll get there.

It seems like I'll be spending a lot of hours in counsellors offices these days. If I'm not alone with the trauma counsellor, Thando and I will be in our premarital counsellor's office - starting on Tuesday. But I'm not complaining, it's all necessary.

My thoughts stop when I get home to a happy house; finding my people - Kevin, Asanda and their little bundle of joy in the nursery. They've moved back in on Monday, and living with them again will be really great. I'll get to practice motherhood on their daughter all I like - or at least when I'm not on campus.

But on Tuesday I don't drive straight home to them when I leave campus, I drive to EL.

Thando is back and we have that counselling session to go to. If I want our marriage to have a strong base I believe I have to be with him in giving these sessions a shot. What I do not feel

okay about though is finding myself being Mrs Phiri instead of being Mrs December. Thando is going ahead with changing his last name, in fact he has already gone to Home Affairs when he was in Jo'burg with his mother and completed the BI-196 form. I don't know how good or sufficient his written reason for the change was, but he submitted it. I tried to have him drop the whole thing but I was just wasting my time, when his mind is made up about something there's no changing it.

Anyway, I come back to Alice after the session. Only to have a special visitor on Friday - my father. When I come back from campus I find his car parked by my gate. What is he doing here though? He didn't tell me he was coming. However, I have to admit that this is an amazing surprise.

"Hey, Dad. This is a nice surprise."

I say after knocking on his car window. He

smiles then invites me to join him, to get in the passenger side. As I do, he attacks me with a hug then shows me something I recognise.

-Him: "I believe this belongs to you."

It's the pendant Nick stole from me.

-Me: "Yes, this is mine. It's my pendant. But, Dad, how did you find it? Wasn't it with Nick's brother? Did you meet up with him? Dad, what did you do to him?"

-Him: "Some things you can't fight with law, baby. And you can't leave everything to karma. Sometimes karma takes so friggin' long, you have to handle things yourself."

-Me: "And what does that mean?"

-Him: "The threat has been eliminated."

-Me: "Eliminated? How? Tata andifuni ubanjwe [I don't want you to go to jail]. Thando is still not off the hook and I don't want you to suffer the

same fate."

-Him: "No one's going to jail, baby. And Thando's off the hook you're talking about."

-Me: "Huh?"

Season 2

#20

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"Twelve months have passed. I think it's time we celebrate, celebrate our first anniversary. I know that we have a future, yeah. We've had good times and bad. They said we wouldn't make it this long, but our love is strong." -

Serani

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"The ridiculous charges have been dropped," My father says casually. "Thando wanted to call and tell you himself after he heard the news

from his lawyer but I asked him to let me tell you in person."

The charges have been dropped? I don't understand. From what Thando's lawyer said, the prosecutor took this personally and was eager to prosecute the case. According to him and the cops, Thando went to that farm with the intention to kill Nick, otherwise he would have contacted the police with the intel and let them handle the whole thing. The fact that he and my father went there armed suggests premeditation, according to them. They didn't seem to care that Nick had a gun to my head, threatening to drop me, they just argued that Thando should never have taken the law into his own hands. And that there were other ways he could have handled the situation without taking that fatal shot.

Those cops were so full of it that they even added that Thando shot Nick dead because he

was angry that he almost lost me to him when I fell for the guy, something they got from Emily. Crazy, if you ask me.

-Me: "The charges have been dropped? How? Did you have anything to do with that?"

-Him: "Actually, it's Thando's lawyer who put in all the work."

-Me: "Really?"

-Him: "I had nothing to do with it."

I don't believe him, but I know better than to push. I know he won't tell me the truth anyway, so I just let it go. Either way, it doesn't matter how it happened, what matters is that we got the desired results.

-Me: "So Thando's really off the hook? It's all over?"

-Him: "I believe that's what I said. There was no murder here anyway."

-Me: "This is fantastic news, Dad. Thank you for coming to tell me...And Nick's brother? What's his name again?"

-Him: "Seth. His name was Seth. He died yesterday. Natural causes."

-Me: "Natural causes?"

-Him: "Who said a healthy 34-year-old can't have a heart attack and drop dead?"

-Me: "Let me guess, an induced heart attack."

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

-Me: "Plausible deniability?"

-Him: "Something like that."

-Me: "I understand."

-Him: "You see, the best murders are the ones nobody sees as murders, those that look like accidents or natural deaths."

That to me is confirmation of my suspicions.

The realisation of what he's done should probably have me shaken, but it only makes me revel in the knowledge that I have a protector out there, someone who'll always be willing to do anything and everything to protect me.

-Him: "Look, baby. I'm no saint and I never claimed to be one. I've made a lot of mistakes in my life and the biggest of them all was leaving your mother to raise you all by herself. I can't say I'm now making up for that, not really, I'm just trying to be the best father to you, the father you deserve. Mntanam [my child], I love you. You are the centre of my universe, and anything or anyone that comes anywhere near that centre to wreck havoc is my enemy. Those Walker brothers hurt you, you're now having nightmares at night because of what they put you through. Yes Seth wasn't the one who became physical with you but he was as much involved in that kidnapping as his brother, and I



just couldn't let that slide. Nobody hurts my family and not incur my wrath. Nobody.

Revenge is the only kind of justice I understand. And by that I'm not talking about an eye for an eye. You take my eye, I take your entire face. That's just how I operate. Now, a question for you: are you gonna judge me?"

But how could he ask me that? Yes I know that I judged him for killing Thuso last year but things have changed in a major way since then. I'm no longer that naïve girl who saw the world as black and white. No.

-Me: "No, Dad. Of course not. How could I judge you after everything you've done for me? I could never. I love you, Mashiya."

He stares at me then slowly his lips curve to form a cute, loving smile that lasts for a long moment before he speaks.

-Him: "Well, I'm happy to hear that. I thought

you'd be throwing tantrums, but I didn't really care, I did what had to be done."

-Me: "I hear you. But I'm still worried about the rest of Nick's family. His father and sister. Won't they be a problem? And, Dad, you can't eliminate everyone."

-Him: "They won't be a problem if they know what's good for them. See, I know that boy's father, Mitchell Walker. Our paths have crossed more than once in the line of business. Let's just say he knows me too well to know not to step on any of my toes. After what happened on that farm I paid him a little visit, just to let him know that Thando is my son-in-law and that the young woman his sons had abducted was actually my daughter. Then I told him that I had no intention of taking the feud any further and that I would appreciate it if he, too, would take a step back and not get involved. I think he got my message loud and clear, he knows what I

meant by that."

-Me: "Well, as long as you're sure that he won't be a problem I'm cool."

-Him: "He knows better than to mess with me. Listen, baby, I'd like to stay longer and chat but I can't. I gotta go, I have a flight to catch, to Cape Town. I told you about the appointment I have with the specialist I want to help Milani with her burns, right?"

-Me: "Yes, you did. I just find it weird that with all the technology we have available today he still wants to talk to you face to face before he even sees the patient. But anyway, I hope he helps Lani."

It's funny that just a year ago it was just me and my mother. But now I have a loving father, and not one but two aunts. The whole thing was weird at first but now it feels really great.

I haven't built any solid relationship with Milani

yet but when I was in East London I'd go visit her in hospital. The burn wounds she sustained, on her abdomen and arms, aren't pretty. And now my dad wants her to get the best care possible.

-Him: "I believe that everything's gonna be okay. But before I go, I have something for you."

He pulls a small gift box out of the glove compartment and hands it to me. Anxious to see what's inside I quickly open it and toss the lid aside. My eyes land on a beautiful, white gold bracelet with two words engraved on it - "Familia Omnia".

-Me: "This is for me? Wow! Dad, I love it. It's beautiful."

-My Dad: "I'm glad you like it. I had it customised just for you. In Latin, 'familia omnia' loosely translates to 'family is everything'. And that's the message I want you to carry with you

wherever you go, baby. Your family will always have your back and I want you to have their back too, even when I'm no longer around."

I'm sure he's saying this because he thinks I'm only pretending to have accepted Iviwe as family, that even after all this time I still haven't completely forgiven her for that Alex thing. But that's not the case. Seriously, the whole thing is 100% behind me, I've been moving forward.

-Me: "You got it, Dad. I promise... And thank you. Thank you for this bracelet. Thank you for everything you've done for me and Thando. And thank you for being my father. I love you, Dad."

He responds by pulling me close to him, wrapping his caring arms tenderly around my body.

-Him: "I love you too, baby. I love you."

He squeezes me tighter, letting the hug linger. And I sure feel the love.

-Him: "Let me get going. I'll see you soon, okay. Take care of my first grandbaby."

He says with a smile when he eventually pulls back.

-Me: "Will do. Just do me one favour, will you?"

-Him: "What is it?"

-Me: "Stay safe."

-Him: "Always."

He starts the engine and I lean over for a peck on his cheek before I open the door and get out. I take a moment to watch his car drive away, smiling to myself. I can't believe at some point I was unsure about letting him into my life. He sure is a thug in a suit but he's also the best father I could ever ask for. And the fact that he wasn't in my life for years no longer matters, it is long forgotten.

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After driving my car inside the yard I go park in front of the garage. Then I pull out my phone and dial Thando's number. I'm too excited to wait until I'm inside the house before I speak with him, I need to do it now. And I know that he's not at work but at his tailor's in PE with Bongo and the rest of his groomsmen for the final fittings.

"Sthandwa sam." He answers with an upbeat voice.

-Me: "Hey. I was just with my father and he told me the good news. Thando lwam, I'm so happy."

-Him: "That makes the two of us. I was so afraid that if this goes to court I'd be radioactive no matter the outcome, but now I no longer have to worry about that. Listen, why don't you come

tonight so we can celebrate?"

-Me: "I'd love that but tonight won't work, hon. I'm babysitting for Kev and Asanda, remember?"

Kevin is taking Asanda out on a special date in Grahamstown. They are going to spend the night and they asked me to babysit for them.

-Me: "I already said yes, babe. I don't think I can pull out now. Besides, I'll be with you tomorrow, so why don't we just celebrate then?"

I'm going to be in East London tomorrow for Sbu's startup launch party. It was supposed to be last week but there were problems with the venue, it turned out it was double booked, so he had to postpone to tomorrow. And Thando and I are in a good space to go.

-Him: "It won't be the same, sthandwa sam. I want us to do it tonight."

-Me: "Okay, fine. I'll see what I can do. I'll call you, okay?"



-Him: "Cool. Hope to see you soon."

I hang up and go inside. Kevin is still at work and Asanda is at her parents'. It's only now, after 5 weeks, that her parents have thawed their hearts and called her home so they can see the baby. But I wouldn't bet on them babysitting for her tonight. Which means if I don't want to disappoint Kevin I need to come up with a plan.

Sitting on the couch in the lounge, it hits me. Kevin's brother, the one who's a cop in Fort Beaufort, could help. He and his live-in girlfriend have been coming around to spend some time with the baby, they love her and I think they won't mind babysitting for the night.

I quickly call him and just like I thought, he's more than willing to babysit his niece. Great. I text Kevin informing him about the new arrangement then I call Thando and tell him that I'll sure be with him tonight. Now with that out

of the way, I should go get my stuff and get going.

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It's around 18:00 when I get to Amalinda, and just as I drive down our street Thando calls to tell me that they are still on their way from PE but he'll be home soon. Okay, I guess I'll have the house all to myself until then. No problem there.

But as it turns out, Thando has other plans. When I walk into the house I'm welcomed by dozens and dozens of rose petals on the floor. What? I smile, surprised. This is how we are going to celebrate? This man is so full of surprises, that much I have to say. But I thought he was in PE, so when did he get the time to do all this?

As I'm still standing there wondering, a single rose amongst the petals draws my attention. Picking it up I notice that attached to it is a note that reads:

"There's a little something waiting for you in the bedroom. Please get ready xx"

Okay, what's going on? We are going to have a romantic dinner in? Or perhaps out? Excited I take strides to the bedroom, and on the bed I find a nice black dress with a long, deep v-neckline and a bejewelled empire waist. The length reaches all the way down to my ankles, and that's exactly how I love my evening gowns. It is really nice, I think it looks great on the hanger, and I hope it will look great on me too.

Trying it on, I wonder if it doesn't make me look fat. I turn around, looking at myself from all angles in the bedroom mirror. No, it fits perfectly. It covers my baby bump exquisitely. And it's sexy too.

I don't know what Thando has planned but I better get ready as per his request. I quickly take off the dress and go to the bathroom to freshen up. When I enter I see the mirror filled with printout pictures of me and him. What's going on? There must be a hundred photos covering the entire mirror, some are from his last year's birthday party where we shared our first kiss, pity there are none of that kiss, others are from when we had just started dating, some from our Bahamas baecation, others of the actual engagement, our Western Cape getaway, the twins birthday party this year, and a lot others.

Every picture shows us happy together, and I realise just how deeply I love him, how deeply we love each other. I could spend hours looking at all the pictures, but stuck on top of all the photos is a post-it note that reads: "Happy 1st Anniversary, sthandwa sam xx."

Oh my God, it's our first anniversary together. Today last year we were in his bedroom and for the first time we shared the most sensational sex I had ever known, then he topped it all by telling me that he loved me. How could I forget that? Isn't it usually guys who forget stuff like this? Now I understand why he insisted on having me here tonight, it had nothing to do with celebrating his charges being dropped but everything to do with celebrating our first anniversary. How could I not remember it? I honestly feel so bad right now. But what would make me feel even worse would be for him to get here and find me still not ready, so I better get a move on.

After a quick, hot shower, I slip into my new, ridiculously expensive dress, and flat sandals. I neatly tie my relaxed hair, then apply light make-up and put on some accessories. The bracelet I just got from my father fits perfectly around my

wrist and the pendant also goes back to where it belongs - around my neck. Butterflies keep swarming in my stomach at the anticipation of how great tonight is going to be.

Thando doesn't use his key but rings the doorbell at exactly 19:00, I know that it's him because none of our neighbours ever comes knocking here. I delightedly hurry to open the door and it's indeed him. He's wearing nice black pants, a crispy white shirt and a wine red jacket with black lapel, no tie. He looks amazing, handsome and so damn sexy. Hell, I think I just forgot my name, as if I'm seeing him for the very first time.

He walks in with a smile painted across his handsome face and gives me a hug which leaves me drunk in his to-die-for cologne before he hands me the bouquet of red roses he has in his hand.

-Him: "Happy anniversary, mamakhe."

His voice is full of joy and expectation. My internal guilt-o-meter goes all the way up at this point because I know that I had forgotten about the anniversary. But I won't tell him that now, I don't want to ruin the moment.

-Me: "Thank you, thando lwam. These are beautiful."

-Him: "Well, not as beautiful as you are. You look..." he rakes his eyes from my head to my feet and all the way back again until our eyes meet once more. "...breathtaking."

I feel heat rise in my face as if he's never complimented me before.

-Me: "You look very handsome yourself. And happy anniversary, thando lwam...I saw what you did in the bathroom, reminding me of where we come from, and I loved it. But, babe, how did you get the time to put it all together? You were in PE."

-Him: "Well, I have a confession to make. I came back early, around 14:00. When I called saying I was still on the way back I was actually at Bongo and Zizo's."

-Me: "You sneaky man."

I say, playfully punching his chest.

-Him: "We're going out, so we better get going now before you break my ribs."

He says laughing.

-Me: "And where are we going?"

-Him: "Out. Just for dinner."

-Me: "Where?"

-Him: "You'll see."

-Me: "Okay, let me put these beautiful flowers in water, then we'll go."

Moving to the kitchen I get a vase, half-fill it with water and put in the flowers. Then I go



grab my bag and return to Thando. Reaching for one of my hands, he tugs me gently towards the door.

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He takes my arm, like a perfect gentleman, and leads me to his car that is parked right in front of the house. The atmosphere outside is warm and slightly humid, the air velvet-soft against my heated skin. This sure is a beautiful night.

Thando gets my door, helps me inside then walks round to get in beside me. As the car moves forward I can't stop wondering where he's taking me, where we are going to have this dinner, but we continue to talk about things that bring us together and a few other things, including the charges being dropped.

Thankfully, by the time we get to our destination

my anxiety levels have dropped significantly. Guiding me out of the car, he takes my arm and escorts me towards the entrance of this oceanfront restaurant in Quigney.

-Him: "Have you been here before?"

-Me: "With who? Of course not."

I answer with a chuckle. In a moment we are at the entrance, and my stomach tickles as we walk inside. But why is it so quiet and dimly lit in here?

-Me: "Where's everybody else, babe?"

-Him: "We have the entire restaurant to ourselves tonight."

He whispers close to my ear as a cheerful thirty-something man, dressed in a black suit and golden tie, appears and comes to greet us. What? He booked the entire restaurant?

-Thando: "Good evening. Is our table ready?"

-The Guy: "Of course. This way, Mr. December."

He leads us to our perfectly set table with lit candles and rose petals on a crispy white tablecloth. This is beautiful, but what's making it more beautiful is the perfect view of the ocean we have from this position. The guy introduces us to our waiter for the evening then leaves.

We sit down and I look over at Thando and, once again, I have to catch my breath. I can't believe he did all of this.

"Can I get you started on some drinks?" The waiter asks, bringing me back to this planet.

-Thando: "Yes, please. What I pre-ordered."

-The Waiter: "Right away, Sir."

He walks away, and I'm left wondering when did Thando plan this whole thing. But just as I'm about to ask, I hear beautiful piano music filling the entire room. I know this song, it's a classic,

Lionel Richie's "Endless Love". But where is it coming from? I turn to my left and a new light that's brighter than on any other part of the restaurant draws my attention, leading me straight to the baby grand piano that's delivering the music in the corner. Oh, nice. But wait. I know the guy sitting behind that piano. That's Ryan. Thando has been planning this with Ryan? Wow, that's unexpected but pretty cool. Ryan's eyes meet mine and he gives me a broad, honest smile, his fingers still working the piano keys. Suddenly, his wife, Megan, appears through the door behind him, already dropping vocals to his instrumentals - with a soulful voice. Haha, what? This is totally amazing. I turn to Thando with a broad smile on my face.

-Me: "Baby, you had all this planned? Wow. It's...I can't even find the word to describe it."

-Him: "Well, I won't take all the credit. I was talking with Ryan and Megan on Tuesday telling

them about what I was planning for tonight and they came up with this idea. They are the ones who decided to use their skills and talent to brighten up your evening even further."

-Me: "And they have succeeded."

At this point the waiter comes back with our drinks. I absently take a sip, my eyes on the amazing man sitting across from me, ears listening to Megan's beautiful voice and the sound produced by Ryan's skillful fingers.

"Ready for your starters?" Through my euphoria I somehow make out the waiter's voice.

-Thando: "Yes, you can bring them. Thank you."

Once again, the waiter disappears, leaving us alone. Thando tells me that he already picked everything he wanted on the menu for the evening, and that he hopes I like everything. Is he kidding me? I'm sure I'll love everything. Besides, he knows all about my food aversions,

so I'm sure none of those are included in the menu.

In a moment the waiter comes back with the starters and we dig in, but I can't tell you how these prawn parcels taste like because I'm fully focused on Ryan and Megan, loving what they are delivering. I can't stop smiling, my heart is in paradise. Nothing impresses me more than someone who puts in all the effort, and Thando is a pro in that field.

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When the music stops, Ryan and Megan come to our table, all smiles, to congratulate us.

-Me: "You guys, that was...really sweet. Thank you." I say rising from my chair, and hug them both. "I can't believe y'all knew what Thando was planning but didn't say anything to me."

-Ryan: "Tell you and ruin another man's surprise? Of course, we couldn't do that."

He answers laughing.

-Thando: "Well, I'm glad you two came through for me. Thank you, once again."

-Megan: "Bring it here. Bring it here."

She says opening her arms for a hug. Thando welcomes the hug then turns to Ryan for a brotherly handshake.

-Ryan: "Well, our job here is done. My wife and I will be on our way now and leave you two love birds to enjoy the rest of the evening."

-Megan: "Once again, congratulations on your 12 months together. May you continue to grow as a couple."

-Thando: "Thank you. Now will you two please get your behinds outta here? We need some space."

He says jokingly and we all laugh before this married couple leaves us. Now left alone, the background music plays softly from the restaurant's speakers.

-Thando: "May I have this dance?"

He extends his hand across the table to take mine.

-Me: "I'd love that, but there's something I need to admit to you first."

-Him: "What is it?"

-Me: "I'd forgotten about our anniversary. Totally. It didn't even cross my mind. I'm sorry."

-Him: "Is that it? Come on, babe, don't worry about it. I remembered it for the both of us. And I thought we should celebrate it. When we started dating the odds were against us and most people probably didn't think we'd make it this far, but here we are and we are still going strong. Yes, we do come across some speed



bumps along the way, just like any other couple, but our love remains strong. I'm seeing a bright future for us. I love you, Someleze, and I wouldn't have it any other way. You are the only one for me."

I find myself getting emotional. My God, I love this man. I can't believe I once felt something for another.

-Me: "I love you too, Thando. I do. The first time you held me in your arms I felt like I had finally come home. And today that's what you are to me - home. You're my home, thando lwam. And I don't ever wanna do this life thing without you. Thank you for loving me for me. You are one amazing man."

His smile broadens, showing his beautiful white teeth.

-Him: "Well, now I'd like to propose a toast. To our future together."

-Me: "Meant to be. I'll definitely drink to that."

Laughing, we raise and clink our glasses. After taking our sips we leave the table to have our dance. By the time we return to the table I can't stop laughing at this man who can't dance. I know that he doesn't have two left feet, he's just clowning. He can be really crazy sometimes, and I love it.

The main course arrives and we eat while talking and laughing non-stop.

The night is naturally beautiful but Thando has made it even more so.

-Him: "You really like Ryan and Megan's house, don't you? When we were there on Tuesday I noticed how you couldn't stop admiring it even though it wasn't your first time seeing it."

He says, now changing gears.

On Tuesday after our counselling session we passed by Ryan's place just to see them. I

wanted them to finally meet my fiancé. They've been talking on the phone since the kidnapping incident and it was now time for them to meet. The visit was great, they all clicked, but shortly I had to love and leave them with Thando and rush to Alice before it got dark.

-Me: "It is out of this world, I just can't get enough of it."

-Him: "Maybe we can also get a place like that."  
I laugh.

-Me: "With what money, babe? Unlike those two, we are not trust fund babies. Yes, we've talked about getting our own place after we are officially married, a place to raise our kids, but as a startup home I think we should get something small."

-Him: "You do know that I'm not a volunteer, right? I'm employed and I get paid. I'm capable of providing for you and our children, Soso."

-Me: "And I don't doubt that, babe. But I don't think we can afford a big, luxurious place with only your salary. It's only you who's working right now, I'm not, remember? So I think a smaller place will do for now. And I also think we should go 50/50 on the deposit, mine will be covered by my father. He and I have been talking about this and he said he'll be more than willing to help when we are ready to invest in a property. I know that I shouldn't have spoken to him about this without your knowledge, and please don't think I'm undermining your abilities as a man, it's just that I want to chip in in everything, I don't want everything to be on you just because I don't have a proper job. I hope you won't take this the wrong way."

-Him: "Nah, it's okay. We are a team after all."

I don't know if he means that, but from the tone of his voice it sounds like he does.

-Me: "I'm sure my father will be willing to help us

with humble digs, not a mansion. Your father on the other hand, well, there's no love lost between you two, so we can't ask for his help. Which means a smaller place it is, right?"

-Him: "We'll see."

From there we continue planning our future, with a little spice of humour, until we leave after over-indulging on dessert.

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We pull up in the parking area at our complex, and Thando looks at me.

-Me: "I really had fun tonight. Thank you, thando lwam. I can't believe I almost chose babysitting over this."

He doesn't answer but his smouldering eyes stay on me. The oxygen in the car suddenly

becomes sparse, and the energy that seems to always be pulling us together, that delicious magnet of fire, rises to hazardously high levels and my heart rate shoots through the roof. He leans over and take possession of my lips with his. I let out a soft moan as I respond to the kiss. And we keep at it until another tenant's car pulls up next to ours.

-Me: "Ummh..I think we should take this to the house."

I say against his mouth.

-Him: "Agreed."

Leaving the car and walking to our front door, I feel my desire growing stronger until it floods my senses, so much that I can't even walk in a straight line. He hands me the key to the door, and I fumble a few times, trying to insert it into the lock. Once I manage to get it in and turn it to open the door, I feel his breath on the back of

my head. Suddenly, he turns me around and crashes his lips to mine. His hands hungrily grope my body as he guides me across the threshold, walking me into our lounge. The door slams shut behind us, and coming up for a quick breath of air, he turns on the lights and quickly takes off his jacket, his eyes never leaving mine. But as I'm still anticipating his lips on mine again, his phone rings. I beg him not to answer but when he sees that it's the hospital, he answers.

-Him: "I'm sorry, babe, but I have to go. That was the hospital and they want me in. I'm really sorry."

He informs me after hanging up. What? I am crushed, I won't lie, but I fake a smile.

-Me: "That's fine, we'll continue with this when you're back."

Immediately after he walks out my eyes fill with

tears. I am being ridiculous, aren't I? It's not like I didn't know that he's on call tonight. And I also know that he loves me just as much as he ever did, I just have to keep being the understanding partner.

Taking a deep breath, I head straight to the bathroom. I'm sweaty and sticky, all I want is a cold shower then go straight to bed. What a fucked up ending to a perfect night.

But when I return to the bedroom after the shower I find Thando laying on the bed. What, he's back? But why? I didn't even hear him come in. But the shower water was making noise anyway.

-Me: "Baby? Aren't you supposed to be at the hospital? Why did you come back?"

-Him: "Well, I couldn't be away from you tonight, so I made another plan."

He gets up from the bed and quickly closes the



distance between us. Embracing my body with his strong arms he pulls me towards his body and kisses my lips with loads of passion.

Season 2

#21: Season Finale Part #1

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"I'm about to dive in. Baby girl, hold your breath. We about to get so wet. Swimming in your body, let me dive in. You know ain't no running 'round this pool. Going under just for you, baby you watch me stroke, left stroke, right stroke, back stroke." - Trey Songz

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The sexually-drenched "Dive In" plays softly on the bluetooth speaker seated on the nightstand.

Trey Songz is setting the mood with his suggestive metaphors that equate lovemaking to taking a swim.

It doesn't look like it's going to be a lonely night after all. I'm really happy Thando has chosen us over his job tonight.

-Me: "I'm glad you came back home, babe."

I mutter against his lips.

-Him: "There's nowhere I'd rather be but right here with you, sthandwa sam."

He covers my lips with his in a slow, sensual kiss. His tongue slowly dips into my mouth, and his hands move lower to my ass as our tongues mingle. We continue to kiss, the song a serenade in the background. Then suddenly the song comes to an end, leaving only two apparent sounds in the room - the sound of our beating hearts and the slight yet relaxed rhythmical breathing of our two souls in the dim

light afforded only by the bedside lamps. This is a warm, embracing light that softens the darkness, and enhances the warmth in the room. Another mood setter.

Coming up for a quick breath of air, Thando swiftly gets rid of the towel around my torso. It drops to the floor, leaving me naked, with only my panties on. Now I feel his minty breath on my face as his lips come to meet mine again. He kisses me so tenderly that I let out a soft moan.

"I love you." He whispers as his sweet lips brush mine, sending shivers up my spine.

Waiting for no response from me he lifts me off the ground and carefully lays me down on the bed. Then with his deep voice he tells me to close my eyes and keep them closed until he tells me otherwise. I do that with pleasure because it always magnifies the remaining senses.

A few seconds pass and I feel like I am alone in the bedroom. I hear no sound around me, but I know that Thando is close by. I can feel his presence at the bottom corners of the bed. After a few seconds the silence is slightly broken by him shuffling from one side of the room to the other. I guess he's also getting rid of his clothes. Can't he just hurry up and come to me already? I long for his touch. I need to feel his strong yet gentle hands on my body.

Just as I'm about to tell him to hurry up I feel him between my legs. His moist tongue licks me from my foot all the way up to my inner thigh where he plants tender kisses. Soft moans escape my mouth with each touch, lick and kiss. Electric-like pulses gently surge up through my leg and all the way to my heart as he repeats his actions on my other leg. With me still savouring that feeling, goosebumps speckle my skin in a flash as his lips gently,

ever so softly, descend and touch the skin of my pregnant belly. My breath quickens and I tremble at the softness of his kisses, the promise of his gentleness permeating the air.

He takes his time worshipping my round belly with his kisses before his wet lips slowly trail up my body until he reaches my breasts. My nipples are already hard from the anticipation.

My lips part slightly and the last breaths I've been holding escape with a low, sensual sigh as he traces his tongue around one of my nipples, encircling it around the most tender part. With my eyes closed, I feel every sensation threefold. He blows on me gently, the silken air causing me to tremor and breathe heavily. He takes one of my breasts into his mouth and gently sucks on it. Oh, my! I tremble, feeling wetness drenching my panties. The electricity between us is amazing, not great like a surge but gentle and undulating like a low charge traveling just

under the surface of the skin. I sigh and roll my head back, arching slightly as I become pleasantly yet agonisingly aroused to his mouth on my other breast, gently sucking and nibbling at my nipple. I want him inside me more than I can say but at the same time I want to postpone the inevitable joining so as to make it last all that longer. To terminate this glorious feeling too soon would be a sin.

His breath quickens, probably because he perceives my arousal. I can feel that he wants to move his mouth quicker as he sucks on my breast but it seems like his heart won't let him. It slows his movements to draw out the pleasure he is both getting and giving from this intimate motion. He, too, doesn't want it to end even though he craves fulfillment. My moans grow louder, and my hands land on his head and gently brush it as he continues to work my breasts. We both move together and separately

in a dance of sensual expression.

Finally, he brings his lips up my chest to my neck then to my mouth, letting them brush me across my top, and then bottom lip. Suddenly, they press against both my lips in a tender kiss. They are soft as a feather, and wet as rain. His tongue delves into my mouth and I meet him in a greedy kiss, my body trembling with each labored breath. But he pulls away all too soon.

"Gosh, I love you. Every part of you." He whispers against my lips.

The inability to see him makes me even more aware of his deep, thick voice and the emotion that accompanies it. My eyes instantly water, my emotions high, as what he's just said lands directly into my heart. It is at this point that his mouth finds mine again, hard and passionate, his hands moving lower as our tongues mate with each other. I moan into his mouth as his fingers softly glide over my pubic mound,

stroking over the white lace of my panties. I can feel myself becoming wetter and wetter by the second. But his hand withdraws and moves back to my breasts. His fingers stroke around them, his thumb teasing my nipples, hardening them even more. His lips lift from mine and gently fall to my soft spot on my neck, slowly licking and kissing, forcing a loud moan out of my mouth. His hand now leaves my breasts and move down again. He starts to explore inside my panties, lightly stroking my puffy lips, taking care to use just a single finger to plant his energy wherever he touches - lightly, lovingly with care and deliberation. Each time the finger catches my clit I jolt and groan in ecstasy.

He withdraws the finger and trace it with my juices to my breasts then follow with his tongue, lapping up the moist trails. I rise to his touch and the need grows from my love centre up through my body making my breasts swell and



tingle, as loud moans escape my lips. I wish this sweet ecstasy could never end, and I breathe out a low sigh that eloquently speaks of pure sensuality.

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I feel him go all the way down to the bottom of the bed and slowly pulls my panties down. His kisses follow the white lace creeping down my legs. Then I feel him between my legs and his strong arms lift my knees over his shoulders. Breathing in syncopation, he draws his face close to my honeypot and ever so softly lays a trail up the inside of my thigh. He waits for the anticipation to build then his fingers open up the lips of my womanhood. A loud moan escapes my lips as his skillful tongue enters me, impaling me and licking my walls inside.

"Ohh god, Thando... don't stop... ohhhhhhhh." I scream.

Using his shoulders I am able to lift myself further off the bed, wanting and needing his tongue deeper inside me, my loud moans encourage him. I can feel tingling spread throughout my body as his tongue thrusts in deeper, twisting and probing, drinking my juices. Involuntarily I heave and gulp, locking my ankles behind his head to open myself fully to him. 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. He keeps going, licking deep. Incoherent words stream from my mouth as fire burns between my thighs. My hands go to his head and push him down on me some more. Faster now, his tongue darts in me, fire raging through my body. His finger rubs my exposed

clit and seconds later my world explodes, my juices gush onto his mouth.

"Ooooooh... Yesss... Ohhh." I scream, my hips bucking against his face, the heels of my feet digging into his back. My legs grip his neck like a vice, holding him there as he rides the erotic storm in me, lingering deliciously as he drinks from me.

As my orgasm subsides, my legs unclench and release him from me. His tongue gently licks my engorged lips and clit. -Me: "Oooohh, baby, that was great."

I say, heaving. His mouth leaves my honeypot and trails over my belly button. His warm breath making my skin tingle once more. He licks and kisses my breasts, gently nibbling on my nipples. I feel his breath on my cheek, then his flavoured tongue on my lips. I suck his tongue into me, moaning as my tongue dances with his. He pulls away from me, and my head lifts off

the bed trying to melt back into him. But I feel his breath on my ear.

-Him: "What do you want now, babe?" he whispers.

-Me: "Make love to me, please. Make me come again."

I reply with my breathing still ragged.

He lifts himself from me and with his legs he spreads mine apart. I raise my hips to invite him in. I feel his hardness against my opening and he slowly plants himself in my slick sheath, inch by inch, deeper and deeper. His labour breathing an indication of how hard it has been for him to hold back for so long.

Together we move in sequence. I can feel his warm breath on my breasts as he licks and teases them with his tongue. I run my fingers over his haircut and down his back. My nails trace down his back, digging in as I scale his

skin. His body slows down on mine and I feel him lift off of me.

-Him: "Open your eyes."

I snap them open and I am welcomed by his intense eyes staring deep into mine. Gosh, I just melt in them as he starts moving again.

-Him: "I love you."

He says in a shaken voice.

-Me: "I love...you too."

I whisper brokenly, and hear his groan of satisfaction as he buries his face between my breasts. He continues to move inside me, a steady rhythm building but still gentle and soft. I lift my hips to meet his, wanting him deep inside me, as I wrap my arms around him.

Losing my mind in this ecstasy, my hands leave his back to gently touch his face then pull him to my lips and I kiss him passionately. I brush his hair then direct his mouth to my hard

nipples. His teeth tease them as my nails dig into his back.

He pulls out as far as he can, then slowly deeps himself back in. His finger lightly touches my clit, building me to my second orgasm. I place my hands on his buttocks and pull him hard into me, his hardness impaling me faster as I groan louder and louder.

His fingers creep away from my clit and he trails them to my mouth. As I suck them in, he pushes harder into me, deeper and deeper. My legs begin to shake as I gyrate my hips into him, feeling myself losing control. Pulling his fingers out of my mouth, he presses my arms into the bed with every push. I pull on the satin sheet beneath me as the tingling returns. My screams turn into howls, as he moves faster and faster, the sensation tripling. He grunts louder, his carnal sounds thundering through me as a reminder that he has taken full possession of

me. Soon my wicked orgasm erupts as he drives me, shoves me, flings me over the edge.

He continues to stir inside me, building his own orgasm. He kneels, pulls my leg up, rests my ankle on his shoulder and now uses all his strength to drive himself inside me. Fucking hell, he is so deep in this position, and he moves skillfully, hitting all the right corners. His moves push me further on the bed and I use the headboard as a buffer. Thank God, it's padded.

At this rate he is going to make me come a third time and I can't wait to experience it. He grabs hold of my hips and concentrates on building me up again, the groans coming from him an indication that he, too, is nearing the finish line. It doesn't take long for him to make me come again. And soon after me, he also finds his release. As he does he yells my name and thrusts into me one more time, emptying himself deep inside.

I'm still clinging to the sheets when his head sinks to my forehead. We're both sweating and panting, feeling our aftershocks surrounding each other. He gives me a delightful kiss and strokes me as the both of us recover, our bodies sweating as one, entwined in the soft satin sheets crumpled around us. He looks up at me and softly whispers, "Happy Anniversary, I love you."

-Me: "Mmm I love you too. This was amazing, baby. Really amazing."

I plant a kiss on his lips.

We take a moment to rest before we clean up then cuddle up for the night. It is such a beautiful, tender feeling. We lay in each other's arms, holding each other so close that we almost become one, delighting in the afterglow of our passion. I feel warm and safe in his arms, like always. This man is the most passionate lover I've ever been with in my life, not that I've



been around a lot though. His love, wildness, and passion towards sex is something I adore.

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I'm awakened by his fingertips gently tracing my cheek. I'm tempted to open my eyes but I don't. Slowly past the cheek, his finger traces the line of my lips and over my chin and down across my gently rising chest, then his lightly cupped palm comes to rest on my round belly. No, why is he stopping? I open my eyes and turn to look at him laying beside me.

-Me: "Morning, baby daddy."

-Him: "Hey. It's already afternoon actually."

-Me: "Huh?"

-Him: "Yeah. It's around 15:00."

He pulls me to him and plants a tender kiss on

my lips.

I'm not surprised I'm only waking up now though, we didn't get much sleep last night. We drew the night out, not wanting it to end. We talked, laughed, kissed and made love over and over again before exhaustion tugged us into oblivion around 5:30 a.m.

-Him: "We need to get up and get ready for Sbu's launch party. We have less than 3 hours to get ready and get there."

I groan, not feeling like waking up.

-Him: "I know, I know. I don't feel like going either. Apart from wanting to spend the rest of the afternoon in this bed with you, I also don't feel like being in that kind of scene today. But Sbu is my friend, I have to be there to show him some support. And I need you there with me to make the evening bearable."

I feel like cuddling with him all afternoon, but I

understand that we have to go.

-Me: "Okay then, let's get ready. But I'm hungry, I need to eat first."

-Him: "No problem, I'll make you something to eat while you take a shower."

-Me: "Thanks, babe."

I kiss him. Then we both get up and make the bed together before going to brush our teeth side by side, with him teasing me about wasting toothpaste. After that I get in the shower while he just cleans his face and hands then goes to the kitchen.

Done with the shower, I join him for our late lunch in the kitchen. We don't get to savour the moment though because we are running out of time. We eat in a hurry. Then I clean up while he goes to take his own shower.

All done, we dress up, me in a red dress, him in a blue suit. I feel good in this dress, but I'm not

so sure about the kind of event I'm attending.

We arrive at the venue around 15 minutes after the set start time of the exclusive event, and the place has already hit capacity. It is filled with current and future clients who are ready to start signing with Sbu's new cybersecurity company, a company that specialises in protecting large companies from cyber-attacks. The who's who in the business world in the province are here. I just wonder how Sbu's company has been able to pack a room full of exactly the people it needs when it is a brand-new startup that has bootstrapped its way to launch. I guess the 10 years he spent working as a senior network engineer, a professional hacker, in his industry before he decided to go out on his own has helped him. Within that timeframe he has built a list of contacts. And I'm hopeful that those contacts will help his company ride the wave to success.

The event planner has worked her magic here, everything is on point, especially the decor. The women are all dressed in reds and rich oranges, the men in formal whites and ice blues, to honour the theme of the party. From the lighting to the floral arrangement, the theme is ubiquitous, executed throughout the party with a tasteful flair. The guests mingle and network around a champagne fountain and oyster bar. Subtle ambient music creates a feeling of instant cool, taking the seriousness out of this business affair.

This is all nice but it is just not my scene.

-Me: "I'm already feeling lost in here, you know? Business events are just not my scene."

I say, looking at Thando beside me.

-Him: "I know right. But you'll get used to it when we move to Jo'burg. My old friends over there are in business, they are into this kind of life. I

used to get invited often and I believe nothing's gonna change even now."

Move to Jo'burg? What is he talking about?

Before I get to ask, he takes my arm and leads me through the party, with him reminding me to relax and just go with the flow. We weave our way in, greeting and moving on, greeting and moving on, until we spot Sbu. When he sees us approaching he quickly excuses himself from the two men he was speaking with, and we get to congratulate him.

The rest of the event becomes plain torture to me, but I keep reminding myself that I'm here for my man's friend. And Zizo, who's also just another guest feeling out of place, keeps me company every time our men get whisked away but other guests.

Really, I'm a township girl, I'm not used to these kind of events. The language here is foreign to me. I don't even see the need to mingle

anymore.

Feeling bored, I walk away from Zizo to get myself another drink from one of the servers. But as I turn around with the drink I bump into someone and almost spill the virgin cocktail on his expensive suit, but thanks to my on-point reflexes I manage to twist the glass so the liquid could land on the floor.

-Me: "Oh God, I'm so sorry, Mister. I didn't see you there."

-Him: "Don't worry, no damage done."

He says with a smile, then stretches his arm to take my hand in his. He pulls it to his lips and kisses it. Corny. He introduces himself, and I try being polite by introducing myself too, faking a smile.

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But my smile falters when I see Thando looking at us from across the room. He's standing away from the centre of the party, talking on the phone, but his eyes trained to me. Please don't tell me he's jealous, I don't even know this guy. When he hangs up and approaches us, I excuse myself from the group and walk over to him, to meet him half-way.

-Him: "Baby, I have good news. Great actually."

He says with a smile. Oh good, he doesn't care about that guy.

-Me: "Really? What is it?"

-Him: "I got a job at this private hospital in Sandton."

-Me: "What? I didn't even know you were looking for a job, you didn't tell me."

-Him: "I didn't want to tell you until everything



was finalised, and the call I just had was the final stamp I needed. But remember three months ago when I told you I was gonna cut down? Well, I was talking about this sort of thing. At that hospital I will be the general surgeon that I am, not a trauma surgeon by force. And I definitely won't double as any other emergency doctor because of shortages. I knew that I wouldn't last in the hospital I'm with right now, not while working under Dr. Summers who hates my guts, so I opened my eyes to other possibilities."

I'm not sure how I feel about this, particularly him keeping me in the dark about such an important decision. A decision that won't only affect him but me as well.

-Me: "This is good news alright. But, baby, I thought we were gonna stick around the province, have a home here. We talked about that. And now you're telling me you had other

plans in your head? Is this what you meant when you said when we move to Jo'burg I'll be used to scenes like this one?"

-Him: "I'm sorry, okay. You know me, I don't know how to communicate my plans until they come to fruition. But still, I'm sorry. And, baby, I think this is actually gonna be good for us. I need you to join me me, well next year. I already got us a place there, a house not far from the hospital."

-Me: "A house? You got us a house? When you were talking about us buying a luxurious house yesterday you knew that it was already taken care of? Is that it?"

-Him: "I wanted it to be a surprise, babe. From me to my wife."

-Me: "A surprise? How did you even finance it?"

-Him: "Can we please talk about that when we're home?"

-Me: "You do know that this decision you've made without me is going to affect my own plans, right? Plans that I shared with you. You know that I already have a Master's scholarship to study at Fort Hare next year. I already have a project, Thando. We talked about me leaving the baby with my mother and going back to varsity after I give birth in February, remember that? Now how's that gonna happen if you're asking me to move to Jo'burg? Or what, you don't care about my own education because you already have your MMed? Is that it?"

I'm honestly angry right now but I'm trying to control myself because we are in a room full of people.

-Him: "Yoh, you're now turning this into something else. I do want you to study, Soso. I do. And moving to Jo'burg doesn't mean you won't study. If you still want to study at Fort Hare that's okay, you can always study part-

time. Look, I'm sorry I didn't communicate with you first but please, please do this with me. I can't move to Jo'burg and leave you here, not when we're married. It's already tough as it is living in different towns, how much more living in different provinces? I would have to worry about guys like Nick and the one you were just with right now, won't I?"

Dear Lord, is he being serious right now? Please tell me he's kidding.

-Him: "Look, baby, moving will be good for us. A lot of bad stuff has happened here so it'll be good to start afresh somewhere else, in another province. And we'll be close to the twins. Those girls are my life, I need to be close to them, spend more time with them."

Thando is good at manipulating situations to get what he wants. He did this last year when he wanted me to quit my job, he made it look like he was doing it for me whereas in reality he

was doing it for himself. Yes, it did work for me at the end because I managed to pass all my modules well, graduated cum laude and landed a scholarship, but still. He's being a manipulator even now, mentioning the kids and the bad things that have happened to us here. What the hell?

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Note from the Admin: Let me just put this here. I, Philisiwe Mbali-Enhle Makinana, the head writer of this story, love sex. I love talking about it, I love writing about it, and I love having it (but only with my husband). My husband knows this and it's a good thing that we both have the same level of appetite in the bedroom. Last December we were celebrating our 6th wedding anniversary, and sex is still the most important

part of our marriage.

There's just something I don't understand though. Why is talking about sex taboo, especially amongst women? Why do women avoid talking about sex or call those who are free to talk about it names? Why is it that we feel uncomfortable talking about what we do almost every night? I'd be with my married girlfriends and they'd openly share their worries about their kids, households and spouses, but when I come up with the sex talk they'd be uncomfortable and quickly change the topic. I think this is ridiculous.

They'd be like sex is private. Private? I say, fuck that. Movies, politics and ads can be all about sex all the time and that's fine but when it comes to sex between two people who have committed their lives to one another, the topic is suddenly taboo. What the hell? I honestly think this privacy thing is contrived and

unnecessary. Think about it. If married women (or any adult women) talked about sex, we could share our secrets and desires and have them validated. We could empower one another to ask for what we want. We could support one another in never faking another orgasm again. We could easily tell men that putting tab A into slot B is not sex but merely one component of sex. That foreplay is not a thing but it is sex, and our pleasure cannot be an afterthought.

Women have sex. Women like sex. Women want sex, all kinds of sex and all of those kinds - and that's okay and good as long as they are between consenting adults. Sex is self-care. It's not just okay to want it and to have it. I believe it's also good, really good, for us mentally and physically. There's no reason for us talking about it to be taboo. Not a good reason at all. If we want to be satisfied sexually, which is nothing wrong, we need to talk about sex.

We have best friends who we confide in. Maybe we talk to them a little about these things. But we should be able to talk to them about everything – sex toy recommendations, new positions, how to talk to our partners, near misses and home runs, the whole 9.

Sure, people engage in sexual activities but talking about it is seen as dirty. You have got to be kidding me!!! Talking about sex should not be a generalised taboo. When information about sex is shared in the same way as information about food or travel or beauty, then sex and sexuality become as "normal" as food and travel and beauty. How are we ever going to be comfortable talking to our children about practising safe sex if we can't even talk about sex with other adults? Again, I think the whole "sex is private" thing is ridiculous. Who's with me?

Season 2



#22

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"I'm gonna love you 'til the end. I'm gonna be your very true friend. I wanna share your ups and down. I'm gonna be around." - MLTR

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3 months later

I'd like to think every little girl dreams about her wedding day, at least in my case I know that to be true. I pinned all my hopes on the one time when I could be the centre of attention as I walk down the aisle. I knew exactly what I wanted to wear and envisioned how I would look like on my big day. But we don't always get what we want, do we? Today is the 28th of December, my wedding day, but because of this 7-month baby bump I'm not going to walk down the aisle in the mermaid silhouette gown I envisioned

myself in as a little girl. I somehow feel robbed of being in the spotlight as an amazingly beautiful bride, but I wouldn't have it any other way. My baby was obviously not planned but now I wouldn't trade this pregnancy for anything. My baby is the reason I wake up every morning and push harder to build a bright future for myself as an individual so I could be able to give him or her an even brighter future no matter what happens between me and his or her father in the unforeseeable future.

However, planning a wedding while pregnant is not something I would wish on any other bride. Planning a wedding is stressful enough but doing it while pregnant means the stress gets doubled. But thanks to my understanding wedding planner, my supportive mother, my loving fiancé and surprisingly, Iviwe, I had most of that burden taken off my shoulders three months ago. They pulled together and got

everything done while I just focused on finishing my dissertation, getting my wedding gown to be perfect under the circumstances, as well as taking care of myself and the life growing inside me.

I managed to finish and submit my dissertation on time and I am, without a doubt, graduating next year. I can't believe that me, the little Someleze Ndlovu who's always been a nobody with nothing but a dream and a supportive mother, is now going to be a registered Scientist. This is only one step closer to my dream though. My ultimate dream is to get my Doctorate and finally change my title to Dr. I'm going to have to get through doing my Master's part-time before I get there though. Studying part-time at Fort Hare is the only option I have considering that I am moving to Jo'burg with my husband after the wedding. I would just study in Jo'burg if I didn't have a strong sense

of loyalty, but because Prof Harisson believed in me more than I have ever believed in myself I feel obligated to work with him. He wasn't even my supervisor during my Honours year, Prof Elliott, who is now leaving Fort Hare and moving back to Nigeria, was. But when he saw my Honours work he got impressed and asked me to work with him next year. Because of him I now have substantial funding and a very interesting research project to work on next year, so I am not dropping him.

Am I happy about moving to Jo'burg though? Well, I can't say I am, but I've accepted it. It is what it is, a done deal. However, that doesn't change the fact that I was absolutely angry when Thando first shared the news with me. I was enraged because I actually felt disrespected and bullied even though he said making me feel that way wasn't his intention. He had no right to make such a decision

without consulting me first. The fact that I'm 10 years his junior no longer has any relevance, I'm his partner which means I'm his equal and we have to make such decisions together.

When we got home that night I voiced out my feelings about the matter, there was no way I was just going to let it slide. He apologised non-stop and refrained from trying to justify himself. That to me was very admirable and it's the reason I forgave him. My heart found reason to surrender and accept the decision he had already made. And discussing the whole thing at length during our counselling sessions also influenced my decision. I saw how much he was willing to try harder to work on his major flaw, which is his whack communication skills. And since then I'm very much seeing the difference. That's one area the counselling sessions helped us on, and there are many others. So, thanks to Zizo who hooked us up

with that premarital counselor.

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Me being certain about marrying Thando, however, doesn't make me feel less nervous right now. It is normal to be nervous on your wedding day, right? But with me I think it's more than just the normal wedding anxiety. I have this strange feeling that something bad is going to happen, but I don't know what. When that feeling strikes me again my heart starts pounding, sweat moistens my palms, and I struggle to breathe. I'm having another panic attack, a second one this morning.

"Hey guys, I think she's having another panic attack." My already hysterical hairdresser says, dropping the curling iron and taking a step back. Even through my struggle I can see her eyes

growing wider in the mirror I'm sitting in front of. She's really freaked out.

My friend, Amanda, springs off her chair and comes to me.

"Chomi, eyes on me. Look at me and take a deep breath. Take slow, deep breaths with me."

She flew in late yesterday and got here at the Grande Roche Hotel, where the wedding is going to be held, just before the wedding rehearsal started. She couldn't miss the wedding for the world, especially because she's my maid of honor. She was my obvious choice because she's my childhood friend, she knows me better than anyone in this room.

She's also the one who helped me when I had the first panic attack this morning. Being a yoga instructor back in Jo'burg she knows very well how instantly beneficial to the mind and body a few slow, deep breaths are. Holding my hand,

she takes the breaths with me, slowly calming me down before giving me a glass of water to drink.

-Her: "Chomi, this is a second panic attack you've had this morning. You need to stop worrying, okay? This is a happy day, your big day. Please be calm and enjoy every single moment, girl."

She says with some concern disguised under her sweet smile.

-Anathi: "Everything is going to go okay, sweetheart. Don't worry yourself. The day is beautiful, you also look beautiful. All that's left is for you to finish getting ready and go marry your man. My brother knows how lucky he is to be the one who gets to marry you. Now calm down and let us all help you get ready for him."

My only sister-in-law says, brushing my shoulder. She and her parents got here just



after us yesterday, with her father riding in a different car. Her father and mother are going through divorce, something that makes me feel bad. I feel bad because they had to come down here to attend our wedding while their own is going to hell after 35 years. But Thando is not sharing my worries, he's actually happy that his mother is finally divorcing his cheating father. Sure, I have no doubt that it's the best decision for her but still, I feel bad that my own parents are getting married in two days and my husband's are splitting up.

-Zizo: "Think about the baby, Soso. Your anxiety is affecting it too. Relax, babe, relax. You're marrying the love of your life here, you should allow yourself to be a little happy, alright? Nothing is gonna go wrong. This is the man who knew he wanted to marry you even before you two actually got together."

Okay, what is she talking about?

-Me: "Huh?"

-Her: "What do you mean 'huh'? Didn't he tell you?"

-Me: "Tell me what?"

-Her: "What I just said. That he knew that you would be his wife even before you two got together? Well, that night at his birthday party last year he said it to us. But it wasn't the right time to even ask you out yet."

Really? I didn't know that, Thando never told me. Now that I've heard it it should probably bring a smile to my face, but I just can't bring myself to smile right now. The rest of my bridal party is now hovering over me, pushing my anxiety levels through the roof once again. I feel like I'm suffocating.

-Me: "I need my mother. Please, I need my mother. Where's she? Where's my mom?"

I'm getting frantic with every word that comes

out of my mouth. I'm not trying to be a brat here, I just think it's my mother who'll manage to totally calm me down. Hearing from her that everything's going to be okay will make all the difference, or at least I think so.

-Milani: "The last time I checked she was helping Iviwe with the baby in her room. The baby has been crying non-stop since Iviwe got here this morning."

Milani, my most recently-found aunt, is also a member of my bridal party. They are 5 in total, including the maid of honour. It's Amanda, Anathi, Zizo, Asanda, and her - Milani. She came on board only a few weeks ago after I got let down by Megan, Ryan's wife. I guess that's what happens when you don't have a lot of friends in your corner. But thank God my aunt came through for me, otherwise we were going to have a problem because Thando has 4 groomsmen, excluding the best men. When I

asked her I wasn't sure she would want to come on board though, I was just trying my luck but she surprised me and said yes with so much joy. I guess it's true that family will always have your back. Her going along with my request came with only one condition, a dress with long sleeves to make sure that her arms are not exposed. She's had two surgeries in the past three months to correct her burned skin, with my father settling the bill, but she still has a long way to go before she can be able to show off those arms without any worries.

-Me: "Please go check her for me, Lani. Please, I need to see her. I need to see my mom."

She is now totally a member of our family but I still don't see her, or Iviwe for that matter, as an aunt. I see them as sisters instead, and that's probably because they are only 3 years older than me. As someone who grew up as an only child, having them feels really great. I now know

how it feels like to have a big family, and I wouldn't trade this for anything.

Milani hears me but before she can answer, there's a knock at the door.

-Asanda: "That's probably her, your mom. I'll get the door."

She goes to open, and I hear her talking to the person.

-Her: "Dude, what are you doing here? This room is for us girls."

It's obviously not my mother.

"I'm here to see my friend. Please let me in." I have my back to the door and these girls are still hovering over me so I don't see who it is but I recognise that voice, I can tell who it is.

-Me: "Is that Ryan?"

-Amanda: "Yeah, it's him. I just sent him a text asking him to come. Let him in, Asanda."

I swivel my chair around to face the door as he walks in.

-Amanda: "Ladies, let's give them some space to talk."

I'm a little confused. Why did she ask him to come to my room? But I don't ask, I just let them all, including the hairdresser, walk out. They are already done getting ready anyway, it's only me who needs to pull her shit together and let everybody help me get ready.

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"Hey. I hear the wedding anxiety is getting the better of you." Ryan says as he takes a seat on a chair next to mine.

Oh, now I see why Amanda called him. I think she's wasted all of our time though because I

don't see how Ryan is going to help me. I know that this is more than just wedding anxiety but I don't feel like telling that to anyone, I do not want to sound like a paranoid fool.

-Him: "Have you eaten? I hear bananas help. And I've brought you some potassium tablets. They are completely safe and they help deal with nerves that are difficult to get under control."

He hands them to me.

-Me: "I'm pregnant, Ryan. My baby forced me to eat this morning even though I didn't want to. And I've a had a banana but nothing seems to be taking my worries away. What if things don't go as planned? What if something goes wrong?"

-Him: "And why would it go wrong? Two people who love each other and want to spend the rest of their lives together are getting married today.

Everything is already in place for the ceremony and the reception. So, why would anything go wrong?"

-Me: "You don't understand, Ryan. You don't."

-Him: "You're right, I don't understand. But what I do understand is that this is the day you always dreamed about. The day you get to marry the man you love, a man who also loves you in return. Thando is that man, and this is that day."

-Me: "How do you know that for sure?"

-Him: "Is that supposed to be a trick question? Dude, I was already in your life as a friend when you started seeing Alex, remember? You were happy alright, but not as much as you are with Thando. This is the most beautiful and happy I've seen you. And I always see the love in your eyes whenever you talk about Thando, they just light up. The same thing I see in him. You



should have seen the look on his face the evening he was telling Megan and I about your first anniversary celebration 3 months ago. Trust me, I know when a man loves a woman. I can spot a man in love. And that's exactly what I saw in Thando that evening and I've been seeing ever since. You guys are good together, and getting married was the next logical thing to do. You're not making a mistake here, if that's what you're worried about."

-Me: "No, that's not it. I'm not experiencing cold feet or anything like that."

-Him: "Then just relax and enjoy your big day...Remember a month into your Juliet role in Romeo and Juliet? Our artistic director was already regretting giving you a shot, he wanted to cut you and give the role to your understudy because according to him you were not in touch with your sexuality, you seemed inexperienced when it came to dating and that showed on

stage. Everything he said was true but I knew how hard you had worked to land that role and just how devastated you'd be if you lost it. So, I..."

-Me: "You offered to teach me everything I needed to know in order to crack it. And you did without hitting on me even once."

-Him: "I know I was still a jerk back then, hitting on everything with paired X chromosomes, but you were different, I respected you. I was seeing a true friend in you and I didn't want to ruin that by making a stupid move on you. But I did ask why you were still a virgin. And you told me you were serious about your studies and guys were just going to be a distraction. You were like 'call me old-fashioned but when I finally give myself to someone for the first time, I want it to be someone I see as a potential husband.'

However, a year later you started dating Alex. And I was like 'What the hell? This is not the one

for her.' I seriously didn't approve and I didn't hide that from you. Neither did Amanda."

-Me: "But I was too much blinded by love to even listen to you guys. And it turned out y'all were right about the guy."

-Him: "And I believe we are right even now. Thando is the one for you. You made a right choice. Not that you need to listen us, but both Amanda and I are your friends and we want only the best for you. And Thando is exactly that, the best for you. This is the day you always dreamed about. Now please cheer up."

-Me: "It looks like we both got what we wanted, huh. You said you'd marry a woman from a foreign country and that happened."

-Him: "I guess dreams do come true after all...But I just can't stop wondering how a guy like Thando got to pick a messed up girl like you."

He says laughing. I know he's joking, and I find myself laughing too.

-Me: "You know what I'm gonna do to you, right?"

I ask with my hand already ready to land on his face. He jumps off the chair, laughing. I'm about to leave my chair too when my cellphone rings.

-Him: "You better take that and the pills. I'm just gonna leave you to it and see you outside during the ceremony."

-Me: "You got off easily, you know that? Lucky monkey."

I grab my phone and check who's calling as Ryan makes for the door laughing. It's Busi. What? Why would Thando's ex-wife be calling me today of all days? Yes, we sometimes talk when it's something concerning the twins, but now why is she calling? I hesitate to answer and look up at Ryan who's about to walk out the

room.

-Me: "Hey, Ryan."

He stops and turns to look at me.

-Me: "Thanks. Thanks for coming to talk to me, for the pills and for attending the wedding."

-Him: "Are you kidding me? I wasn't gonna miss this wedding for anything. Too bad Megan is home, she would have loved to come."

With that he walks out, leaving me to answer Busi's call.

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"Busi, hi." I answer slightly apprehensive.

-Her: "Soso, how are you doing? Listen, don't worry I'm not about to be the definition of trouble on your big day. There's just something I

need to say to you. But before I do I want to apologise for not being able to send the twins down there to witness you walk down the aisle."

-Me: "It's okay, Busi. You explained why they couldn't come, and Thando and I both understand."

-Her: "Right. Now let me just get straight to it. Soso, I know how it was when you had just started dating Thando. I know that I became a total bitch to you, something you didn't deserve. When my twin girls came back home from visiting their father and started ranting and raving about his cool new girlfriend I snapped and did the stupidest thing. It took you sitting down with me and giving me facts for me to understand that your role didn't include competing with me or jeopardising my relationship with my girls. My fear and insecurity won, but only for a short time until you came and made me see things clearly."

MaNdlovu, I sincerely apologise for the ugliness I once spewed your way. And I humbly thank you for stepping up and becoming another mom to my kids. I understand that it can't be easy being an instant mom, especially at your age, but you were up for it. You are doing it with so much grace and utmost respect for me, something that made me love you even though I was honestly hesitant to at first. You loved the girls the very first time you met them, I kept waiting for you to change and be this monster but that hasn't happened yet and I trust that it would never happen. Thank you for loving, protecting and embracing them as your own children. Now, whenever they visit I know that they would be in good hands. Two months ago, at 5 months pregnant, you dropped everything that mattered to you and came all the way up here alone just to be there for Lily's chess tournament and Lathi's dance play. You stepped in as their parent when Thando was

drowning in work and I was all the way across Namibia trying to impress a client of the company I'm working for, a company that's not even mine. You did all that not because you had to but because you chose to, because you love those girls as your own. I know that I thanked you back then but I feel like thanking you once again. Actually, I don't think words are enough to express how much I'm grateful, not only for that but also for always being there for the twins when they need you. You often put yourself behind their needs, something you sure as hell didn't sign up for. You are one special woman, Soso, and I see why Thando is marrying you. I believe this day will be the most beautiful day, beautiful as you will be when you walk down that aisle. Congratulations for being Mrs Thando. And from today onwards I know that the twins aren't just mine and Thando, but they are yours too. Enjoy every minute of today, and I wish you all the best in your marriage. I'm now



100% certain that Thando was never meant to be with me."

Awww, this is sweet. And if I can say I expected it I'd be lying. Her words have touched me so much that my eyes are now watering, messing up my make-up.

-Me: "Busi, I uhh...I honestly don't know what to say. I'm completely speechless, but thank you. You don't know how much this means to me. You've just made my day."

-Her: "But don't get too emotional now, okay? We don't want you to ruin your make-up or be a bride with red eyes now, do we?"

-Me: "Definitely not."

I say laughing through my tears.

-Her: "Let me leave you to get ready, okay? Cheers, my kids other mom."

-Me: "Thanks. Bye."

I hang up and stare at myself in the mirror for a long moment, in disbelief. Okay, it looks like it's indeed going to be a bright, beautiful day after all. I let out a huge sigh of relief then dab my eyes with a tissue.

I better take the pills I got from Ryan before my anxiety sets in again. Reaching for the glass jug of water, I pour myself some in a tumbler then down two pills after reading everything about them. Just as I put them away I hear a knock at the door, then the door pushes open. When I turn around to see who it is, my eyes land on someone I didn't expect to see here.

-Me: "Thando? Baby, you aren't supposed to be here. Don't you know that it's bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding?"

He just starts searching his pockets as he comes to stand right in front of me.

-Me: "What are you looking for?"

-Him: "Fucks to give. And it looks like I don't have any."

He answers with a silly smile etched along his mouth. This one can be so silly sometimes, and I can't help but laugh.

-Him: "I don't care about that superstitious nonsense, sthandwa sam. And it's not like I'm seeing you in your wedding dress anyway, you're still in this silly bathrobe. And I'm in...whatever the hell this is."

He says referring to his sweatpants and T-shirt.

-Me: "You are one crazy man, you know that?"

-Him: "Crazy about you... Listen, I just had to come see you. I didn't get much sleep last night, nervous about today, but I couldn't wake you up with a call. Even when we talked on the phone this morning I didn't get what I wanted to hear from you, so I decided to just come see you in person. I had to come ask you one more time if

you haven't changed your mind about marrying me."

-Me: "You're joking, right? Baby, I could change mind about anything else but not about marrying you. In fact, I can't wait to say 'I do'. We are doing this, babe. We are doing it."

He looks at me and his lips slowly curve to form a smile.

-Him: "I love you. And I, too, can't wait for us to exchange our heartfelt vows. I can't wait to officially make you mine forever. I'm sure you'll be beautiful out there. And don't worry about this baby bump, it suits you."

He pulls me to him and presses his lips on mine. I respond, parting my lips for his tongue to move into my mouth. As we are still enjoying ourselves, the door opens behind us.

"Oh, hell no! Bhuti, wenzan' apha? [Big bro, what are you doing here?] Don't you know that it's

bad luck to see the bride before the wedding?"

As soon as we hear Anathi's voice we step away from each other laughing.

She walks in with the rest of the girls.

-Thando: "Can't a guy just come and see if his bride is okay? Now that's not fair, is it, Sis'?"

He asks smiling at her.

-Anathi: "Well, that's just how things are. Now please leave. She still needs to finish getting ready. You too need to get ready. Don't you know that you should be done before the bride?"

-Him: "Okay, fine, I'll go. But I'm already ready, I just need to put on my..."

-Zizo: "...your expensive suit, sport."

-Him: "Yeah, something like that."

-Anathi: "You're still here? Bye-bye."

He just laughs and walks out.

-Amanda: "Now, chomi, let these ladies finish getting you all dolled up for your chess-inspired wedding."

The make-up artist and the hairdresser get on with their job.

My mom also comes to be with her only daughter and see if everything is okay. When we are finally done, my dad comes to get his baby, to walk her down the aisle. This is really happening. I'm now going to share my life with this man who found me, who understands me, who loves me. My best friend.

Season 2

#23 [unedited]

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"Ndikuthandile sthandwa sam, ngentliziyo yami yonke. Nditsh' uthando endinalo soze luphele." -

Vusi Nova

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When my mother first introduced me to my father a year ago she said she wanted me to know my father before a man comes and asks for my hand in marriage. At that time I had just started seeing Thando and I didn't even know when or if I'd get married, but I'm glad she connected me with my father despite my initial ambivalence about the matter. Now knowing that he's here to walk me down the aisle is a very heartwarming feeling. I really love this man. As I always say to him, he's too cool to be my father. I just can't imagine my life without him in it anymore. The love he has for me is just out of this world, it's love I never thought I would ever get from my father. The relationship we have is one I would never trade even for a major organ.

With my arm in his, he walks me alongside the hotel's Manor House to the Bosman's lawn, with so much pride. I've always loved outdoor weddings, and this hotel's magnificent lawns captured my eye the very first day Thando brought me here, not to mention the spectacular views of the Paarl Valley and the Drakenstein Mountain. I couldn't have asked for a better venue to say "I do" to the man I love.

As we approach, a piano version of "1+1" by Beyoncé starts playing. It's a cover by Søren Bebe, the Danish pianist. I got it off the CD Thando gave to me on our first date night in. When he gave me the CD he said he wanted it to be a reminder of where I'd found him, the state he was in when I first came into his life. Well, I thought it was only thoughtful to also bring it along to the next phase of our relationship, the point we are at right now, just so we could reflect on our journey together and



appreciate the point we've now managed to reach in spite of everything. I couldn't have picked a more suitable song to walk down the aisle to.

The white carpet to the altar extends about 5 feet before we could actually reach the seated guests. They have already turned in their white foldable, wooden chairs to look at me. I feel nerves creeping up on me and I stop rather abruptly at the beginning of the carpet. All I'm thinking about are the 50 pairs of eyes looking at me right now. What are they going to say about this bride who looks like she's swallowed a beach ball? My belly is not that big, in fact I look like I'm still in my 5th month, but still, I feel like a beached whale.

"Baby, you look beautiful. You look absolutely amazing in that dress. Actually, you make being pregnant look incredibly sexy. In fact, after this every bride will want to walk down the aisle

pregnant." My father whispers to me, causing me to let out a brief, soft laugh. This man though. Like I said, he's just too cool to be my father. It's like he's read my mind and knew exactly what to say to ease my fears.

There is no doubt that the dress itself is beautiful. It is a custom piece, hand encrusted and embroidered with hundreds of tiny, glittering crystals. My designer and her tailor put in thousands of hours, over six months, to make sure that it doesn't only look perfect on the hanger but on me as well. Well, I guess my father is right, I look good in it. Everyone who's seen me in it has been saying the same thing anyway, so let me stop worrying. This is my day.

-Him: "You may not have had the things other brides get to have, like a bridal shower or a bachelorette party but you are a normal bride, okay?"

I take a moment to look at the two ivory, giant

Rook (Castle) chess pieces standing on each side of the starting point of the carpet. This is a chess-themed wedding after all, and right now I'm a queen about to step into her castle so I better be confident, I've earned it.

-Me: "Let's do this, Dad."

He smiles and we both step on the carpet and walk down the aisle following the flowers scattered by the flower girl and boy - Milani's 4-year-old daughter and Anathi's 3-year-old son who are wearing T-shirts with Pawn chess pieces printed on the chest.

Attached to the small posts bordering the aisle are a dozen white Hydrangea bouquets with simple bows, and they are strung together with white orchids and some green leaves.

Hydrangea are my mother's favourite flowers, and white orchids are mine. Down on the ground, standing guard on each side of the aisle, are 4 large gold Knight chess pieces, 2 on each

side. Looking at them as I walk I feel like they are telling me to relax and proceed to the altar because it is safe to do so. It is at this point that I raise my head for the first time and look at Thando who's waiting for me at the altar. Oh my God, he looks absolutely handsome. He's always been handsome but he looks even more so right now, he's radiant and breathtaking. I won't give all the credit to the perfectly tailored ivory suit he's wearing though, but also to the extreme happiness that seems to be radiating from within. His eyes are on me and his beautiful, bright smile broadens mine. I'm nervous, I'm excited, I'm just a ball of emotions right now and tears are threatening to escape my eyes. As I walk closer I notice that Thando is becoming an emotional mess too, fighting back tears. Oh God. The song that's playing is not making this moment less emotional either. As it plays, the things Thando and I have passed through to get to this day keep dancing in my

head, forcing tears out of my eyes.

We get to the front and my father hands me over. My maid of honour, Amanda, immediately hands me a tissue to take care of my tears as I take my position next to a giant Queen chess piece, right in front of Thando who's standing by a King piece. After I've sorted myself out, the priest, who is accompanied by a Bishop chess piece, starts with his opening remarks - the cliché "Friends and family, we are gathered here today..." But he cracks everybody up, including myself, when he says, "Kings and Queens alert your Knights for the games are about to begin."

After that he takes the moment to emphasise the significance of the vows we are about to exchange. Also reminding us of our duties and roles in marriage. He doesn't take much time though because he understands that I'm pregnant and can't be on my feet for too long. In no time he is done and we proceed to the

exchange of vows.

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Thando and I have written our own vows, we didn't want to repeat the familiar "to have and to hold, for better or for worse" vows. We want to speak from the heart, and I am the one to go first. Gosh, I am so nervous. But an assuring smile from Thando takes all my nerves away. I may not be looking like a Cinderella in this dress but I sure as hell marrying my Prince Charming. This is happening, only minutes from now I'm going to be Mrs Dece... No, not Mrs December but Mrs Phiri. Gosh, am I ever going to be used to this surname change? I felt my heart sink the day the change was granted by Home Affairs. But I told myself that I'd be Phiri officially, but anywhere else I'll be Someleze

Minenhle Ndlovu December. No offense to my mother-in-law whose maiden name is Phiri but December is the only surname I'm used to, even at my department in varsity they've been calling me December since the day they learned that Thando and I are engaged.

Thando looks into my eyes and I find courage to speak. In fact, words just flow out of my mouth, I don't even need to read from the paper that I wrote.

-Me: "Thando lwam, I call you that because you are my love, my everything. You are my light and you've shown me more love than I've ever known. When or where we met we were not supposed to fall in love but we did. We fell together. We fell fast and we fell hard. It was a bit overwhelming, but in a heartbeat you showed me in everything that you did, and everything you still do, that you had my back, that you were without a doubt my person.

Expectedly, when our relationship came out you were forced to choose between the safer expected path and the harder road that may provide genuine happiness and fulfillment, and you chose the latter. You chose me. I knew at that moment how fortunate I was to be loved by you. With that realisation I also knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my life cherishing and loving you. Thando, you allow me to be exactly who I am and have never asked me to change. For example, you are a neatnik and I'm...well, I'm nowhere near that, but I've never heard you complain, not even once. You accepted me for who I am, and only been encouraging me to be the better version of myself. Since day one we have shared something that I never could've imagined existed. And today I promise to love and care for you, and to also try in every way to be worthy of your love. I promise to walk with you hand in hand wherever our journey leads us, living,



learning, and loving together, forever. I will always work towards making sure that you feel unconditionally supported as the person you are and working to be. I promise to laugh with you and to also take the time to talk about the important things. I promise to comfort you when you lose a patient in the OR and celebrate with you every time you save a life. I will celebrate your triumphs and love you all the more for your failures. Our open attitude towards finding adventure together in our home is something that I cherish. I love it even more when those great experiences are followed by us making up a home-cooked meal together, with crazy music playing in the background and you dancing like a clown over the stove. I swear I would marry you for your occasional craziness and your risotto alone. Thando lwam, I promise to cherish, value and protect the families that we have, the family that we are becoming and the family that we have yet to

come. I vow to have the patience that love demands, to speak when words are needed and to share in the silence when they are not. I promise honesty and faithfulness, unconditional love and forgivingness, respect and lightheartedness, attentiveness and self-improvement. I promise to hold your hand every night and to never let us lose our spark. Finally, I promise you myself. I love you, thando lwam. With my whole heart, I take you as my husband, acknowledging and accepting your faults and strengths, as you do mine."

By the time I finish Thando is an emotional mess. Awww, I'm touched that he's touched by my vows, but in this state I wonder if he'll be able to get his out of that mouth. Like he did for me I also give him a smile to give him the spirit he needs to start speaking.

-Him: "MaNdlovu, until today, the day that I told you I loved you, the day I certainly knew that I

was going to marry you, was the best day of of my life. You know the kind of person I am, you know everything about me, and somehow still you manage to love me. You know, there is still a part of me today that cannot believe that I'm the one who gets to marry you. I feel truly blessed and I promise to ride this wave with you all the way to the shore, and by shore I mean grave. You have been my best friend, playmate, confidant, and my greatest challenge. But most importantly, you are the love of my life and you make me happier than I could ever imagine and more loved that I thought possible. Today I promise to remain faithful and supportive, and to always make our family's love and happiness my priority. I promise to hold your heart tenderly and protect it fiercely. I promise to listen, not just listen, but to hear you. I promise to be loyal and to be honest with you. I will dream with you, celebrate with you and walk beside you through whatever this life may bring. I believe in you, the

person you will grow to be and the couple we will be together. I promise to nurture your dreams, sthandwa sam. I promise to help shoulder our challenges, for the fact that we are standing here today is proof that there is nothing we cannot face if we stand together. I promise to be your partner in all things, not possessing you, but working with you as part of the whole. I promise to be your lover, companion and friend. Your partner in parenthood. Your ally in conflict. Your greatest fan and your toughest adversary. Baby, I promise to always be your wild partner in our...adventures, your consolation in disappointment, and your accomplice in mischief. I promise to not frown whenever you beat me in chess but to celebrate your win because you would have earned it, for in everything you are more strategical than I am and I love that about you. I promise to remain your bad dance partner who occasionally steps

on your toes and kick your feet for as long as it still makes you laugh, because when you laugh my world is alright. I promise to always be that not-so 'normal' guy who loves Beyoncé's music but I promise to never play it in the house because I know you don't like it, and I would never do anything you don't like. I promise to watch romcom movies with you and not complain when you finish all the popcorn. In sickness and in health: I promise to take care of you even if it's the popcorn overindulgence that's making you sick. And I promise to cook you my special soup and the risotto you love so much whenever you pretend to be sick. For richer or poorer: I promise to never again spend all my...I mean our money and a lot of my mother's to buy us a house without communicating with you first. Above all else, I promise to live in truth with you and to communicate fully and fearlessly. It is my understanding that everything in life takes work

and unconditional effort, and I promise you that I will never stop working on us. And that I will never falter on any of my promises. Thank you for choosing me. I choose you for all of my yesterdays, especially my today, the days to come and past that. I love you, Someleze, and today I give you my hand and my heart as a sanctuary of warmth and peace. I pledge my love, devotion, and honour as I join my life to yours. I am truly blessed to be a part of your life which as of today becomes our life together."

All the time he's been talking I've gone through a number of emotions - I've smiled, giggled, cried, but most of all, I felt the love. I feel like kissing him right now but that moment is yet to come.

We now exchange rings. He gives me a beautiful straight band with three small diamond stones. And I put in his finger a simple titanium band.

And now the moment I and everyone else has been waiting for arrives.

-Priest: "Okay. Thando and Someleze Minenhle, I now pronounce you husband and wife - Mr and Mrs Phiri. Thando you may kiss your bride."

I can't believe that it's over, that I'm now officially Thando's wife. We seal our union with a passionate kiss, our first one as a married couple.

As the priest wraps things up with a few last words and a blessing, I can barely hear him, I'm just too excited. Nothing has gone wrong, my bad feeling was just that, a feeling. We exit the ceremony together as newlyweds, followed by the wedding party, girls in gold dresses and guys in ivory suits, to take pictures around the estate.

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Done with the photos, Thando and I follow the wedding party to the reception venue - the hotel's venue that is usually used for conferences. This whole thing is still so surreal to me, I just can't believe that it's really happening, that I indeed have Thando's ring on my finger, that I'm officially his wife. What I do believe though is that this the happiest day of my life.

When we enter the venue everyone is already standing and "You Da One" by Rihanna starts playing. As per our agreement the MC does a special announcement of the groom and bride to punctuate a truly grand entrance, but I honestly don't hear him. I'm just happy and excited about what I'm seeing in front of me - the wonderful job done by the wedding vendors to perfectly execute the Renaissance-inspired Chess Theme in Gold and Ivory that I wanted. From the lighting to the floral arrangements, the



chess motif is ubiquitous, executed throughout the reception with a simple ivory palette with gold accents.

For the guests to know where their seats are, I designated certain chess pieces to certain people, and asked for mismatched chess pieces to be used as place-marker holders.

Then to keep the chess motif going they've also used candles in the shape of chess pieces as part of the centrepieces. This is just beautiful.

Projected on the sheer panels surrounding the raised platform erected at the back of the room is a photo montage of me and Thando, all the pictures that he used on our anniversary day.

Awww, that's pretty cool, I didn't even know that he requested it to be done. What I do know though is that we seperately sent few of our wedding vows to the cake maker to use them on our cake. They've honoured our request and put them on the oversized 7-tier white cake,

personalising it with gold calligraphy. Then, to top it off I requested a lovely crown cake topper, and they've delivered. All of this is really beautiful and I'm satisfied.

After we've sat down the proceedings move forward. The MC gives the guests a chance to wish us well in our marriage. I really appreciate this but it quickly becomes one big blur because I'm hungry, I need to eat. I asked Milani to carry my snacks and water so I could eat and stay hydrated throughout the ceremony and the reception, so I wave for her to come. But she tells me that the snacks that were with her are finished. I ask her to go get others from Iviwe, but she tells me that Iviwe is not around, that she wasn't even there during the ceremony. She says she had to go take the baby to the doctor because he had been crying non-stop. What? My heart begins to pound. She had to come with the baby because she couldn't find a

weekend babysitter, and now this is happening? What is worrying me the most though is, what if the baby had been crying non-stop because he, too, was feeling what I was feeling. I remember some years ago my grandmother telling me that babies can feel it when something bad is about to happen in their family. Was she right or was that just another superstitious nonsense? At this point my anxiety returns. But I don't share my worries with Thando or Milani. I just let Milani go get me more snacks. And when she comes back, I quickly devour them.

When the priest gets to bless the meal and it's finally time to eat, I'm already sorted. Then we get to cut the cake, as unsettled about this day as I still am. However, I try to relax when it is time for toasting the newlyweds - which is us, so why can't I just enjoy the moment and let go of all worries? I'm probably worrying over nothing anyway. But I only become truly happy,

with no pretense, when the best man - Bhongo, and the maid of honor - Amanda, make toasts to us, too, followed by our family and friends. Their heartwarming words bring a genuine smile to my face so much that by the Thando and I hit the dance floor for our first dance as a married couple, I'm all hyped up. We dance to "A Thousand Years" by Christina Perry, and for once, Thando doesn't clown but gives meaning to the dance. But by the time we finish I'm already not feeling good, I'm experiencing some cramping in my lower abdomen and sharp backache in my lower back. I don't think much of it though, it's probably because I've overexerted myself.

Thando walks me back to our seats and sits with me. I inform the MC as well as my father that we are going to have to skip the father and daughter's dance, using exhaustion as an excuse. I don't tell them nor Thando the truth, I

just don't want to worry them. This is a happy day, and I don't want to steal their happiness. I pretend to be okay until Thando leaves me on my seat and goes for the mother and groom's dance. As I'm sitting there watching him dance with his mother the pain on my back become more constant. At first it would come and go, but now it's constant and it won't ease even if I change positions on my comfortable chair with elevated footrest. And I feel increased pressure in my pelvis, and some mild contractions that come and go. I don't know what's going on but I'm sure about one thing, that I'm pressed and I need a bathroom break, the 100th since the reception started. When I'm done with my business in the bathroom I notice blood in the toilet paper. No, this can't be right. But maybe it's the normal spotting. Right? As I'm still standing in front of the bathroom mirror washing my hands and contemplating what to do next, I hear the door opening and Thando

walks in.

-Me: "Baby? What are you doing here?"

-Him: "Are you gonna tell me what's going on? Sthandwa sam, I can tell that you're not okay, I can see it on your face. What's going on?"

-Me: "It's just some cramps, babe, that come and go. Nothing to worry about."

-Him: "Are you sure?"

He asks gently pulling me to him and placing his hand on my belly. It's at this point that I feel something strange happening between my legs.

-Me: "Umh, baby, I think my water just broke."

-Him: "What?"

He jumps back and we both see the amniotic fluid hitting the white floor tiles of the bathroom. I'm now freaking out, but Thando is worse.

-Him: "No, no, this can't be happening. It's too early, you're only 29 weeks."

-Me: "I know that, Thando, but this is real, it's happening. What do we do?"

He's hysterical, pacing around the bathroom. This guy is used to dealing with trauma patients in a busy ER, and now he's struggling to keep his cool and deal with only one woman? His wife? I guess everything changes when the unfortunate hits directly home. It becomes clear to me that if we are to get through this one of us needs to try and be calm. Leaning on the sink, I look at my panic-stricken husband.

-Me: "Thando lwam, please focus, stop panicking. We need to go to the hospital right now, so bring the car around and I'll call my mother and let her know what's going on."

Without saying anything he rushes out of the bathroom and I'm left making a call to my mother. A few moments later she barges in with my father by her side. Just like Thando, she's also panicking, something I don't need

right now. A moment later Thando comes back, and he and my father help me to the car. I guess there'll be no bouquet and garter toss in this wedding. That's just the last thing on my mind right now, but I'm hoping the guests won't let what's happening to me ruin their dancing and fun. That's what I paid the DJ to do - get people out of their chairs and on to the dance floor. I hope they can still do that.

We get to Mediclinic about 10 minutes later and all I'm thinking about is my baby. Will the doctors manage to delay this labour? This baby can't come out now, it just can't.

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PS: I pulled 98% of this episode from the actual wedding which took place back in 2012. By the way this was supposed to be the last episode but I just got tired of typing. And it's my birthday



today, so I don't have much time to type. Who's sharing it with me?

Season 2

#24: Season Finale

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"There's nothing I wouldn't do to have just one more chance to look into your eyes and see you looking back." - Christina Aguilera

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If you want to know the importance of a week ask an expecting mother who's trying to keep her baby inside her for at least a week longer.

When I was 18 I got to see in my mother's best friend how stressful it is having a baby in NICU. Her son was born at 28 weeks, and the fight for survival was a long, tough road. It was one complication after another for most of his stay

in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and with each complication his mother was not losing only hope but also a part of herself. God, please, I am not ready to go through something like that, especially not with my first baby. That's not something I would wish on any parent, but no one ever asks for it, it just happens. My only prayer is that the doctors' attempts to delay this early delivery could work. The longer my baby gets to grow inside me the less likely he or she is to have problems after birth.

When I got here I immediately got admitted because it was obvious that I was going into preterm labour and they had to do all they can to stop it. After checking, they told me that the baby is in a breech position and my cervix is 2 cm dilated. They gave me antibiotics, one steroid shot to speed up the baby's lungs development, IV fluids and some medicine to relax my uterus and stop the labour. Then we

got told that I will be on hospital bed rest until at least 32 weeks. God, I hope all of this works. I'm scared, I'm really scared of what would happen if it doesn't. I keep repeating the same prayer in my heart, a prayer without an Amen, asking God to please intervene and protect my baby.

Thando's clear eyes penetrate my thoughts as he sits on my bed, by my legs, staring at me. I can tell that he's as worried as I am but he's trying to conceal it

-Him: "Are you still feeling okay?"

-Me: "Thando, I'm scared."

-Me: "Don't worry, everything is gonna be okay. All our close friends and family are here, crowding the waiting area. They are praying for the baby and they are supporting you, but not as much as I am. We are in this together, sthandwa sam. Okay?"

He reinforces his words by taking my left hand and kisses it.

-Me: "But, Thando, I don't understand. Just on Monday, 4 days ago, we were at my doctor's and everything was okay. This pregnancy has been normal throughout, my baby and I were both perfectly healthy. And now this? I don't understand."

-Him: "These things happen more often than you think, baby. Let's just let the doctors do their job and hope for the best. But even if our baby arrives today he or she is going to be okay. Molly's is okay."

-Me: "Thando, you can't compare our baby with Molly's. You told me she was 32 weeks when she had the emergency C-section, I'm only 29 weeks. The baby would be a preemie with a higher risk of certain long-term health problems."

-Him: "Not necessarily. And high risk is not equivalent to certainty. Remember the baby I was telling you about 3 months back? The one that had to be delivered at 28 weeks back at Frere? Well, he's now home with no health problems, his NICU stay is nothing but a memory. I guess what I'm trying to say is, I've seen a number of such positive cases and we gotta believe that our baby will be fine too. Yes, it won't be an easy road but we'll walk it together. Okay? We are a team, sthandwa sam, we are team... Look, today was beautiful. You were beautiful. So let's please not let what's happening sully all that. Just relax, you don't need the stress."

Just then my doctor comes in, causing my pulse to spike.

-Her: "Dr. Phiri, can I please talk to my patient alone?"

-Me: "No, it's okay. My husband needs to hear

whatever you have to say."

-Her: "Okay then, Miss Ndlovu..."

It's Mrs Phiri, actually, as of a few hours ago. We've told her that we are married. But I don't blame her for addressing me that way, that's what both my medical aid card and ID card are still saying.

-Her: "We've found Misoprostol in your blood. Have you any idea how it got there?"

-Me: "Miso-what?"

-Thando: "Misoprostol. Doc, are you sure about this?"

-Her: "The lab always double checks, Dr. Phiri."

-Me: "And what exactly is this Misopro-something?"

-Thando: "It's pills that are used for, among other things, labour induction. For that purpose they are usually inserted in the other opening

but they can also be taken orally. Now tell me, how did they get into your system?"

Oh, now I understand why the doctor wanted to speak to me alone, not in front of my husband. She probably thinks I took those pills on purpose.

-Me: "What? Pills to induce labour? I don't understand. I've been very careful with the medication I take. Thando, you know this. I've only been taking pills that are prescribed or okayed by my doctor. I don't know how this Misoprostol got into my bloodstream, all I know is that I didn't take it. Why would I? I would never take anything that would put my baby at risk. I would never."

-Him: "Well, baby, it didn't just seep through your skin and into your blood while you were sleeping. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying you took it on purpose, I know you would never ever do something like that. All I'm saying is

that there has to be an explanation for it to end up in your system."

-Me: "Well, I don't have that explanation. The only pills I took that were not okayed by my doctor are potassium tablets that I got from Ryan. I was extremely nervous before the wedding ceremony and he said potassium would help deal with the nerves. I had never seen potassium tablets before but, of course, I made sure to read the leaflet inside the bottle before I took them. It said at a correct dosage they were safe to take during pregnancy. So, I honestly don't know how this Miso-something ended up in my system. I don't."

-Him: "I gotta talk to Ryan right now. He's waiting outside with everybody else."

From the tone of his voice I can tell that he's agitated but he's carefully controlling his temper. Does he honestly think Ryan would give me wrong pills? I'm about to ask but I don't get



the chance to, he quickly dashes out, leaving me with the doctor.

-Her: "I'll ask a nurse to come put a monitor on your belly to check your baby's heart rate and your contractions once again, and also do a swab for fetal fibronectin one more time."

I just nod absently. She walks out, leaving me mulling over the possibility of Ryan giving me wrong pills on purpose.

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A few moments later Thando walks back in with Ryan in tow.

-Him: "Ryan, tell her what you've just told me outside."

His voice is flat, facial expression blank, I can't read his emotions. But I swear, Ryan's facial

expression summarises his emotional state: shame, guilt, remorse, and abject misery. My heart immediately sinks, already having an idea of what is about to come out of his mouth.

-Me: "Ryan, what did you do? What did you do?"

-Him: "Somi, I'm sorry. I am so sorry. I didn't mean to do you any harm, I was only trying to help, I swear. It was an honest mistake, one that I regret with every part of me."

-Me: "Just tell me what happened, Ryan? What was on those pills?"

I'm now losing it.

-Him: "Remember me telling you that Megan didn't want kids? Well, that wasn't exactly true. She didn't want us to start a family until I got my shit together. I was always too medicated to be a father, she said. I once told you about my wrist fracture that happened when I had just moved back home early this year, but what I

didn't tell you was that it turned me into a pill-popper. My doctor prescribed me Naproxen for the pain and Misoprostol to prevent stomach ulcers while I took the Naproxen, because, as you know, I have a history of ulcers. The pain was so severe that I couldn't do without Naproxen. In fact, I was now taking more than the doctor had prescribed. I knew that was wrong but I was liking the edge of pain it removed especially at bedtime. I was told it wasn't addictive, but boy did I find out the hard way. I got so hooked that I couldn't function without taking the damn pills even after the fracture had healed. I'd lie about recurrent pain, change doctors, anything to get the prescription when I couldn't buy the pills over the counter without it. And for as long as I took Naproxen I had to take Misoprostol as well. When Megan found out about my addiction she tried to find me some help but I said what most addicts say: I don't need professional help to quit, I can

easily do it on my own. But what I actually meant was that I wouldn't quit. I'd hide the pills from her, putting them in bottles of other pills and stash them. But three weeks ago I found out that I wasn't so clever after all, that she always knew that I never quit. That's when she packed her bags and left. She had had it with my crap and my lies, she was tired of pretending, so she dropped you as one of your bridesmaids and flew back home all because of my addiction. Ever since she left I've been trying to quit and I'm succeeding but the withdrawal headaches are just too much. However, instead of taking other painkillers that could be just as addictive I rely on the potassium tablets, same pills I've always been taking as supplements since I started taking the heart medication that depletes potassium in my body. When I took them out of my cabinet yesterday before I came here I thought I was taking a new bottle, not realising that I was actually taking the bottle I

had hidden Misoprostol inside of. I'm sorry. It was an honest mistake, Somi. Please believe me. I'm your friend, I would never do you harm on purpose. You know me, I would never do that."

I can't believe this. I can't believe that I've just got a fat paragraph out of this guy, a paragraph that won't change my situation. I can't believe that I'm here because my pill-popper friend fed me wrong pills. Or that a chain of events that had nothing to do with my baby have now led to this. I didn't even know that Ryan was popping pills. He sure knew how to hide his addiction. And he and his wife sure knew how to pretend. I do believe him though, I do believe that him giving me those pills was an honest mistake because I know him, he's always been a good friend to me, he would never hurt me on purpose. But I just can't stand the sight of him right now.

-Me: "Could you please leave right now, Ryan?"

-Him: "Somi, I'm sorry. Please believe me."

-Me: "I do believe you. But I just can't look at you right now. So please just go."

-Him: "I'm sorry."

And with that he walks out of the room.

-Me: "Geez, this guy."

-Him: "I actually believe him too, you know? I believe it was a mistake. So please cut him some slack. The guy's already going through hell as it is: marital problems, addiction problems. Don't kill him, he's already doing that to himself by irresponsibly taking those pills. He's slowly but surely damaging his kidneys."

His last two sentences are laced with humour. I honestly would never understand how he sometimes finds humour where there's none. Seriously, there's nothing funny here.

-Him: "I think I'm gonna talk to him, as a friend not as a doctor, and encourage him to never go back to popping those pills. Geez, the guy already has a problem with his heart and taking Naproxen on a regular basis may increase his risk of heart failure."

Oh, he cares? Then again, this is Thando, he always cares about people he considers as friends. It is at this point that the nurse my doctor was talking about walks in. She asks Thando to please wait outside and let her do her work. I get alarmed when she quickly calls the doctor. The doctor gives me the worst news I could ever get at this point. She tells me that I would probably deliver within 24 hours. What the hell? What happened to 4 more weeks of bedrest? As if that's not the worst thing that could happen, around 21:00, about 5 hours after my water broke, after I've already told my family that I'd be giving birth tomorrow, I'm told that

the labour can't be stopped anymore, that I'm fully dilated. Oh God, no. This can't be happening, it just can't. Terrified and worried, I just burst into tears and cry my pain out.

-Thando: "It's gonna be okay, babe. It's gonna be okay. There's nothing we can do to change what's happening, all we can do is stay positive. Okay? And we can choose to look at the positive side of this: our baby is about to join us on our wedding day. Isn't that great? Of course it is. And don't worry, I'll be with you every step of the way, okay? I'll be with you in the OR."

He's holding my hand, trying to give me the comfort I desperately need. We get told that the NICU is getting ready for the baby's arrival, preparing a little space for her or him. At this point I also get prepared for the emergency C-section. I am so scared I won't lie, but knowing that I have a strong support system in my family, and that Thando is right here with me



and will be by my side even during the surgery, relaxes me a little. They ask him to put on hospital scrubs, booties and a mask, and he holds my hand as I'm being wheeled to the OR. Just before I'm put under he whispers into my ear, telling me that he won't leave me. At this point, that is all I need to hear.

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When I come to I'm in the recovery room where I'm told my blood pressure, bleeding, pulse rate, and respiration will all be monitored. But I honestly don't care about all of that, I need to know about my baby, and that's exactly the first thing I ask the nurse who is busy jotting something down on my chart.

-Me: "Where's my baby? I need to see my baby."

-Her: "Your baby is okay. I was there, he came

into this world at exactly 22:15, weighing 1.24 kg. He's now in the NICU being stabilised and assessed for immediate complications that need to be treated. They are going to run a number of tests too. And you'll only get to see him tomorrow. But rest assured he's in good hands"

-Me: "He?"

-Her: "Yes, it's a beautiful baby boy."

A boy? That's wonderful news. I wanted a boy. But I also wanted to be my husband who shares this news with me.

-Me: "Where's my husband? I need to see him."

-Her: "What you need is rest. We can't let any visitors in here at this hour. You need to rest and you'll get to see both your baby and your husband in the morning. They are not going anywhere. But right now you need to think of yourself. Alright?"

They sure know how to frustrate someone, don't they? I can't see my baby, I can't see my husband. How am I going to make it through the night? I'm feeling so angry and emotional. I wish I could just pull this IV and catheter off of me and run out of this room to my baby. I need to see him, I need to see how he is doing, but I know that I wouldn't even make it to the door. Soon enough, though, I fall into a dreamless sleep.

The following day I indeed get to go see my baby. They put me in a wheelchair and Thando offers to push me to the NICU, with the nurse walking beside us.

-Him: "Sleeping on a hospital bench was not my idea of a romantic wedding night but hey, it's cost-effective."

He's trying for humour but I'm too worried about my baby to find what he's saying even remotely funny.

-Me: "Really, Thando, how was our son when you saw him last night?"

-Him: "Baby, I told you that I only got to see him for a short moment. I couldn't even touch him. He let out a few little squeaks, I heard that much. Then he was whisked away."

Oh God, I'm scared. I'm scared to see him but at the same time I want to, I need to. Only 1.24 kg? I'm sure he's so tiny.

When we get to the NICU my eyes instantly fill with tears at the sight of him. I just can't help but cry and Thando pulls me to him for comfort. I honestly don't know how I would do this if he wasn't here, he's my pillar of strength.

When I'm ready, my eyes move back to our son again. He is on a ventilator to provide oxygen, various drips, a temperature monitor, a heart rate monitor, and an apnea monitor to check his breathing. His tiny body is just connected to

many machines and gadgets, there are so many beeps and low lights, drips and wires and tubes, and special catheters placed into his umbilical cord. His nappy is teeny tiny, I swear it could fit a doll. He looks so fragile. And I feel so helpless and extremely overwhelmed to see this little person fighting for his life. As his mother I wish I could do something to make things easier for him, but I can't. I want to touch him and tell him that mommy is here and that he needs to be strong, but I can't even do that. I didn't reach 32 weeks, so my placenta couldn't act as a barrier to infection and allow the transfer of my antibodies to my baby while he was still inside me. Thus he lost out on the in-utero protection and has an under-developed immune system, something that makes him more prone to infection and at higher risk of that infection spreading to the bloodstream, hence we can't touch him. All we can do is just look at him as he lies in his special incubator that keeps him in

a position that simulates the position in the womb.

We get a short moment with him then we are to leave. My heart breaks when I have to walk away from him but we are assured that he's in good hands. When we get back to the ward his paediatrician tells us that everything looks okay so far. That this morning they have run some special investigations to make sure he's okay, numerous X-rays and scans to check him out and he passed all of them. They couldn't see no brain bleed or fluid build-up during a brain scan; no Patent Ductus Arteriosus or, in layman terms, a hole in the heart during a heart ultrasound; and everything looked okay in the chest and abdomen ultrasound, his kidneys are functioning properly. Well, that's quite a relief. I know that complications can arise at any time but still, this is something. And as the doctor continues to take us through everything about

our son's care he feeds me with more hope. Seeing the care my little prince is under makes me believe what Thando has been saying to me since yesterday, that advances in neonatal care and treatments for preterm babies have greatly increased the chances for survival of even the smallest babies. Maybe our baby will also be a success story, I just have to have faith.

But I feel my body cringe when they tell me how they are going to feed him since oral feeds can't be given. The special catheters I saw placed into his umbilical cord are to provide fluids and the medications he needs, but to administer expressed breast milk to him they say they will have to insert a specialised tube through his tiny nose and into his little stomach. Just the thought of that being done to his fragile body breaks my heart, but I understand that there's no other way. The tube will be used to administer the milk to him until he develops the

ability to suck and is able to breastfeed. His tiny fragile body sure needs his mother's breast milk as it contains his mother's antibodies and many essential nutrients. The doctor tells me that the NICU staff will assist and show me how to express the breast milk. At least as his mother I'd feel better knowing that I'm doing something to provide the most basic form of care for him.

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Thando brushes my arm and smile at me.

-Him: "See? He's in good hands, babe. He's going to be okay. He's going to leave this place a healthy infant. And it's a good thing that your mother is also moving to Jo'burg with your father after they get married. She'll help take care of him in our own house. As for my mother, well, unfortunately she won't be able to see him



until he's a little older and stronger. She's still sickly and we can't have people like that near him with his weak immune system."

My parents are actually getting married tomorrow, and it breaks my heart to know that I won't be there to witness their moment, their special day. But I won't let them change anything, tomorrow they have to be in PE, it's their day. They can come check on us after they've tied the knot.

-Me: "That sounds like a good plan."

-Him: "But as long as he's still here I'm going to be the one to stand by you two. I'm not going anywhere."

-Me: "Baby, no. You're starting your new job in Jo'burg in two weeks, you can't be stuck here in Paarl."

After staying and serving his notice at Frere for the past three months they sure would be

expecting him to resume his duties on the set date.

-Him: "Well, they are gonna have to understand. My wife just had a baby, a baby that's now lying in NICU, so I deserve some time away.

Sthandwa sam, you and our son are very important to me. There's no way I'm leaving you two, my family, behind. As your partner I want to be here for the duration of our son's stay, the entire estimated 9 weeks. I want to walk this road with you as I promised. I'm not going to be at that hospital helping strangers with their health and let you deal with our son's alone, I'm not going to miss any change in his progress or any milestone."

I don't know how this is going to play out but I won't lie and say I'm not happy he's choosing us.

-Me: "Well then, there's nothing I'd love more than to do this with you, thando lwam."

Touching my wedding ring, I look at him. This man sure fills my heart. With him by my side, I feel like I have everything and I can do anything.

-Him: "Good. Now are you ready to tackle the name subject again?"

In the past months we've gone round and round, never finding quite the right one.

-Me: "No, not really."

His eyes gleam bright.

-Him: "Well, this morning my mother told me she has come up with one. You know she's a proud Tswana woman so she came up with a Tswana name. And I've come up with a Xhosa one. Two names that when combined would have a single meaning - 'Neo Esihle'. A beautiful gift. That's exactly what our son is to us. A beautiful gift."

He says, giving me a look of pure satisfaction.

-Me: "Mmmh 'Neo Esihle'. They are both not fresh but I love them. They are perfect."

-Him: "Just like our life is going to be."

I smile, my heart content. And he kisses me. I could never ask for a better husband than this one. He's so supportive and he's been treating like treasure since day one.

-Him: "Have I told you today how much I love you?"

-Me: "I wouldn't mind hearing it again."

-Him: "Well, I love you so much more now that you've given me a son."

He kisses me again. I have to say, I'm now feeling a whole lot better than I was before I saw Neo. Now I have hope. And I'm ready to see my visitors - my family and friends. Thando has given me faith, he has turned my doubt into hoping, that much I can't deny.

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Soon my mother and father join us. Others are going to have to wait a little because they can't allow me to have more than three visitors at a time.

As soon as my mother sees me, she walks over to my bed and pulls me into an embrace with tears in her eyes. I'm sure it hurts that they all can't see the baby yet but at least they know that he's doing okay so far.

-Her: "Your son, my grandson, is gonna be okay, baby. Don't you worry. Last night I was literally on my knees praying when no one else was, and I will continue to do so until he leaves this place."

-Me: "Thank you, mama. I really appreciate all your support."

-My father: "How are you feeling, sweetheart? Are you okay?"

Thando and I have agreed that we won't tell him or anybody else about what Ryan did. To avoid conflict, we'll keep it to ourselves.

-Me: "Yeah, I'm fine, Dad. And I have faith that my son is gonna be fine too."

Just then I hear his phone buzzing in his pocket. He takes it out and reads something on its screen - obviously a text message. His facial expression quickly changes to hard and icy, whatever the message is saying must be agitating him. But when he looks back at me he forces a smile and brushes my shoulder.

-Him: "Sorry, baby, I'm gonna have to step out for a couple of minutes but I will be back soon. Don't worry, your son is as strong as you are, he'll be fine. I love you, okay?"

I nod with a smile on my face, and he walks out.

About 10 minutes after he walked out we hear a loud sound coming from outside. Thando who has been sitting next to me on the bed springs off, startled.

-Him: "What was that?"

He asks affright. Ever since he shot Nick dead any loud sound that resembles a gunshot startles him, even if it's coming from a movie. On some nights he would toss and turn, having nightmares. But he just won't go for therapy even though he sees the good it did me.

-Him: "What was that?"

He asks again, his eyes wide open like a madman.

-Mom: "That sure sounded like a gunshot."

She's right, that definitely was a gunshot. The moment that sinks in my head an unsettling thought flashes in my mind like lightning causing my pulse to spike in an instant.

-Me: "Wheres my father? He said he would be back soon but now he's been gone for close to 10 minutes."

As if my mother has been struck by the same bad feeling as I have, she bolts off the chair and make for the door in a hurry

-Her: "I'm going to look for him. Sit tight."

I try not to think negatively after she has left. I do my best to focus on Thando and our conversation about our son. However, when minutes and minutes pass without my mother walking through that door my anxiety levels go through the roof. But still, I don't say anything to Thando.

About 15 minutes later Thando's father walks in. It's no secret that he's not his son's favourite person but I can't say he also feels the same way about Thando. I know that he still cares about him as his son. And he also cares a great



deal about me and his grandbaby. My relationship with him hasn't changed even after the fall out he had with Thando. And that's exactly why he came to witness his son and I tying the knot yesterday. He was so happy at the wedding, joy written all over his face, but now he looks like he's just seen Count Dracula in action.

-Me: "Tata, what's going on?"

He comes to sit next to me on the bed and holds my hand.

-Him: "I don't know how to tell you this, my child, but it's your father."

-Me: "My father? What happened to him?"

-Him: "He's...he's been shot."

-Thando: "What? Right here at the hospital?"

-Him: "At the parking lot."

-Me: "How's he? How's he?"

I'm now hysterical, wanting to jump off the bed but he holds me down.

-Him: "I'm sorry, my child. The doctors did all they could but he...he didn't make it..."

Anything that comes out of his mouth after that becomes just one big echo in my ears. Why did he have to tell me this now? I feel my heart sink to the pit of my stomach, as if there's a giant rock sitting there, and I just stare in space, not shedding even a single tear. I can see Thando pulling me to him for comfort but I don't feel him, I can't even hear what he's saying. I guess I'm still in shock. But how could this have happened? Was this what I was feeling yesterday? No, no, it can't be. My father can't be dead. Not when I've just found him a little over a year ago. Not only a day after my wedding and a day before his. Not when he still hasn't seen his only grandson, his first grandchild. No, no! Not when I didn't tell him that I love him back before

he walked out of this room. No! He can't be gone. He just can't. He can't leave me. He can't leave my mother. He can't leave us. Not now. Tears trickle down my cheeks. My heart slowly breaking into pieces inside my chest. But why can't everything in my life be on an even keel for long? Just when I had just gained faith that everything is going to be okay with my son this had to happen to my father. Why?

"Noooo!!!!" My loud scream of agony tears through the dense atmosphere in the room and bounces off the walls. And I'm sure it echoes throughout the ward.

THE END

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