



# THANDO LWAMI

By:  
SHIRLEY GRACE  
@FlowerOfGrace

## Chapter 1

3.8K 127 22

Ntando's POV

Love. 1

love is a beautiful thing. 1

Love is a beautiful feeling.

And I am a girl love.

Loved by the most amazing man in the whole wide world.

I only had to look in his eyes and I would see the love. His words said it and his actions confirmed it.

I reached my hand inside my top and produced the necklace pendant

8 pages left

that was hanging inside.

It was not just any pendant, it was a ring, a promise ring, that the love of my life, Gilbert, had given me a couple of weeks before the semester ended.

I remembered the moment and smiled, we were coming from a movie and then he bought us some food, we ate and then he drove me back to campus.

Exams were starting in a week and this was our last date of the year, Gilbert was going to audit a branch of their company in Malawi and by the time he would be back the semester would be over and I would have returned home, Bulawayo the country's second largest city, by then.

We had been dating for a year, we met on campus when he was a final year finance student and I was in 2nd year sociology, at the university of Zimbabwe situated in the country's capital city. The following year I was on my 3rd and final year and he was graduated and working - with a good job at that. 1


He is a quiet guy, tall and lean. His physique reminded me of my father. I am daddy's girl - no wonder I was attracted to a man who could pass as my father son anytime of the day.

7 pages left

But there was no way Gilbert could be my father's son because he was Gilbert Rufaro Chitsikwapasi.

My father is Madodana Dlamini.

To any other person, there is nothing amazing about these names. But to me, they were a painful reminder of what they meant.

Gilbert was from the Shona tribe and my father was from the Ndebele tribe. 

According to my father, my relatives, church mates and a whole lot of random people all over the country, Shona and Ndebele were like oil and water, they simply did not mix.

For a long time I too carried this belief firmly, and would have never dreamt of ending up with a Shona guy - the mere thought was despicable. But Cupid had shot his arrow. Yes blame it on Cupid, how else do you explain my falling in love with a Shona after being raised to hate them the same way they hated us.


Yes they hated us. My mother and my older brother Ishamel were an every day reminder that Shonas hated us and were a ruthless people.

I sighed and pushed the unhappy thoughts away, my mind went back to the time when Gilbert gave me the promise ring.

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6 pages left

We were seated in his car, parked outside my hostel, chatting about our movie highlights and he held my hands, and looked into my eyes intently.


I blushed. 

I had dated the guy for a little over a year but when he looked at me like that I still smiled like the first days when he was a guy I admired from afar AKA my crush.

"Why are you looking at me like that" I giggled.

He smiled. "Thandolwami" 

"Yes Thandolwami" I blushed back.

Thandolwami meant my love in Ndebele, it's what we called each other. 

"Close your eyes"

I laughed, "why should I close my eyes"

"I want to give you something" he replied.

I smiled to myself, I thought that maybe he was going to kiss me,

5 pages left

Gilbert was a very shy and conservative guy, we dated a month before we had our first hug, 3 months before a kiss and that was as far as we had gone as far as intimacy was concerned.

I didn't mind, I was glad things were the way they were, we were both raised in strict Christian backgrounds, we knew sex before marriage was fornication and fornication was a sin and sin displeased God.

We did not want to displease God, we needed his grace and favor, we needed him to bless our relationship and make us successful. 1

I must have pouted my lips because Gilbert chuckled and said "it's not what you're thinking silly"

I felt embarrassed and threatened to open my eyes. He quickly apologized and asked me to keep them closed a little longer.

Then I felt something cold slip onto my finger.

My eyes snapped opened and I looked at the ring on my finger. My precious wedding ring finger was adorned with a beautiful ring, it was a gold band with 7 tiny little pink stones lined up closely.

It was beautiful.

"Oh Rufaro" I whispered his second name as I marveled at the ring.

"Do you like it?" He asked nervously.

4 pages left

I nodded with teary eyes, yes yes yes, like was an understatement, I loved it.

"It's a promise ring," he said, I smiled, that explained why he was not down on one knee.

He continued, "Ntandokazi Dlamini, Thandolwami, chinyevenutsamwoyo changu, my present, my future, my happily ever after, I love you so much. And with this ring, I promise you, that my love for you will never die, keep this ring, as a reminder, no matter how far, no matter how hard it is, you are the one for me and I will never let you go. I will do right by you. As soon as you graduate I will marry you." 4

I hugged him, sucking in his sweet woody scent with my nostrils, savouring the moment and engraving it on my heart and I let the tears I was holding spill on his shoulder.

"Thank you" I whispered, "thank you for choosing me, you make me so happy, I love you too"

\*

But of course there was no way I could have entered my fathers house with a ring on my wedding finger, that would have invited unnecessary trouble, so hung it on a necklace as a pendant instead.

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Right there and then my parents walked in the kitchen, were I was seated.

"Good morning" daddy smiled, "we smelt the aroma of your cupcakes and thought best to rush to the kitchen before your brothers beat us to it"

I laughed, "good morning mummy and daddy, I was just setting up the breakfast table"

Mum looked at me sneakily as they took their seats and laughed, "we caught you blushing to yourself"

Before I could say anything my brother Ngqabutho walked in, "who is blushing? why is she blushing."

Before I could respond my brother Ishmael walked in carrying his sleepy 4 year old son and took a seat, "who is making who blush?"

I started laughing and everybody joined in, I waved my hands amid gasps of air from the laughter, "I give up on you guys."

Ishmael's wife Catherine walked in, and looked at us all laughing, "please retell the joke" she pleaded.

Mum looked at me and said "well, little Ntandokazi is not so little any

2 pages left

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more, we caught her blushing."

I immediately turned away and busied myself with finishing up serving breakfast, Catherine helped me and we were done in no time, which was not a good thing because I needed time to divert my family from current topic.

We said grace and just as I was about to bite into my slice of toast, Ngqa looked at me and frowned, "you have a boyfriend?"

I coughed, "it's bad manners to talk while you're eating" 1

"No you can't be dating before you finish school. Whoever the boy is dump him. He will only use you and impregnate you and dump you" 3

Trust Ngqa to be over protective.

"Hey," mum said, "if you have a boyfriend and it's serious, your dad and I would love to meet him"


I opened my eyes wide in shock "I thought the parents are the last people to know the boyfriend"

"Yes yes," dad said, "but it's the 21st century, we'd rather meet and get to know our future son in law than be surprised a few months before

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the wedding"

"But dad, you are permitting her to date!" Ngqa interjected. 

Awkward silence. Dad hated being challenged.

"These cupcakes are amazing" Ishamael said licking the cream of his fingers the same way his 4 year old son, Ron, was doing.

Catherine smiled, "Aunty" she said referring to me, I think you'll have to teach me or I'll never hear the end of this"

"Oh but this is my secret recipe to make sure that you guys don't stay in Botswana and forget us" I laughed. My brother Ishmael and his family lived in Botswana where he worked.

"What if we bribe you with a weekend at the kalahari"

"Wait what?" Dad laughed, 'we have been dropping hints for a wedding anniversary gift to the kalahari for years, and all she has to do is bake cupcakes?!"

Everybody laughed. Former Topic forgotten. Crisis averted. Pheeww.



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[Next Part](#) 

Chapter 2


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### *Ntando's POV*

"Mum said merry Christmas"

"Oh that's very nice of her" I blushed, "please wish her a merry one for me too"

"You can tell her yourself, she's right next to me"

My heart skipped a beat as I waited for a moment and I heard Gilbert give his mom the phone to talk to me. 

"Hello?"

"Hello mama how are you?!"

6 pages left



"Ha ha ha I'm good my daughter how are you!" Gilberts mum laughed.

"I am well, you are happy now your son was able to come back from Malawi in time for Christmas?"

"Ah Yesss" Gilbert's mum laughed, "very happy, it would have been the first time we have Christmas without him"

"Ohhh I can imagine" I said, "merry Christmas mama"

"Thank you daughter, merry Christmas to you too"


"Thank you mama" I smiled.

Gilberts mum laughed, "do you know what I told Gilbert?"

"Please tell me mama"

"That next Christmas we will be having our first Christmas with our muroora (*daughter in law*)"

I laughed, I was so charmed, "oh mama, yes yes ha ha ha, that's something to look forward to"

"Yes keep praying daughter, God gives us our hearts desires" 

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"Amen mama, I will pray" I agreed, "please greet the rest of the family for me"

"Okay daughter, greet your family too"

She gave the phone back to Gilbert.

"Thandolwami"

"So we will be married by next Christmas huh"

Gilbert chuckled, "mum really loves you, we all can't wait to have you here"

"Me too thandolwami, I can hardly wait" I smiled.

"I miss you Ntandokazi"

"I miss you too Rufaro"

"Merry Christmas my love"


"Thank you love, merry Christmas to you too."

I smiled to myself. Things were going so well, I had met Gilberts family end of August, early last semester and they had really

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welcomed me into their home with much love, excitement and a delicious meal. His mum gave me a tight hug and said we should keep in touch.

And she had initiated it, on my 22nd birthday in September she bought me a beautiful cardigan. 

It touched my heart. I felt at home. I felt loved. I felt accepted.

Gilbert had come to Bulawayo early August before the vacation ended and met my aunt Sara. They too had hit it off really well.

Aunt Sara and her family were coming for Christmas lunch today, I couldn't wait to share with her what mum and dad had said yesterday about wanting to meet my boyfriend.

\*


We were walking leisurely from the shops, I'd asked aunt Sara to accompany me so that we could have time alone and talk, away from the crowd of people at home.

Aunt Sara pursed her lips, "I don't know Ntandokazi, I don't think that is a good idea."

"Maybe if we give them time to adjust to the fact that I want to be

3 pages left


married by a Shona guy, they will be able to accept him"

Aunt Sara breathed out heavily, "knowing my brother and you mother hmm" 

"So we shouldn't do it?" I asked.

"Finish your last semester first" Aunt Sara said, "then you can introduce him when you're sure he is ready to bring his uncles and begin marriage talks."

"Okay Aunty"

She had burst my bubble but it was okay. Aunt Sara was very wise. She and I were very close. I told her all my secrets and she never judged me. She was always on my side. When I struggled at high school, my parents thought I was being playful, but she understood and she paid for my extra lessons. I was glad to have her on my side. Had she not been there to encourage me, I would have ended up in South Africa looking for employment, with no solid job, no qualifications and prone to abuse. 

For the rest of the vacation I was on cloud 9. I was so happy. Final semester then I'd get a job, graduate and get married.

Gilbert and I talked about that a lot, he would come and pay my bride

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price in September, soon after graduation and we would have a February wedding, on Valentine's Day.

We were both excited.

Soon the vacation was over and final semester started. Everything moved smoothly. When I talked to Gilbert about meeting my parents he had some reservations, he said it was against his culture to just show up and they would charge him during bride price negotiations.

I laughed and said no it's what my parents wanted, didn't he want to have a strong bond with my family, like I had with his?

Finally after much persuasion he agreed.

We finished our final exams and I went home, soon as I got home, I asked my parents to clear their schedules because the following weekend their future son in law would visit them.

They agreed. It was set.

Was I worried that Gilbert was Shona and, given my family's history with the Shona people, they would not accept him?

No.

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Okay maybe a bit

Okay maybe a great deal? 2

But my parents loved me. I was their only daughter and last child. They even named me Ntandokazi, which meant the favorite princess who got whatever she wanted.

Surely if they saw how Gilbert made me happy they would see past his shonanness and accept him and accommodate him as their future son in law.

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Chapter 3

👁 1.3K   ★ 64   💬 17

Gilberts POV

I WAS A NERVOUS WRECK

Simply put I didn't know what to do with myself. 1

Good lord I was meeting Ntandokazi's parents and her brother for the very first time.

I'm told when the brother heard I was coming he also said he travelled all the way from South Africa, were he worked, he wanted to see the man who thought he was good enough for their sister. 2

Did I think I was good enough for their daughter? No. Far from it.

I wonder what she even saw in me. I wasn't muscular or stylish, the


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way most girls seemed to like their guys. I was a very ordinary guy, driving an ordinary car, with an ordinary job.

When she said yes to my proposal and loved me every day thereafter, I was in awe, and I promised to love this girl with all that I am. She was my best friend, my soulmate, my best half..

Initially I had not wanted to meet her parents before marriage talks, but when I realized how much she wanted it, I obliged. And now I was on my way.

It took me 5 hours to drive from Harare to Bulawayo. I left at 7am and by 12 mid day I was in Zimbabwe's second largest city.

I passed through a pay toilet and brushed my teeth, washed my face and sprayed a bit of deodorant. It wasn't hot but I was sweating like crazy. Nervousness. 

I told Ntandokazi where I was parked and when I came out the of the pay toilet she was there, standing outside my car.

When she saw me she smiled, she was wearing the beautiful white lace dress I bought her from Malawi last Christmas. It suited her perfectly. I walked over to her smiling widely and took her in my arms.

"You are so beautiful"

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"Hie love"


We spoke at the same time. She laughed.

"You are beautiful" I repeated.

She blushed, turning around in her dress so I could get a full view, "thank you thandolwami, it's all thanks to your great fashion sense"

I chuckled, trust Ntando to turn every conversation and make it about me when it was about her. I opened the door for her and she blushed, going in like a princess.

She was my GPS for the trip, I only knew my way to a few parts of Bulawayo, and this would be the first time I visited her home.

We arrived and I parked outside the gate. I still felt reserved about parking inside, one can not be too comfortable at his future father in laws home. 

She lead us in, her parents and brother were seated in e lounge, when I entered they got up and greeted me.

I responded in Ndebele, yes my grandmother had been Ndebele and she had taught me some bits of the language, she had taught me enough to enable me to hold a basic conversation.


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Her parents were friendly, they smiled a lot, offered a seat and some snacks, her brother Ngqa had a permanent scowl on his face. I must say, he intimidated me a little, but I was not about to give him the satisfaction of knowing I feared him.

Ntando introduced me as her "friend"

Her parents smiled and said they were pleased to meet Ntando's friend.


As the conversation continued I ran out of my Ndebele vocabulary and started mixing with English.

"Why are you speaking in English when we are using Ndebele?" Ngqa asked suspiciously. 

"Ehm.. ahm.." I laughed, what sort of question was that? 


"Where do you come from Gilbert" Ntando's father asked.

"Harare, I live at Hillside, but my rural home is in Mazowe"

The smiles left all their faces, I shifted, the comfortable leather couch I was seated on suddenly felt uncomfortable. 

Her mothers eyes darkened, she asked, "what is you surname"

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"Chitsikwapasi, I am a Moyo, dewa" 

Her mother quietly excused herself, she appeared ill.

Her father was calm, his face held no expression and her brother was angry. He looked at Ntando fuming.

She was seated next to me and she grasped my hand tightly.

"What the fuck Ntando!" Ngqa roared.

Ntando's lips trembled, she looked scared, like the last time we watched a horror movie together. I had teased her to no ends that it was just movie.

But this was no movie, this was real shit going on.

What was going on?

"Ntando you know how we feel about this but you just had to disrespect us like that? Look mum is crying, can't you see you have hurt her feelings?"

"Ngqabutho sit down" their father finally spoke, quietly.

"Ha ha" Ngqabutho laughed scornfully, "so you are just going to let her

3 pages left

get away with it?"

"Ngqabutho don't let me repeat myself"


Ngqabutho got up and looked at me like he was contemplating to spit on me, "I'd be damned if I let you marry my sister" he said, then walked out of the room.

A cold chill ran down my spine. I put the glass of juice I was holding down and looked at father and daughter, searching for answers.

Ntando in one fluid movement got up and knelt at her fathers feet crying. We both were surprised at her actions.

"Daddy please" she begged, "he is not like the rest of them, he is a good man & he loves me. Please. I brought him here so you could get to know him and see that he is a good man. Please don't judge him for something he had no hand in"

What on earth was she talking about? No hand in? What was that?

"Ntando get up," his voice was still void of emotion, "excuse us, I want to talk with Gilbert alone" 

Ntando got up and left the room. I wondered what he was going to say to me now.

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He didn't say much, he just apologized for the drama I had just witnessed and said he hoped to invite me again, as his daughter had said, to know me better, after his family was past the initial shock.

I nodded my head like I understood. What was shocking about me? Or my name since that is what stirred the uprising.


We got up, shook hands and he walked me to my car. I found Ntando there, her eyes were red and swollen from crying.

I wanted to take her in my arms and hug her and tell her it would be okay.

"where are you going" her father asked.

I then noticed the small weekender she was carrying, "to aunt Sara" she replied.

Her father sighed heavily, "okay" he took out some notes from his wallet "here is bus fare, I will call her to check that you arrived safely"

Ntando dropped her bag and gave her father a hug. He hugged her back, "it's going to be alright my dearest" I heard him whisper. 

I opened the door for Ntando and she got in the car. And said a final goodbye to her father before I drove off. He nodded and watched us till

1 page left 

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we were out of his sights reach.

We stopped at an intersection and I took the opportunity to hold her hand, "Ntando will you please tell me what just happened at your house?"

"It's a long story" she sighed

"I'm listening" I insisted squeezing her hand gently.

"Okay" she leaned her head on the seat looking straight at the road ahead, the robots turned green, the car started moving and Ntando began her story.

**Please vote and share and comment!**

#### Chapter 4

1.1K ★ 66 18

Mariah's POV

Gunshots.

Screams.

Fire.

The grass thatched roof was on fire.

Was I dreaming?

Mariah! I heard someone scream my name.

I was choking, it felt so hot.

8 pages left

I felt a hand grab me and drag me outside.

I was barely outside when the roof of the hut I had been sleeping in gave in and collapsed, creating a huge flame that lit up the entire compound like a big candle.

The cold night air sluiced my face and I regained consciousness, I started coughing and realized my surroundings.

My older twin sisters were lying on the ground with me crying.

There were some soldiers in the yard.

Oh no. We were under attack. My sisters were crying. I was confused, what was going on.

I began looking for the others. Where were Peter and Silas our two brothers?

Where was mama and baba?

No. No. No.

The soldiers were pouring a liquid on the roof of the hut mama and baba used as their bedroom.

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Hannah and Anna my twin sisters were crying, "no please don't do kill them. Please!"

Hannah was 7 months pregnant, it appeared as though she was already in labor, there was blood around her and she was crying and moaning.

Anna was by her side, also crying and begging for our parents lives and trying to help her pregnant twin sister who was evidently going through a miscarriage.

"Hold her Mariah" Anna said, I did as I was told.


Anna got up and ran to the group of 6 or 7 soldiers as they were about to torch our parents hut into flames and grabbed one of their legs begging that our parents be let go.


One of the soldiers kicked her and knocked her head with the gun he was holding. She fell to the ground. Blood splattered from her mouth. She convulsed a couple of times and became still. Lifeless. 

I screamed. The roof of the hut with our parents inside caught flames, within seconds it gave in and fell inside. I heard mama and baba scream in agony as they were burnt alive, their screams pierced the dark night and echoed in the valley, they screamed until they were no more.

Then the soldiers turned to us with evilness written all over their faces.

This is it, I thought. Today I die.

"Ho ho ho comrades" one of the soldiers laughed, "honayi aka Kane numbu" *look and see this one is pregnant.* 

"Ko comrade hamuskuda here kuziva Kuti kana mwana we dissident arimudumbu rwa mai aka ita sei?" Another jeered. *Don't you want to know how a dissident's baby looks like when inside the mother.* 

"Vura comrade tione" another laughed. *Open it up and let us see.*

No. No. No.

What were they saying.

I held onto my screaming sister tightly, she was in so much pain already.

They pulled my sister away from me and one of the soldiers produced a very sharp knife.

"Ndivhure here?"



*Should I open?*

"Vhura!" The other soldiers shouted.  
*Open!*

"Ndivhure here?" He shouted louder.  
*Should I open?!*

"Vhura!" The other soldiers roared in response.  
*Open!*

I screamed as he pushed my sisters top up, exposing her pregnancy, took the knife and stabbed her belly, slicing it open.

I screamed as I saw the blood gush out.

I screamed as I watched my sister groan in pain and die.

I screamed as the intensity of what was happening hit me.

I screamed in pain as one of the soldiers slapped and spat at me.

I screamed and screamed non stop, at the top of my voice, until my voice was gone.

"Aka kakanaka aka" one of the soldiers sneered at me.

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*This one is beautiful.*

"Ngatikutore comrade, ndirikunzwa kuda mukadzi"  
*Let's take her, I want a woman.*

What?

I tried to get up and run for it. One of the soldiers quickly grabbed my arm, twisted it and threw me back down. My arm was throbbing from the pain of the twist and the impact of the rough landing on the ground.

As I was lying on the ground, one of the soldiers kicked my legs,  
"chivhura magumbo aya"  
*Open these legs apart.*

No. No. No.

One soldier pinned me to the ground, the other forced my legs open and forced himself inside me.

I felt excruciating pain. It was like a thousand knives were slicing me in my inner most parts. I groaned in agony. When he was done, he exchanged with his fellow who was holding my arms from struggling and he too forced himself inside me.

I cried.

3 pages left \_\_\_\_\_

I begged them to stop.

They slapped and spit at me to shut up, threatened to kill me if I made any more noise.

Maybe I wanted to die. Maybe I was dying. If not physically, my soul was breaking into a million pieces.

I was in so much pain.

Then I felt numb, everything became a blur.

I lost consciousness when the fourth or was it the fifth soldier forced himself into me.

\*

I cried. I cried so hard. 35 years later the memory was still so fresh. I remembered the day, when the 15 year old me lost her innocence and her family, all in one night.

My brothers, Peter and Silas had been found a day later in the woods, murdered in cold blood and left there for flies to feast.

The worst part is I had a constant reminder for the rest of my life, of what had happened that night.

2 pages left

My son. Ishmael. 

I knew I would never love the boy. I wanted an abortion but my aunts were scared I would die. They said after labor I would forget the pain and love him.

But each time he suckled on my breast, I was disgusted to the core. He was my son and I hated him.

I hate those Shona men who gang raped me and ruthlessly killed my family.

I hated all Shona speakers because they were their relatives weren't they?

So that evil blood of ruthlessness coarsed through their veins too didn't it.

No I would never forgive them for what they did to me.

And now my daughter, knowing very well my story, had the audacity to bring one of them into my house and dared to say she wanted to be married by him.

Over. My. Dead. Body.

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## Chapter 5

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### Gilberts POV

we sat at the lounge of aunt Sara's home, nursing warm cups of tea.

She had sent off her children to sleep early, she and her husband listened as we narrated the story of the afternoon events.

"I cannot say I'm surprised" aunt Sara said, "I always told your father that his wife needs trauma counseling, but he didn't listen, now look we're that has got us"

Ntando had told me the story of how her mother was raped and her family murdered.

I wondered if any amount of post trauma counseling could fix that. 💬 1

[< Previous Part](#)

5 pages left

"Do you think there is any hope of you being accepted" UncleRoy, Sara's husband asked.

"I don't know" I heaved heavily, "but he said he will invite me again when his family has gotten past the shock."

Aunt Sara shrugged, "well lets hope so"

\*

I was given a bedroom to sleep in, I was grateful I didn't have to share with their sons because I had a lot on my mind, to think and go over the events the day.

It was a beautiful room, the double bed had too many blankets and I soon fell hot, so I lay on top of the blankets, resting my head on the pillow I stared at the ceiling.

Thinking.

That night I could not sleep. I was angry, I was hurt, and I was sad.

I wished that Ntando had told me and I prepared myself, but then again, what sort of preparation is done for your future inlaws who are mad at your ancestors? 💬 1

To me it was absurd that I was being punished for sins I did not do. For

4 pages left

people I did not know and probably was not even related to. I was being punished for something that happened more than three decades ago.

I felt my chest tighten and tears well up my eyes.

I genuinely loved Ntando, surely they could see that and let us be.

I could never hurt her. I would love her like the precious queen she is destined to be.

What can I do?

I had phone called my mother earlier and all she said was to be patient and trust God.

"God please" I begged, "if you're listening please help us out, please make a way for us"


The door of my bedroom creaked open, I was startled.

I reached over the wall and switched the light on. Ntando.

"What are you doing here?"

She ignored my question and climbed the bed and lay next to me.

3 pages left

I felt my heart beat fast, we had never shared a bed before and she.. she was barely dressed. 


Goodness. She was so innocent. Did she not realize coming to my room in a nightdress was not a good idea? Worse still if her aunt and uncle found us.


They would interpret the situation wrong.

I'd have no time to explain and they would kick me out of their house in the middle of the night.

I got up from the bed and she sat up staring at me.

"What are you doing here - if your aunt finds us - go back to your room"

"Take me" 


Sorry. What? 

Ntando got up from the bed and came to stand directly in front of me, looking straight into my eyes, she repeated herself, "take me Rufaro"

My eyes looked all over the room but not at her. What the hell had gotten into this girl. What did she mean by take her?!

2 pages left

"Why"

"If I'm pregnant then my parents will have no choice but to let us get married" 

I could see the desperation and plea in her eyes and voice.

Yes I wanted to take her, God knows I anticipated our honeymoon, but not like this, not under these circumstances.

"My mom would kill me a thousand times if I showed up with you pregnant thandolwami"

"What about us? They will be angry but at least they will let us be" she said.

I stroked her face, "I want your family to like me and accept me as their son in law and give us their blessings properly, not because they have been coerced by circumstances"

"Oh" she looked down disappointed.

I raised her chin to make her look at me, "hey, I'm not going to give up on us okay? We're in this together, we'll fight for our love together."

"Okay" she whispered.

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I enveloped her in my arms and she hid her face on my chest, drenching my night shirt with her tears.

For the longest time we stood there, in the same position. Then when she was done crying she apologized for her suggestion and before I could say anything else she broke the hug and left the room hurriedly.

I was speechless.

My heart felt heavy.

I had a long journey back to Harare the following morning, so I forced myself to stop over thinking and fall asleep.

In my dreams, Ntando and I were happily married with 3 kids . She approached me and asked me to take her, I smiled enthusiastically as I took her in my arms..

## Chapter 6

👁 1.0K ★ 53 💬 7

### Ntando's POV

A week had passed since the drama with my family meeting Gilbert. I was still at Aunt Sara's house despite several phone calls telling me to come back home, which I had grown to ignore.

Aunt Sara refused to take part when she was asked to tell me to come home, she said I would go when I was ready. I was grateful for that.

I spent most of my days hiding in the spare bedroom that aunt Sara had given me. It was a neat room, complete with an ensuite, a television, home theater system and a small refrigerator. I really didn't need to go out unless it was evening meal time and everybody had to eat together as was the rule in aunt Sara's home. 1

I would lay on my bed watching movies and chatting with Gilbert over the phone, from time to time the maid would knock and check up on me to see if I was okay.

And now my brother Ishmael was calling me.

He seldom called, I wondered if everything was okay.

[← Previous Part](#)

5 pages left

"Hello?" I said answering the phone call.

"Hey lil sis you good?" Ishmael asked.

"Yeah Im fine" I lied, there was a brief pause and I continued, "I suppose you're calling because you heard what happened with my boyfriend"

"Actually yes" Ishmael sighed, "I think you should go back home and talk it through with the parents, running away and hiding won't solve anything"

I rolled my eyes, "I'm scared Ish, I'm scared of facing mom again man"

"I talked to her, she's calm now, she won't attack you or anything" he chuckled.

"You think?"

"Positive, go home lil sis"

"Okay I'll go, how's Catherine and lil Ron"

"They are alright, they send their greetings"

"Please give them hugs and kisses on my behalf" I said before hanging

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4 pages left



up.

Ishmael being my oldest brother, I had great respect for him, he was actually my favorite sibling. Ngqabutho was bossy and loud, Ishmael was quiet and gentle, a character much like our father's.

Yes our father, regardless of the fact that Ishmael was not our father's biological son, he adopted him and gave him his last name, he loved him like his own. growing up we were told the story of how he was conceived but that did not change the fact that he was our brother, after all he was our mother's child.

I rolled on my bed and hid my face in my pillow, now that Ishmael had politely asked me to go back home, unlike bossy Ngqabutho who kept ordering me to go home, I thought I would.

I told Gilbert and he agreed, it was time to go back home.

\*

When I got home I was welcomed back like nothing ever happened. Ngqabutho had gone back to South Africa so at home it was just me, the parents and the house help.

At one point though I thought mother was going to confront me, she asked, "so you want to get married soon?"

3 pages left

I replied, "yes mama, we wanted to get traditionally married in September after my graduation and then the white wedding in February"

"Oh I see" was all she said and then completely changed the topic, never bringing it up again.

I wondered what it meant. Should I allow my heart to excitedly hope that my mother was accepting Gilbert and things would go our way? If that happened then truly there is a God in heaven who is able to soften hearts of solid rock.

The weeks sped by towards the graduation day, 2 weeks before graduation I went to Harare and stayed there for a week as I prepared for the graduation day. I stayed in an apartment that was being rented by a friend & former classmate of mine Donna, who was already working. Every day after work Gilbert would come and see me at the apartment, sometimes we would go out, sometimes we would just chill together.

Our relationship was in a good place, the setback with my parents had not pulled us apart, it had drawn us closer, with a united purpose to fight for our love and win.

We decided to alter our plans a bit, instead of September and February, we would have traditional wedding in December and white wedding in

2 pages left

April.

Meanwhile, straight after graduating, I would get a job in Harare and we would start planning our life together.

It was a solid plan. It would definitely work out, we were sure of it. We even went to meet our Harare based church pastors and they agreed to start marriage counseling sessions as soon as we were ready. What could possibly go wrong? Everything was all set. 2

I went back home to Bulawayo and came back to Harare a day before graduation, with my parents this time around. We booked a lodge for our 2 day stay. It was a happy moment for me, my parents were excited to have raised 3 university graduates.

Ishmael was a mining engineer, Ngqabutho was a pharmacist and I was graduating a sociologist.

Graduation day came, my parents were my two guests, soon after the graduation ceremony was over, I received a call from Gilbert. He also came to congratulate the graduate, he was with his little sister.

Upon seeing him, mom did not react in any bad way, she smiled and shook his hands, she even took us a couple of pictures. My heart soared, this meant that she was finally approving of our relationship. 3

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Much to my surprise and uttermost delight, Dad invited Gilbert and his young sister for my graduation lunch, Gilbert happily accepted, we went to an exquisite restaurant and had a really good time.

I was happy. My parents were happy. My man was happy. The world was in a perfect place.

## Chapter 7

🕒 931 ⭐ 47 🗨 12

### **Ntando's POV**

It was the first Sunday after my graduation day and were back in Bulawayo.

Mama was very excited, my family went to a mainline church but I had left to join a new church which I felt was more enjoyable, however I would visit our mainline church from time to time.

On this particular Sunday mama insisted that we go to church together. I assumed it was the graduation excitement, she wanted to show off to her friends. She even came into my room and helped me pick out an outfit. I was surprised but I did not mind. It felt good to be in good books with her. 1

As I had speculated, the moment the church service was over, mama came and got me from my peers and took me to hers. They were all very excited and congratulated me on my graduation. I was not a fan of all the attention but the dollars that kept being pressed on my palm with each congratulatory handshake were a welcome consolation. My face beamed with a fixed smile until my cheeks began to hurt.

Just when I thought we were done, mama steered me to another

4 pages left

direction and we walked towards her friend, Mrs Mokoena, who was standing facing the classiest, most luxurious white Mercedes benz I had ever seen...

"Gladys" mama said tapping the shoulder of the woman in front of us, Mrs Mokoena who must have been searching her hand bag for something, turned around and when she saw us her face beamed.

"Hie Mariah!" She smiled and then she looked at me "oh and this is Ntando!"

I extended my hand for a handshake but she quickly drew me in a hug "oh I'm so happy to see you my child" she said.

Okay... someone is a bundle of sunshine, I thought to myself and gave her my toothiest grin when she let go.

"Congratulations on your graduation my child" she said.

"Thank you ma" I responded trying but failing to match her excitement.

"You should meet my son" she said, she turned and peeped through the window of the amazing Mercedes benz, Mrs Mokoena shifted a bit from her position and I got to see the luxe car interior... oh my God! Heaven! This was the sort of car you see on television and magazines

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but never actually imagine seeing it physically, let alone, parked on your humble church grounds on an ordinary day...

"Thuso come and greet Mrs Dlamini and her daughter"

I noticed a chubby male figure grunt and and raise his posture from the reclined seat, he stepped out of the car and came around to greet us.

"Thuso has grown up into a fine young man" mama smiled. They continued exchanging pleasantries.

I looked at Thuso Mokoena and wondered who mama was kidding... the only thing that looked fine about him were his clothes, he had a good fashion sense, but even that wasn't able to hide his chubbiness, pot belly and wobbling cheeks. As for young? This man standing about 20cm taller than me in heels, did not look like a young man..

He looked way older than my brother Ishmael.. and that was to say a lot considering Ishmael at that time was 34 years old. He did have great skin though, pity he kept a beard that covered a third of his face, the black thick beard contrasting his caramel skin made me think of him as a fuzzy teddy bear, I gave a small smile at that thought. <sup>1</sup>


"Thuso please stand next to Ntando I would love to see how you look together" I heard Mrs Mokoena say. <sup>2</sup>

Huh?

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I stopped my thoughts and tried to get what they were talking about.


Thuso did as he was told and shifted uncomfortably next to me.

"Oh they look so sweet together!" Both mothers cried. 

I gave them a confused glare, what is going on?

Mrs Mokoena smiled at me and said, "you know since you have graduated and are such a principled girl, you need to get married soon before some random boy uses you and degrades your value"

I widened my eyes, what on earth was she talking about?

Mama nodded in agreement with her, "Thuso is a medical doctor now based in South Africa, he also studied at the university of Zimbabwe but he was several years ahead of you" 

"And he's not just any random medical doctor" Mrs Mokoena added, "he is a specialist heart surgeon"

"Nice!" Mama smiled, "that's amazing young man, Ntando also recently graduated as a Sociologist"


"Err.. congratulations" Thuso said to me with a small smile on his face.

1 page left

"Thanks" I mumbled.

"Maybe you kids should get to know each other you know, share uni stories and all" Mrs Mokoena suggested. Mama nodded eagerly.


Thuso fished out an iPhone from his pocket, "may I err.. have your number?"

I looked at mama and she glared back at me to give him. I let out a lil sigh, took his phone and saved my contact. 

The mothers gave satisfied looks, they chatted a little more, made plans to meet for lunch the next weekend and then we parted.

When we were off earshot I turned to mama and asked, "what was that all about? Since when are you and Mrs Mokoena besties?"

Mama gave a small laugh and said "oh you! Let's get in the car, your dad must be tired of waiting for us by now"

I didn't get a chance to continue the conversation with mama again. 

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Next Part



## Chapter 8

🕒 1.0K   ★ 49   🗨️ 24

### Ntando's POV

Life is quite strange... Day by day nothing really changes.. We do the same routine things.. breathe in, breathe out, contribute our fair share of green house emissions which consequently will lead to the destruction of earth... Or at least that's what Scientists say..

But don't you sometimes see things turn out in some way and wonder how you got there? Because you feel caught off guard, helplessly hopeless..

Yes?

No?

Well at least that's how I felt. Mid week after the church incident I got a call from Thuso Mokoena, he wanted us to meet for lunch.

I wanted to turn him down but then I thought to just go out of politeness since it's what our mothers wanted. I told myself I would make it clear to him during the lunch *meeting not date* that I was already in a committed relationship.

I remember that day so well.. It was an ordinary, sunny, nothing special


10 pages left

day, but I would remember it for a mighty long time as the day I should have ran away from home.

I'm getting ahead of myself.

A couple of hours after his call, Thuso was parked outside our gate ready to take me for lunch.

I did not feel too comfortable going to an unknown place with a man I barely knew, so I wore black skinny jeans, sandals and a pink silk shirt buttoned to the last hole. I looked at myself on the mirror as I applied my makeup and was satisfied.

Should he try to kidnap me or do anything weird, I was dressed in a way that was flexible enough for me to run. 


I clasped on my promise ring necklace and had it hang over my shirt so as to give my outfit a little sparkle, make it a tad less serious and more casual, my short weave needed not much styling. Lastly I dabbed on some perfume and went to look for our house help.


"Sis Mavy I'm going out"

Sis Mavy had her back to me as she was busy ironing and she said "okay, see you later"

9 pages left



I continued standing and I asked her to look at me and see how I was dressed in case I went missing and she laughed. After she noted my look I gave her the name of the person I was going with and we bade each other goodbye. 

When I got outside the gate Thuso immediately stepped out of his car and came to me and stood an arms length apart. 

Okay is he expecting a hug?

I smiled at him, he smiled back, I clutched my purse strap tighter which he must have noticed because he stepped back but continued smiling "hie"

"Hie" I awkwardly responded.

He opened the car door for me and I was in. I was seated inside the amazing Mercedes I had been marveling on on Sunday.

It looked new and smelled fresh.


"Nice car" I said as he started driving.

"Thanks" he said,

"How long have you had it" I asked as I subtly scanned for a sell out

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sticker on the dashboard or windscreen, people from South Africa were famous for coming to Zimbabwe with hired cars. 

"For about a year" he said.

I couldn't find any hint that it was a car hire so I gave him the benefit of doubt since I'd been told he was a doctor anyway. "Okay, you are taking good care of it hey, it still looks new"


"Yeah I try thanks" he smiled, "although I'm thinking of selling it"

"Oh why?"

"This is more of a bachelors car.. I now want to get married.. start a family, so Im planning to sell this one and buy 2 less extravagant family cars for me and my wife" 

Fantastic! I thought to myself, so this suggests he is dating too! Yay!

"Nice" I said, "so is there a lady in the picture?"

"Hopefully you" he smiled. 

I glanced at him in surprise, our eyes met for a fraction of a second and I looked away, he laughed, I wasn't sure if he was serious or flirting.

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7 pages left



"Ha ha no seriously you mean you are planning to wed but you do not girlfriend yet?"

"Yes"

I looked at him again and wondered, how old is this guy? He looks too old to be single, but our mothers wouldn't have shamelessly set us up if he was married.. Or maybe it's just the chubbiness adding years to his physique?

"I don't believe you" I told him.

"They say when preparation meets opportunity history is made" he responded.

"Oh I see" I sighed, contemplating within me when would be the best time to tell him not to consider me as a potential opportunity because I was happily taken.

We drove silently for the rest of the journey, he mentioned he was taking us to a restaurant a little out of town and I made a mental note to mark the directions, if it was nice I would want Gilbert and I to go there too. <sup>1</sup>

When he pulled up outside the restaurant I was wowed. It was a an old style English white farm house, surrounded by bright flowers and

6 pages left

beautiful thick green trees towering above it. The trees made the sun penetrate less hence it looked a bit dark for midday and a cool breeze was flowing. It looked magical and enchanted. I was captivated.

"Hold on I'm coming to open the door for you" I heard Thuso say.

I snapped out of my marvel and said "no no don't worry I got this" and quickly stepped out and of the car.

Thuso watched me as I again took in the view.

"You like it?" He asked.

I nodded," it's breath taking."

"I hear the food is good too"

"You've never been here before?" I asked.

"Drove past it a couple of times and today I thought maybe let me try it out with you"

I smiled at him and said "if the food is bad I'm going to judge you"

He scratched his head mock nervously and we laughed. He wasn't a bad guy, I thought.

5 pages left

We walked inside the restaurant and it was even more beautiful than outside, where the outside looked traditional, the interior was modern and classy. Suddenly I felt under dressed, like I should have made more effort and wore a nicer outfit. I chided myself for undermining Thuso and expecting the worst from him. For the first time that day I looked at his outfit and noticed he was also dressed casual in white sneakers, grey shirt and black jeans. I was relieved he wasn't dressed up fancy either and I had to admit to myself, he was actually looking good.

Ntando snap out of it, I chided myself again, the plan is to kill this guy's hopes for a relationship with you, not to start identifying likeable things about him. <sup>1</sup>

A waiter took us through the restaurant and offered us a table that was right next to a man made pond, I couldn't believe the place could be any more cuter. I stood in front of the pond to see if there were any fish and yes, I spotted one, then three, then a whole swarm. <sup>2</sup>

"Oh there's fish!" I exclaimed, lost in the moment as I watched them swim.

Thuso who was making his way to his chair decided to come over and stand behind me a little too close, I could feel his breath on my skin as he lowered his head to my neck and one of his arms circled my waist, "and there are ducks too"

4 pages left

I stood frozen for a minute. What was he doing?

The waiter must have thought we were having a cute couple moment because he cleared his throat nervously and excused himself to get the menus.

That also snapped me off my frozen state as Thuso tugged me closer to him. I felt as if there were walls closing on me, I felt as if I was cheating on Gilbert, I didn't understand why Thuso was holding me like this? What did he hope to achieve? Heck I wasn't even attracted to him!

While all this turmoil was going on in my head, on the outside I was very calm, I stepped out of his embrace and took my seat.

The waiter brought us the menus and left. We opened and looked through them. The words were blurry to my eyes. I had to tell him.

Finally I gathered enough confidence to speak and as I raised my head from the menu to look at him he also raised his to look at me

"What are you having-"

"I'm in a relationship-" <sup>1</sup>

We spoke at the same time. Inner me face palmed.

3 pages left

He kept quiet. So I repeated myself, "I am in a relationship."


"So?"

I widened my eyes. That is not the reaction or response I was expecting. So? Really? I thought if I told him I was in a relationship he would apologize for holding me the way he had and we could end this lunch meeting as fast as possible before he spent money on a futile effort.

"So I do not appreciate what just happened while we standing over there" I responded firmly.

"What happened over there?"

I stared at him incredulously, was he seriously playing dumb with me? "You invaded my personal space" I told him.

"And you didn't like it?" 

"No I did not like it, you were too close, and like I said I have a boyfriend, I can't be standing like that with other guys"


"I was just showing you the ducks" he shrugged, then he grabbed my hands and I regretted placing them on the table.

2 pages left

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His big thumbs ran over my fingers "plus I don't see any ring on your finger" my hands felts small on his palms.


I quickly withdrew my hands from him and placed them on my lap, "that doesn't mean anything, I am committed to him"

"But it does" he chuckled, "it means you are still on the market, tell me, where is your boyfriend now?" 

"He's at work" I responded.

"Where does he work?"

I chose not to name the company but to just say he works in Harare.

Thuso leaned on his chair and said "so you are committed to a guy living some 500km away from you. How do you know he is equally committed to you? How do you know he doesn't have another girlfriend or girlfriends? Matter fact right now" he leaned over to our table "how do you know his tongue is not deep inside some girls throat?" 

"Stop it" I pulled my chair back trying to get away from him, "I trust him".

"You trust him" Thuso laughed but it did not reach his eyes, "so does

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he know right now you are having lunch with another man?"

"No-" I felt bad, why hadn't I told Gilbert? We talked about everything, why didn't I just send him a quick text after Thuso had asked me out for lunch? I told myself I was protecting him. Protecting him from what though?


Thuso smiled satisfied as if he had read my mind that he had made his point.

"I see what you're trying to do" I said, "mind games"

"No sweetheart" I cringed at that, he continued, "I've just been in the game long enough to know how these things work. For as long as you do not have his ring on your finger then you are still in the market. He knows it. I would be a fool to pass the opportunity of a beautiful lady like you just because she says she has a boyfriend" 

I frowned realizing he wasn't going to apologize for holding me the way he had earlier and I looked back on my menu.

"Have you decided what you're having?" He asked. I nodded and he called the waiter.


I ordered the most expensive main meal and dessert there was on the menu. 

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Next Part >

## Chapter 9

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The lunch meeting *not date* with Thuso actually lasted the entire afternoon and I arrived back home just after 5pm. 

Mama and daddy were already back from work so I went to greet them.

"Where are you coming from" mama asked.

"Er, I had gone out with Thuso for lunch"

"Mokoena? The doctor?" Dad asked.

"Yes" I replied.

Mama smiled "oh yes he called earlier this morning and asked me if he could"

I wish I could say I was surprised.

Dad was impressed, " oh that's good, he is a responsible young man"

I wondered how both my parents knew Thuso but I did not ask.

10 pages left

"So did you enjoy your date?" Mama asked.

"It wasn't a date" I sighed, "we just went and ate food, that's all"

Mama and dad laughed. I dismissed myself and went to my room.

\*\*

On Friday of that same week mama came home early from work and came straight to my room, where I was lying in bed and watching a series on my laptop.

"Mum?" I sat up on my bed, and checked the time, it was 12 mid day, an unusual time for her to be home.

"Have you bathed?" She asked.


Okay weird. "yes"


"Great, get up, we are going outfit hunting for your birthday lunch tomorrow"

Really? I didn't mind getting a new outfit for my birthday but this was too short a notice, I was enjoying my series, "do we have to do it today? I can always buy an outfit next week"

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9 pages left

"No. Tomorrow is a big day for us" Mama wasn't taking no for an answer, "get up and lets go" 

Well yes, tomorrow I was turning 23, apart from that there wasn't anything else amazing that would need me to get a new outfit, right? 

I did as she said and followed her out of the house.

Mama drove us to town and took us to the best boutiques and departmental stores in the city, at first I was excited and tried choosing what I liked, but she would discredit my choices as not formal enough or not classy enough. In the end I realized she knew what she had in mind and I allowed her to be the one choosing the outfits.

By the time our mini shopping spree was done I had a new dress, shoes, jewelry and perfume. It wasn't exactly my fashion taste, as mama's selection was more mature but the items were lovely all the same.

I thought since we were done we would go back home but mama had different plans, next stop was the hair salon.

"Why are we here?" I asked.

"To get your hair done" she said like that was the most obvious thing

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8 pages left

in the world.

But it wasn't because "there's nothing wrong with my current hairstyle, it's barely 2 weeks old and I still like it" I said.

Mama looked at me and pursed her lips, "hmm no I don't like it, lets have it changed"

I sighed and once again gave in to her demands.

We got in the hair salon and found our hairdresser finishing off a client. She asked what I wanted to do with my hair and I had no clue. She gave us a catalogue to look through and decide but in the end I chose simple braids. Mama asked how long braiding my hair would take and the hairdresser said 4 hours so she bade me farewell and said she would be back to get me after the 4 hours.

The hairdresser asked one of her friends to help do my hair quicker and they together very excitedly wanted to know if I was getting my hair done for a special occasion.

I told them not that I knew of, and they suggested maybe I was having a surprise graduation party.

I smiled to myself, they were probably right, it made sense, my birthday and surprise graduation would be a reason justifiable enough

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to have the complete makeover.

I smiled at the possibility. No wonder mama was so excited. How sweet of her.

Or so I thought.

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The following day was Saturday, my birthday. I received an early morning call from Gilbert.

"Hie babe" his voiced hummed in my ear over the phone.

"Mmm hie honey" I said turning over my bed and trying to wake up.

He chuckled, "you were asleep?"

"Yeah" I said trying to stifle a yawn.

"Such a lazy bum, it's already 8am"

"What but it's a weekend honey, I was actually planning on waking up at 10am"

Gilbert laughed, "you're impossible, I thought maybe on your birthday you'd miraculously turn into an early riser"

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"Miracles are a myth babe" I said tugging myself inside my blankets for more warmth.

"Hahaha I don't know about that, but happy 23rd birthday Thandolwami, I love you so so much"

"Thank you sweetheart" I smiled.

"So what's up for your day?" He asked.

I told him how yesterday mama had whisked me away for shopping and hairdo and he agreed with my suspicion that I was probably going to get a surprise graduation & birthday party.

"I will come see you next weekend and we celebrate your birthday together" he said.


At that I sat up and gave a little squeal.

He chuckled, "does that mean you are happy?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Thandolwami! Very happy! You are coming to Bulawayo! That is the best birthday gift I could ever ask for!"

"Oh so I shouldn't buy you a gift? Just my presence is enough?" He teased.

5 pages left

"Hey I didn't say that" I moaned like a kid being denied a lollipop, geez, was I turning 23 or 7 I inwardly asked myself. 

Gilbert laughed, we talked for about an hour longer, afterwards he gave the phone to his mother and young sister and they too wished me a happy birthday. I was very happy, my heart was full, this was a perfect way to begin my day, I couldn't possibly ask for more.

By the time Gilbert and I ended the call it was past 10am. I groaned to myself as I had to get up from my bed. I wondered to myself why no one had come to wake me up yet. It was unlike mama to let me sleep past 9am. This leniency reassured my suspicions of a surprise party. I gently opened my bedroom door and stood outside the corridor to hear if there were people talking about my surprise. I heard no voices but I couldn't ignore the delicious aroma of cooking food that filled the house. Chicken roasting, Custard simmering, Chocolate cake baking. It smelt like Christmas.

Deciding not to spoil the surprise I went back into my room. I peeped over my window to see if there was any activity in our backyard, perhaps a tent being pitched? Nothing.

Oh well. It's a surprise party Ntando, they wouldn't leave everything in plain sight, I told myself.

Leisurely, I made my bed, tidied up my room and went to bath. I had

4 pages left

just gotten back and was applying body lotion when I heard mama shouting down the corridor asking if I had woken up yet. In no time her voice and footsteps drew closer to my door and she let herself in.

"Good morning" I said with a smile.

"Good morning" she said scanning me "yoh thank God you are up, get dressed in the outfit we bought yesterday"

"Okay are we going somewhere?"

"No we are not" she said "hurry our guests are almost here"

"Which guests" I asked.

She stopped just as she was about to open the door and let herself out of my room, "you'll know soon enough"

"How mysterious" I muttered.

Mama turned to me, smiled and gave a little wink then walked out. I giggled, she could be a funny woman sometimes.

A few minutes later I was dressed in my new peach knee length figure hugging off shoulder dress, nude pumps, red tassel earrings and my braids were tied up in a loose bun, I applied a bit of lipstick and

3 pages left

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mascara, dabbed on my perfume and I was satisfied with my look.

I went out of my room and suddenly I felt nervous. I could hear voices in the lounge but for some reason I couldn't bring myself to enter, so instead I went into the kitchen.

I found sis Mavy busy chopping some vegetables. She looked up to me and smiled.


"You look beautiful Ntando" she said.

"Thanks sis Mavy, can I help you with that?" I asked making my way to wash my hands and she immediately stopped me,

"No they are waiting for you at the lounge" she said

"Okay, who are they?"

Sis Mavy shrugged her shoulders, I pursed my lips and left the kitchen for the lounge.

As I drew closer to the lounge I could hear Aunt Sara and Uncle Roy's voices speaking and I excitedly quickened my pace. When I entered the lounge, I found seated my parents, aunt Sara, uncle Roy, Thuso, Mrs Mokoena (Thuso's mother) and another old man who was later introduced as Ntate'Mokeona (Thuso's uncle). 

I knelt down and greeted them, as is culturally considered a respectful

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way of greeting elders and I saw Mama and Mrs Mokoena beam with smiles while the men nodded their heads in approval. When I was done Dad offered me a chair and he made the necessary introductions.

Thereafter we shifted rooms to the dinning room which had been beautifully laid with mama's finest cutlery and serviettes. At the center of the dining table was my huge chocolate cake which had two candles, a 2 and a 3 slowly burning. I smiled.

As per family tradition I stood behind the cake and they sang to me my birthday song and I blew the candles. We all took a few pictures and it felt awkward when I had to pose with the Mokoenas but I pushed the thoughts away and focused on being celebrated.

Afterwards the cake was put away to be eaten later as dessert and sis Mavy brought in the dishes for lunch.

We all sat down the table, Thuso on my right, my mother on my left and Aunt Sara in front of me. Mrs Mokoena and Ntate'Mokoena sat on either side of Aunt Sara and Uncle Roy and dad sat on both ends of the dining table.

Dad gave grace, we served ourselves and dug in our food. I glanced at Thuso's plate next me and I couldn't help but notice the oversized portions he had placed for himself.

I laughed inwardly as I thought to myself, clearly someone is not

1 page left

chubby by accident. At that moment aunt Sara's eyes briefly met mine, they were also filled with laughter, she too had seen what I had seen.

We quickly looked down and focused on our plates before we brought unnecessary attention to ourselves.

The lunch went well, with the adults generally making the small talk on the economy, government scandals and business prospects.

Thuso and I also talked a little, he asked how I was and if I was enjoying my meal, beyond that we really had no conversation.

After the main course sis Mavy collected the used dishes and then brought back in the birthday cake, fresh cutlery and individual sauce boats filled with custard. I got up and sliced the cake for everyone and served them.

I had just taken back my seat and was relishing the fresh taste of the moist chocolate cake when my dad spoke up.

"Ntando, we have decided that you and Thuso should get married"

3

Suddenly the cake in my mouth turned into sawdust and I choked on it as I tried to swallow.

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Next Part




## Chapter 10

925 ★42 ♥24


"My baby are you okay?" Mama asked, her voice laced with worry as she patted my back.

"Here" Thuso said, handing me a glass of water. 

I glanced at him with teary eyes and breathed a thank you after sipping the water. 

"Brother you cannot do that" I heard aunt Sara say.

"But I can and I have" dad said in his stern non negotiating voice. Like I said before, dad really did not like it when people talked back or opposed his instructions.

"We think it's for the best" mama said. 

She had been rubbing my back and all of a sudden her touch felt like hot thorns prickling me. I shrug myself from her reach and whispered "don't touch me" under my breath.


She heard me and she stopped. She removed her treacherous hands from my back and I stood up. All eyes in the room turned to me.

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9 pages left

I was livid. No way. This is the 21st century. There was no way I was going into an arranged marriage. Simply no can do.

"Ntandokazi sit down"

"I need to use the toilet-" 

"I said sit down!" His tone had changed, I needed not to be told twice, I sat down.

I wanted to scream and shout and let it all out. All my frustrations, the incredulity of this whole situation got me dumb founded. I was so angry at my parents betrayal at the same time I felt completely powerless. These are my parents. They brought me up respectfully and I knew better than to make a scene in front of the Mokoenas, I would have to wait for them to leave first. 

My face felt hot, I was frowning really hard at what the implications of this imposed marriage meant. The entire time my head was saying "no, I love Gilbert"

Mrs Mokoena and my father were talking but I was so blinded and deafened by my inner fury that I could barely make out what they were saying.

"Ntando.."


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8 pages left


"Ntandokazi"

"Agh Ntando" my mother nudged me "Mrs Mokoena is talking to you"

I looked up and paused my inner screaming brain, it then registered she had been calling my name.

"How do you feel about this?" 

Ho. Ho. Ho. Did she just make the mistake of asking how I felt? Well let's see? I felt angry, I felt like slapping them all, I felt like grabbing my cake knife and stabbing Thuso until he died. I glanced at Thuso and he appeared unperturbed, maybe he knew about this the whole entire time?

Nevertheless, I felt like telling my parents I hated them and that they were evilness personified. I felt like laughing on their faces for the bad joke and tell them off and walk out of this room. 

But of course I couldn't say all that. Instead I said, "I don't want to marry Thuso"

"Why?"

"Why?!" I asked incredulously, Thuso also shifted to look at me like he too was curious too "why because I don't love your son Mrs Mokoena, maybe my parents forgot, but I have a boyfriend and I am very much

7 pages left

committed to him and we plan on getting married soon."

Mrs Mokoena's face paled. Thuso scrunched his face in a scowl glaring at me, I glared back at him in a 'don't act surprised I told you' kind of manner.

"That won't be happening" dad spoke.

"Excuse me?" I asked turning to him.

"You will not be marrying that boy" dad said.

"Well then I will not be marrying this one either" I retorted stubbornly.

Dad stared at me like he thought his look would intimidate me, but instead I was infuriated, I stared right back at him.

The atmosphere in the room was tense. Mrs Mokoena cleared her throat and said "maybe we should leave and we give you a chance to talk as a family"

"Maybe you should" I agreed still eye locked with dad.

"Ntando don't be rude" mama said, "respect your elders"

I looked at her, I knew she expected me to apologize but I had no

6 pages left



intentions to. I sat back on my chair and folded my arms. Aunt Sara sat quietly watching me.

"No it's okay" Thuso said dragging his chair backwards and getting up, "we should leave and give you time to talk things through.."

Mrs Mokoena and Ntate'Mokoena also followed suit and they got up to leave. My parents also got up to walk them out.

"I'm so sorry" mama said apologizing to them, "I hoped we would get a better reaction than this" 1

I widened my eyes at her, in disbelief of what I had heard the woman who called herself my mother just say.

"Maybe we can invite you again when we have reasoned with her" dad said, "but thank you so much for coming, Ntate'Mokoena"

Ntate'Mokoena nodded at my dad and Mrs Mokoena said it's okay. They were just about to exit the room when Mrs Mokoena turned to her son and said "oh by the way Thuso didn't you have a gift for Ntando?"

"Oh yes it's in the car" he responded.

"Maybe go and get it and give her before we leave" Mrs Mokoena

5 pages left

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suggested.

"Yeah sure" Thuso said excusing himself to go out as he felt his trouser pockets for car keys while his mother, uncle and my parents came back and sat down on the table with us.

We all sat in silence, a couple of minutes I heard mama gushing "oh my God" and I turned to look at what she was marveling at.

To say it was big is an understatement, Thuso walked in with a ginormous bunch of fresh flowers tied together with a cute thick pink ribbon and on his other hand he held two wrapped boxes, one narrow and long and the bigger one was the size of a medium sized pizza box.

He came and resumed his seat next to me, "these are for you" he said.

Everyone was watching us. I simply looked at Thuso, my face was void of any reaction or expression.

"I know you may have been taken aback by the whole marriage thing, but I believe that our parents in their wisdom are making a great a choice for us, and if you give me a chance I can take care of you and show you that I can be all that you want and need in a man." 3


I heard aunt Sara make a sarcastic grunt while mama was like "ohh Ntando aren't you so lucky"

4 pages left

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Thuso extended his arms to me so I would get the gifts from his hands but I did not move. I just looked at them and looked aside. If he was offended he didn't let it show because he went on to put the gifts on the table in front of me.

"Why don't you open the gifts so we all see what he got you" Mrs Mokoena said. 

I looked at her, then at the gifts and I cast my eyes down to my lap. Mama seeing that I was not going to respond, excitedly got up and started unwrapping the bigger box, it turned out to be a box of fancy chocolates.

"Ohh chocolates!" Mama exclaimed, "Ntando loves chocolate"

"These are special ones from Belgium" Mrs Mokoena said.

Such a show off. Who asked her?

"That's lovely, special Belgian chocolates for our special daughter on her special day" mama said nudging me excitedly, I rolled my eyes, who was she trying to convince?


Mama took the smaller box and unwrapped it, and once more she oohed and aahed, as she revealed a black jewelry box that held a golden necklace made of tiny petals and a matching bracelet, "this is


3 pages left 

beautiful "she said lifting the jewelry up for all to see.

"Thuso got these from South Africa, from a prestigious shop in Durban, I wanted them too but they were so expensive" Mrs Mokoena said, "what was the name of the shop the again Thuso?"

"Ehm ma, I don't think... ahm.. that's not necessary" Thuso gave a small laugh that sounded somewhat uncomfortable.

"NWJ jewelry" Mrs Mokoena said smugly. 


Right. Because we know where that is? 

"Ntando aren't you going to say thank you" Mama asked and once more I cast my eyes down, "thank you Son" I heard mama say to Thuso.

And he gave a small laugh as he feigned humility, "oh it's nothing ma, I hope she will like the gifts"

"Oh she will, you have great taste and I see these are well thought special gifts, I just hope she will share with me some of this chocolate " my spokesperson aka mama said chuckling.

"Well we were on our way out" Mrs Mokoena said standing up.

2 pages left 

"We will see you out" dad said as he and mama once more got up to take the Mokoena's out.

Once I heard the door click closed ensuring that they were outside and away from earshot I turned to Aunt Sara and Uncle Roy, "what is going on?!"

"Your father is mad" aunt Sara said, she looked quite angry, "him and your mother, they can't do this"

"They are literally selling me off as if they are desperate" I said in disgust as I pushed the gifts that were in front of me away.

"I have never been so embarrassed, they were literally kissing the Mokoena's butts" Aunt Sara agreed.

Uncle Roy cleared his throat, "maybe let us wait for them to get back and they explain to us what the motive is?"

"It's bullshit Roy" aunt Sara said to her husband, "whatever it is they are going to say, I assure you, it's pure bullshit"


We all three sat in silence deep in our own thoughts, I was wondering what my parents had to say for themselves and I too was rehearsing the speech I was going to tell them once they got back.

1 page left

A few minutes later we heard a car drive off the yard signaling that the Mokoena's had left and a few moments later the main door opened as my parents came back in, mama stormed in the dining room where we were still seated, she was fuming "Ntando what manner of rubbish behavior was that?! Embarrassing us!" She shouted.

## Chapter 11

847 ★42 10

I got up to face her. 

"Rubbish behavior?" I chuckled humorlessly, "do you want to know what rubbish is *mother*? Rubbish is setting me up for marriage with a man I barely know and most definitely do not love. That's rubbish."

*Bam!*

Dad hit the wooden dining table with his hand, "Ntando you will not talk to your mother like that" he roared, "apologize immediately"

I stood akimbo and I narrowed my eyes at her, "I apologize for raising my voice at you, but I do not apologize for what I said. I mean it. I'm not marrying Thuso Mokoena"

"It's not up for negotiation" mama spat.

4 pages left

"Oh? So what's your plan? You will force me at gun point to sign a marriage certificate with him or you will just forge my signature? Because I do not see any other way I in my sane mind would willingly get married to him"

"That Shona boy has corrupted you" dad said.

"That Shona boy? That Shona boy dad has a name, his name is Gilbert Rufaro Chitsikwapasi and I love him! You were all kind and polite just the other day when he was here and on my graduation, today you say he is corrupting me? Why didn't you say so then? Huh? Why are you saying so now?"

Mama looked so angry she was shaking, "no. child. of. mine. is. getting. married. to. A. Shona. do you hear me Ntando?" She said her finger poking my chest with each word.

"And I am not getting married to Thuso either!"

"Are you not the one who said you want to get married 'soon' what's the difference? Here is a man that we have found, whom we approve of, he will marry you soon enough as well!" Mama yelled back at me.

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I looked at her and I was sure she had gone crazy, surely she had lost it, "I did not say I just want to get married soon, I said I want to get

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3 pages left

married to Gilbert, the man I love! Why is it so hard for you to understand that? You are my parents and I respect you, but you have no right whatsoever to choose a spouse for me"

"Ntando don't forget who you are talking to" dad said and I flinched, "this is your mother and she carried you for 9 months, without her you would be nothing, you would be none existent. You will listen to what she says and obey it." 2

"I never asked to be born" I retorted.

Dad moved closer towards me, his eyes flashing danger, anger, I honestly thought he was going to beat the living daylights out of me. I stepped back.

"You will do as you are told" he said.

"And you can forget and smile!" I replied as I turned and grabbed the two thirds of my cake that remained uncut, a fork and a bottle of water. I sure as hell was having my chocolate cake and eating it. I wasn't about to let them ruin the only good thing that was left of my birthday - the cake. I started making my way out of the room. 1

"Where do you think you are going, we are not done here" dad said.

Maybe he wasn't done, but I was. I had my back to him as I walked out

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2 pages left

of the room and I think he was about to come and pull me back before I left the room but aunt Sara jumped from her chair and blocked him, "brother no! Let's sit down and reason together"

I exited the room and banged the door behind me. I made my way to my bedroom and when I got in I locked myself inside.

I was feeling very frustrated. I didn't want to talk to anyone. I thought of calling Gilbert and telling him what had happened but I was so angry I decided not to, lest I ended up saying something in anger.

I grabbed my laptop, switched it on as I sat on my bed and I went through my videos folders. I wanted to watch something that would make me laugh and distract me and hopefully improve my foul mood.

I found a comedy series I had been stalling to watch "outsourced". You better be good, I muttered to myself as I clicked play. A few minutes I was giggling to myself as I enjoyed the comedy and munching on my birthday cake. Happy birthday to myself!

The comedy was so good I watched the full season episodes none stop and for that time I forgot about all my worries. By the time I finished the season my cake was gone too, I rubbed my stomach, I was probably going to be sick the next day. I checked if I had season 2 of outsourced and I realized I hadn't. What a bummer.

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It was now 9pm and I felt sleepy anyway, I changed into my jumpsuit socks and tee shirt for bed and I got a wet wipe to remove makeup from my face. There was no way I was going to risk going outside my room to the bathroom lest I bumped into my treacherous parents.


As I got in bed I checked my phone and found some messages from Gilbert and some friends, I responded to them, we chatted for a bit and finally around 10pm I dozed off to sleep.

A couple of hours later I woke up startled from my sleep. There was a loud banging on my door.

"Ntando! Ntando wake up!" Sis Mavy was panic knocking and shouting.

I scurried from my bed, barely awake, wondering what the noise was for at such an odd hour. I opened my door, sis Mavy was crying, panicking, she was jogging on spot as if she didn't know whether to stand or run.

I rubbed my eyes trying to stifle a yawn, "what is I-"

"It's your mother" I stopped mid yawn. "She has collapsed." 

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Next Part



## Chapter 12

901 ★44 17

They say you do not become a woman or a man until you have lost your mother. <sup>1</sup>

I had always heard this statement but right now, at that very moment, being faced by the harsh realities of the possibility of losing my mother, I felt it's gravity.

I ran past Sis Mavy in silent panick, my heartbeat racing, I saw my parents bedroom door open, they weren't in, I rushed to the main door and found dad struggling to open the door with mama on his arms.

I squeezed myself between them and unlocked the door.

He pressed the car keys on my hand "bring the car over while I hold her"

I rushed to the garage and all of a sudden I was hit by confusion, I forcefully attempted to open the Toyota Rush with keys for Toyota Belta. The alarm went off. Crap. <sup>1</sup>

"Ntando what's taking so long" dad shouted.

"I'm coming!" I said scurrying over to the right car, I reversed it back to the veranda were I had left dad waiting with mum but he was already in the driveway, quickly I parked the car and helped him put

[← Previous Part](#)

8 pages left

her in the back seat,

"Hold her" he instructed and I got in the back seat with her, her head on my lap.

"Dad the Rush- the alarm-"

"Leave it" he said, getting behind the wheel and driving off while the Toyota rush continued screaming alarm that disturbed at most our 3 direct neighbors, thank Goodness for big yards.

The gate was closed. Great.

"Do you have the gate keys" dad asked eyes widening at me.

"No, should I go and get-"


Before I finished my question he was already outside the car, I turned to look behind and saw him running, Sis'Mavy appeared also running towards him waving the gate keys, as if grabbing the button stick on a relay race, dad grabbed them, Sis Mavy followed him, dad paused at the gate, appearing confused with the bunch of keys in his hands.

Sis Mavy grabbed the keys back from him and unlocked the gate then slid it open. Dad rushed back to the car. <sup>1</sup>

I looked at mama, she was still, lifeless, I lowered my head to her face, I couldn't feel her breathe. At that point all thoughts of checking her

7 pages left



pulse had evaporated from my mind. 

I couldn't feel her breath meant she wasn't breathing.

"Dad she isn't breathing!"

Dad stepped on the accelerator, silent tears streamed down my face, how we got to the hospital alive ourselves, given the crazy speed we were using, was a pure blur.

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We got to the hospital, dad once more carried mama, I rushed in and I don't know what I said to the nurse, whatever I said he understood because next he was calling for a stretcher and another pair of nurses joined him.

They rushed to dad and put mama on the stretcher. The other 2 nurses did preliminary checks on mum while the third nurse asked dad for a couple of details.

I followed the stretcher as it went inside the hospital corridors and stopped when they entered an examination room because the third nurse who was following directed me to go to the waiting room.

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6 pages left

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I found dad there. Seated on one of the sofas, looking sad. Very sad. Never had I seen my father with such a fallen expression. His shoulders slumped, his head bowed, his hands clasped, fingers interlocking.

I didn't know what to do either, so I sat there next to him.

After a while, he looked up at me, his eyes blood shot red, had he been crying?


By then my own tears had long since dried.

"Have you called your brothers? Your aunt?" He said, clearing his voice that was heavy laden with emotion.

"No I don't have my phone" I said.

"Okay"

He was silent for a while too, as though in a trance. After a while he said, "I don't have my phone either"

Had the circumstances been different, this was going to be funny. 

About 40 minutes later a nurse came in the waiting room, we got up, "How is she nurse?"

"Who?" She asked.

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5 pages left

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"My wife" dad said absentmindedly.

"Oh I'm sorry, I'm looking for the driver of a white Toyota belta, number plates 'adm 3220' it's blocking our entrance."

"That's ours" I said, "Dad let me go and remove it while you talk to the nurse"

Dad looked so far away, as though he could see past the walls surrounding us.

"Dad?"  
I tapped his shoulder.

"Right, the keys" he rummaged his pockets and produced the keys. I was about to grab them and go when he stopped and said, "my cellphone is in the car"

"Okay dad"  
He remained still, and after a moment finally handed me over the keys.

"How is my wife" he asked the nurse.

"If you give me her details, name, when she was brought in, and her condition I may be able to trace her for you"

4 pages left

Dad once more did not respond, both the nurse and I looked at him, unsure if he heard anything. A tear trickled down his eye.

"Sir please have a seat, I will bring you some sweet tea to help with the shock" the nurse said, then she turned to me, "may I have the patients details please? You are related?"

"Yes she's my mother, this is my father"

The nurse gave me a piece of paper to write mama's information. She returned a couple of minutes later with 2 cups of tea and handed them over to us.

"I don't want tea, I want my wife" dad said, tears streaming.

To say I was shocked at his reaction would be the greatest understatement ever. My heart swelled in my chest, it hurt so bad to see him like this, I began crying too.

"Please drink the tea" the nurse said, "it will help with the shock"

I brought the cup to my lips and tasted the tea, it was warm but so sweet it was uncomfortable to drink. The nurse encouraged us to drink more. So we did.

"Once you feel okay, please go and remove your car from the

3 pages left

entrance" she said, "meanwhile I'm going to check for your mother's information"

I nodded, and placed the half empty cup of tea down and followed her out.

I got to the car and found a good parking spot for it, that would be easy to find.

Then suddenly the intensity of all that had happened hit me on a new wave, I bawled like a baby. I threw my hands on the steering wheel and the hoot horned. Great.

I lowered the chair instead and cried some more, the image of mama lifeless on my lap scarred my thoughts, seeing her still on the stretcher, as the nurses pushed her away from us, my heart broke even more.

I could not begin to imagine a daybreak without mama. I cried some more.

After a while I got myself together, I needed to be strong for my dad. So I started looking for his phone, when I found it I went back in the hospital building.

I went back in the waiting room, dad was still there, but he wasn't alone. Aunt Sara and Uncle Roy had joined him. Aunt Sara was holding dad's hand with both of hers. When I entered they all looked at me.

2 pages left

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Aunt Sara was first to speak "Ntando look at what you have done" 1

Sorry. What?

"No Sara, don't say that to the child" Uncle Roy said.

"But she should know the truth, all this wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for her stupid war with her mother"

Finally I found my voice, "what do you mean it's my fault?"

Fresh tears fell on Aunt Sara's face as she narrated what she said dad had told them, "after you stormed off the dining room we talked briefly with your parents and asked them to give you space and time, then we left. You mother didn't take it well, your reaction, the exchange of words, the possibility that you want to do exactly what will hurt her the most by marrying Gilbert. She came to your room but you had locked yourself in. She went into her bedroom and cried some more telling your father how stressed she was, then after a while she got up saying she was feeling thirsty but then she collapsed. The doctor was here a few minutes before you came back in Ntando, he said she suffered a heart attack-" 2

At that I gasped and my hands covered my mouth.

"No"

1 page left

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"Yes" aunt Sara nodded.

"Is she going to be okay?"

"Yes, fortunately it's a mild one"


Thank goodness. "I haven't told Ngqabutho and Ishmael" I said.

"I have already called them" Uncle Roy said, "have a seat Ntando, you seem drained."

I took back the cup of sweet tea the nurse had given us, which by now was cold and I finished it off. It didn't calm me down much.

I thought long and hard over what Aunt Sara had just said. Then I was no longer sad, I was now angry all over again, this woman I called mother was out to make my life hell. Either she marries me off to a stranger or she dies and makes me the bad guy.

I leaned back on my chair, folded my arms on my chest and looked at Aunt Sara and dad seated in front of me. After a while I finally spoke up.

"Mama's heart attack is not my fault, she brought it upon herself." 

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Next Part

