



You play stupid games, you win stupid prizes

TROUBLED

a TSH&PI M ORIGINAL NOVEL

TROUBLED

#01

At the church

The church bells rang as a way to alert everyone that the ceremony was about to begin. The bride groom stood at the end of the alter conversing with his best man and brother. One would even forget his sins, looking delectable at the alter with that cream white suit hiding the ink on his arms but showing those on his hands, the new heart tattoo on his ring finger. No one was bothered as they knew the bride was supposed to take her time and Rhysand was more than happy to wait for his bride to be. She needed all the time to get ready and she had called late at night venting about wedding jitters. Something that was normal during occasions such as these.

At the bride's dressing room, Ruby rubbed her flat

tummy. What she did was necessary, she was never supposed to fall for the subject. Although at first she had subjected herself to sex with him, it was always the best and she had to admit the best sex she has ever had in all her entire existence. Overtime she had started to notice the tiny details. How he smiled when he was happy and although he was particularly private with his business, she had enough that would put him in prison for at least five years. After all her colleagues were counting on her to get the job done.

Voice:Ruby? Thehemma people are waiting for you.

Ruby:Coming mother..

She said quickly and she looked up trying to not let the tears drop. After he was locked up, she would never have to see him again. Her mission would be over along with a piece of her heart. She closed her eyes, picturing his smile. There was something about his smile that would make a woman want to do anything for that goddamn creature. At first her parents weren't happy with her choice but they

warmed up to Rhys to the point that he did everything at her father's farm since he was too old to even do half of the things Rhys does. How he let his guard down too was remarkable. Her phone vibrated. The police were here, the Crime Investigative Unit members in particular. She just had to act but this time she wouldn't be acting. It would be real heartache, it already hurt that she killed his offspring before it could even finish the first trimester in her belly and now she was sending the man she had learned to love to prison? What a job she had.

She breathed in and out and she stood up. She could do it. Her father wasn't going to walk her down the aisle but he was here. She was grateful for that. Her stomach rolled and she had to swallow back the thick foam of spit forming in her mouth. This was where the real anxiety started, knowing that whatever that was going to happen here was all orchestrated by her and her team. That everything was planned to the T on this particular day, of

course everyone was astonished that Rhys wanted to marry her. She was surprised as well, she didn't know that it would lead to that too but they were here now.

Ruby held the hem of her dress and turned back around. She let go and picked her cellphone, deleting evidence for the last time. She deleted the messages and she cleared her phone of all the memories she had with Rhys. He was going to be someone who belonged in the past soon and the sooner she forgets about his existence the better. Either way, it didn't make anything much better, instead it got worse and she rubbed her chest in a circular motion. She lifted her head and stared right back at the mirror. Was she that person? She knew he did what he did to put food on the table and even though he had qualifications, not all graduates get employed and everyone has to do what they got to do to put food on the table. And the life gets so addictive when one makes big bucks, this whole year Rhys had never mentioned what he did. She was just

a spoilt princess and one he loved very much.

She finally gained the courage to place her hand on the door lock and she turned it. She should make it to the alter like a normal bride, they must be worried that she might pull a runaway bride stunt on them but she was going to see this plan through till the very end, she swore to be loyal to the state when she was sworn into the Police Force and it was a life she had chosen for herself.

She started to walk to the church and she could hear the sweet instrumentals. Tears welled in her eyes, she was going to ruin the makeup. A very unnecessary thing but everyone said a bride has to look her best so she had people paint her face in whatever. When she reached the other end of the alter, Rhys looked up and that smile, just that smile almost became her undoing. She almost ran just to avoid what will be happening here in a few minutes.

She smiled and Rhys covered his face, she was an ethereal princess. He didn't know how he fell for her and the past year with her was just bliss forgetting his suspicions, his bride was what a bride was supposed to look like. Ruby maintained her posture as she walked to the alter, not to be his wife but to be his doom. The very reason he was going to lose his freedom. She was glad she had convinced him not to go to the magistrate's office first because if they did so, she was going to be his wife throughout this whole ordeal and how would it look if she filed for a divorce with an inmate?

Rhys held out his hand and she took it. She looked into his eyes and he smiled again. There was something terribly sexy about his smile, it said that he knew it was her weakness and he smiled more and more, pearly whites against thick lips that were already accustomed to every part of her body.

Rhys:Hello precious..

She looked down with a smile full of guilt.

Ruby:H-

Before she could utter any other syllable, the police officers walked inside the church and gasps filled the place. The Chief investigative officer walked forward to the alter in long strides that ensured he was there in front of the “couple” in seconds.

Chief officer:Sorry to ruin this pretty little wedding but Mr Rhys McKnight you are under arrest..

Rhys let go of Ruby’s hands and he looked at his brother. They knew that this would happen and he looked at Ruby who couldn’t even look at him. He smiled.

He lifted her head and softly kissed her lips, she openly kissed him back. Knowing that this was going to be the last time she would feel his lips against hers.

Rhys broke the kiss and he whispered in her ear. His suspicions had been correct but he had hoped that

her so called love for him would win in the end.
Guess he was wrong.

Rhys:Whatever you think you know is not the real information precious thing. I love you though.

Ruby's heart froze as he moved his head and he placed his hands behind his back.

Chief Officer:You don't even know why you are being arrested.

Rhys:This is temporary Officer Moilwe. You have been waiting for years(smiling)no need to scare the guests and expose my sins in this holy place right officer?

Two police officers came forward to handcuff him and he started to walk out of the church with them escorting him. As soon as he was out, Ruby's mother rushed to Ruby. They had heard rumors but seeing him arrested on this very day that was supposed to be a special one for her daughter was

unacceptable. Ruby's knees wobbled and she broke down in her mother's arms. Alex stood in front of the church as hush whispers passed among the guest.

Alex: Everything will be okay. Let's give the family time to process this and my apologies for the scene. My apologies for your wasted time..

Ruby wailed as Rhys' mother held back tears, her firstborn son was gone but she was sure they were going to question him. She didn't know what he did but whatever it was, it wasn't something he was supposed to be arrested for right? He said he owned a company that does tenders for the government and he traveled here and there. Alex walked to her and she shook her head.

Alex: Mother it will be okay.

She nodded and Alex was left with the job assuring people that everything was going to be okay.

Meanwhile outside, Rhys was shoved into a police

van. He didn't have time to even lament over his problems, it was time for plan B. They got caught but what evidence do they have? He should have listened to his instincts the first time he suspected Ruby was undercover but he gave her the benefit of the doubt. After all he believed she was in love.

The van started moving with Rhys inside on the way to the police station.

.

.

Are we ready to start the new journey? I couldn't wait so buckle up family and let others know that tomorrow 11am is a date

TROUBLED

#02

The following morning

At Rhys' mother's place

Alex sat down holding a coffee mug. Rhys had managed to call him last night and he said although the evidence they had presented had a little weight, it wasn't enough to put him in prison for over six months. He was the lesser person in this case and he had to protect the big guys or else they are throwing all of them under the bus and they could go for more years. Along with Alex of course.

He groaned as he leaned back. He had stayed the night to make sure the old woman is okay and he

was sure Rhys was trending on Facebook and The Voice Newspaper obviously wrote about him. Nothing bypasses those vultures and even though nobody could quite prove that Rhys McKnight was into dodgy dealings, the arrest was much louder than it should have been. Time to implement plan B. Obviously they were going to raid them and want their electronic devices which they weren't going to get.

At Ruby's house

Ruby sat upright on the bed with puffy red eyes. It was all her fault and her stupid heart had fallen for the man she wasn't supposed to fall for. How stupid can she be? A job was. A job but it fucking hurt her. She rubbed her stomach and that brought more tears to her eyes.

He knew and obviously that meant that Alex knew and it would be useless to visit Rhys in prison. She

cried some more as the door to her room opened. They even had a whole house together and she couldn't bring herself to go there. She was such a fool.

Ma Ruby:My baby, it's okay. I know how you love him. He will be out soon. Do you want to visit him?

She shook her head and used her hands to wipe her tears. Her mother sighed and sat by the edge of the bed.

Ma Ruby:Do you want anything to eat?

She shook her head again and placed it on her knees.

Ma Ruby:It will be well.

That was all she could say. Rhys was the guy she warned her daughter about but she was persistent about wanting him but look at her now. All hurt that he was arrested. It was still going to happen one day, just that they were not sure when and how or even why but he was bad news on his own.

Ma Ruby walked out and Ruby broke down that morning once again. All the blame on herself. If it was a different life, they would have been together but for now they were playing for different teams and she was the miserable one.

At Nyangabwe Referral Hospital

Neelo opened the door and walked inside. He was still on oxygen machines and even though both of them knew there was no hope for him, they just kept hoping that he will be alright.

She sat down and placed the food by the table.

Neelo:Hello.

He coughed before he could utter a word and her heart cracked. This man was one of her best friends

and she didn't know how she was going to cope with his death. She looked at the small diamond ring on her tiny finger. Aone coughed again and she looked back at him.

Neelo:Let me get you clean. Akere I left the clothes and melora here maabane.

He nodded and she stood up. She got the body wash and the wash cloth. She will find a bucket in the small hospital bathroom. She walked to the bathroom and left the door open. At this point she hated hospitals now and she didn't think she would allow herself to spend some time there.

She came back minutes later with warm water. She helped him sit upright and removed the vest he was wearing, he had lost a lot of weight and all there was was skin and bones just trained to get along. Tears clouded her eyes and she moved away to wipe them. Aone looked at his wife, she did her best to help him and he was grateful but she could see he was going soon. He wasn't young like her and she definitely

needed to live her life a little. She fulfilled her role in his life and she was grateful for everything and all the opportunities Aone had presented her with.

Neelo cleared her throat and finished removing his top.

Neelo: Did Katlego pass by?

He nodded. Early in the morning, he felt his touch and he knew he had been here.

Neelo: That's good. After this, you are eating and I will let you rest autwe? Might come with Katlego later on.

He nodded as the warm washcloth hit his skin.

Neelo: I will be done in no time. Your parents will be here tomorrow Aone.

Aone: Th-the-they...

Neelo: Don't talk. Katlego should come maybe before they come just to see you. I will be around though I should give you guys privacy.

He nodded weakly. So this little girl had sacrificed 3 years of her life for him. She was a brave little thing and he hoped the money he had saved up for her would be enough. He knew how greedy family members could be when it came to money so he had Katlego save the money for her in his account in case they refuse with his properties regardless of the will. He coughed and she rubbed his chest.

Neelo: There, there. You will be fine. I always pray for you Aone. God heard our prayers.

Aone: I'm a-a-a sinner.

Neelo: Don't say that. God hears us and you will be okay.

She finished cleaning him up before she discarded the water and started to feed him. Once he was full she covered him up and sat down.

Neelo: Just believe you will be okay, have faith Aone motho wame.

She said as he closed his eyes. She sighed and covered her face with her small hands. This was hard. She couldn't face the possibility of Aone dying on her and Katlego. That would be terrible and she didn't even want to think about it. Aone was her father's age and already her in-laws were calling her a gold digger. They expected a grandchild the first year of marriage and she didn't want to break her promise to Aone. She was taking this secret to the grave. Her parents on the other hand just let her do what her heart desired. If she wanted to marry a man in his late forties then so be it. To them she was chasing her own happiness and no one else's opinion should matter.

The door opened and Neelo lifted her head to look at the door. It was the nurse, she looked at Aone on the bed. He was peaceful and she was definitely going to pray for him as soon as she left the hospital.

Neelo:Hello.

The nurse nodded and checked on Aone as Neelo watched silently. Once the nurse was done she walked out leaving Neelo in the pitifully quiet room. Neelo sighed heavily and stuck her finger in her hair to rub the itching part. She had to prepare for her in-laws and knowing how hard it was to please them, she was not going to enjoy their visit. Not at all.

She stood up and rubbed Aone's hand.

Neelo:Bye and I will see you tomorrow. I promise.

She walked out with her head low and her bag against her small chest.

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#03

At Aone's house

The taxi stopped by the house and Neelo stepped out of the car. She paid the taxi driver and she opened the gate. She searched for the house keys in her small bag and once she found the keys she unlocked the door. She looked around before she stepped inside and locked the door once again. She leaned against the door and slid down. This was a heavy burden to carry at a young age. She couldn't cry right now, she needed to be strong for Aone and be his shoulder to cry on. That was what she said in her vows.

Minutes passed before she stood up and walked to the kitchen where she started to take out the pots.

Her in-laws were coming and she was sure they would start by criticizing everything she did before they could even ask about their son. They hated her that much and she was already used to it at this point in her life. There was nothing she could do for them to know that she is not the bad guy.

She looked at the kitchen before she broke into a silent sob. Both she and Katlego knew what was wrong with Aone but it was something that would destroy his family if they knew, she already swore that she would take Aone's secret to the grave. She rubbed her chest as she held onto the kitchen sink. She sniffled as the tears trickled down her hollow cheeks. The phone rang and the sound pierced through the silence, she used her hands to wipe her tears once more and made her way to the lounge where her phone rang over and over again. She opened the small bag and found the noisy device. She saw the caller and she wiped her tears. With a cleared throat she tried to laugh but it sounded so fake, she answered the call.

Neelo:Neelo hello..

Ma N:Hello Neelo, how are you holding up my child?(softly)

Neelo's resolve shuttered and she sank to the ground with tears burning in her eyes.

Neelo:Mam-mama go thata.(mama, it's hard)(whispering)

Ma N:Aone isn't getting better?

She shook her head with her other hand over her mouth. Aone was slowly slipping away from the land of the living and it was killing her to not even tell a single soul what was wrong with him.

Ma N:The doctors are still not saying anything?

Neelo:mama Aone is dying and the-there is nothing that could be done to prevent that..Go botlhoko mama..

Her quiet sobs softly tore her mother's heart apart. Neelo was hurting but she never told anyone what was wrong with Aone, just that they knew he has been in hospital for over six months and she was the one taking care of him.

Neelo cried her eyes out to the point of losing her breath in between the sobs and the hiccups that accompanied her purging. Her mother silently listened without uttering a single word. Neelo eventually stopped crying and she used her shirt sleeves to wipe her tears. Her head was all fuzzy and so light.

Neelo:Ma-mama? Are you there?(soft low voice)

Ma N:Ee mma. How are yo feeling?

Neelo:I don't think I will survive his death mama. His family hates me an-

Ma N:we are here for you, we will always be your family Nono autwe?

Neelo didn't have the energy to smile when her mother used the nickname. It always warmed her heart whenever they called her Nono.

Ma N: Take a bath, eat, pray then sleep.

Neelo: My in-laws are coming today. I have to cook.

Ma N sighed. Neelo wasn't going to rest, she didn't know why her daughter strived to please those people.

Ma N: okay. I will call later..

Neelo: Thank you mama. Bye.

She hung up and sniffed wiping her face. She fanned her face before she held the couch for support. She looked at her phone and threw it on the couch. She was exhausted if she was being honest with herself.

At the Police Station

Rhys was placed in the interrogation room for the

fifth time that day and they kept on asking the very same questions.

Detective Moilwe: you do know you can get more years unless you tell who are your associates..

Rhys:Admit it detective, you don't have enough information to put me behind bars. If there are no further questions, I would like to go back to my cell(smirking)

The detective didn't know what to do at this point, what they had was his bank statements and those were thousands and thousands of pulas in there. They couldn't even trace their source and what Ruby found out wasn't even enough. So he didn't love her enough to share his secrets with her. Rhys was escorted out with chains on his arms by a police officer and Moilwe hit the desk with his fist. Damn you McKnight for being so smart.

Rhys heard the table bang and he laughed as he was escorted to his cell. His little Ruby wasn't as smart

as she thought she was. It would be a cold day in hell if he was going to trust a woman with delicate stuff like this. Once you jilt them, they want to talk and he was a wanted man in these streets, he wasn't even going to risk shit.

The police officer opened Rhys' cell and tried to shove him inside.

Rhys: Watch it officer!

The officer let go of Rhys as he stepped inside his cell. The keys jingled as the cell was locked. Rhys unbuttoned the orange overalls and he tied it around his waist, exposing his tattoos and the white vest. He should be over a woman right at this moment, enjoying the fruits and pleasures a woman's body had to offer but she had to ruin it all. He sat on the bed and brought his hands together. Wherever Alex was, he was making things happen. He taught his little brother well and he was going to avoid fucking this up.

At Ruby's house

Finally Ruby dragged herself out of the bedroom with red puffy eyes. Her parents were in the lounge and she looked at them before her eyes landed on the pictures of her and Rhys.

Ma Ruby:He will be fine.

Ruby:I-I want t-

A door knock disturbed them and they all turned to look at the door.

Ma Ruby:Who is it?

Voice:Alex..

They all looked at each other before Ruby pulled her gown and sat on the chair. Her mother went to open the door and Alex greeted her.

Alex:Good evening. Can I see Ruby?

Ma Ruby:She is not in the best mental state but come in.

He walked in with a sombre expression as he greeted Ruby's father who just nodded. Alex:Ruby hi, can I talk to you?

Ruby looked at her parents for a few seconds and her mother walked to the couch to help Ruby's father stand up. She grabbed the old man's blanket and handed him his walking stick as they walked to the guest room.

After the elders had let the room Ruby faked a smile and Alex squared his chin as he placed his hands on his knees. Ruby could see his Adam's apple bob and his jaw tick, like Rhys in a way.

Alex:I wanted to see how you are holding up.

Ruby squinted her eyes. She was expecting him to ask if she knew why Rhys was in police custody and in her investigations she had found it hard to find

anything implicating Alex in Rhys' shenanigans and a part of her believed he was the good son. Then there was the police part of her that knew that even Alex was too good to be true.

Ruby:I'll be fine. I want to visit him tomorrow
(clearing her throat)

Alex:That's wonderful.

Alex in his calm demeanor took in everything Ruby did. She was going to fake it till the end wasn't sh? Wonderful show she was putting on.

Ruby:have you talked to him though?

Alex:He said he's okay. I should take care of our mother and you.

He emphasized the you and he could see the guilt in her eyes. No wonder women could talk to snakes. They were snakes themselves.

Ruby's throat dried. Rhys still cared even though on the day of his arrest he hinted that he knew. Tears welled in her eyes and she sniffed. Alex sighed and moved closer to her. He hugged her as she broke down and he wanted to roll his eyes.

Alex: There there, Rhys will be out before you know it and you guys will get married. You love each other.

Ruby nodded knowing that it might never happen. If she was going to really pursue her relationship with him, she might as well quit her job and she loved what she did even though it meant putting the man she loved behind bars.

At Aone's house

Neelo switched off the stove as she sniffed. They said they will be here but if they were not coming then all of this work would have been for nothing. Her phone rang and she rushed to go pick it up. That

might be them. She looked at the caller ID and sighed.

Neelo:Neelo hello..

Katlego:Hey Nene...

She smiled. What was up with the people and nicknames today?

Katlego:I'm at the hospital.

Neelo:How is he? Is he improving?

Katlego rubbed his lover's hand as he breathed through machines, the only sign to know that he was alive was that his heart was still beating.

Neelo:Is Aone okay?

Katlego:Still the same..

Neelo stopped smiling. Why was she hoping for a miracle at this point? A door knock interrupted her.

Neelo:I have to go Katlego. You'll update me on the

situation.

Katlego:Bye.

Katlego hung up and Neeelo walked to the door with her phone in her hand.

.

.

.

*

*

*

Tomorrow 11am. Yes? Thank you.

TROUBLED

#04

At Aone's house

Neelo opened the door and she plastered a smile immediately when she knew who it was at the door.

Neelo:Dumelang. Welcome..

Aone's mother gave Neelo a snark as she walked inside along with Aone's younger brother who was ten years Neelo's senior. The two walked in and Neelo sighed as she closed the door.

Neelo:I made dinner.

Ma Aone:Can you take me to the hospital? I want to see my son.

Neelo:Of course. Le-

Ma Aone:Now!

Neelo:Ee mma.

Neelo left them in the lounge as she went to the bedroom to get her bag. She sat on the bed biting her lower lip. She looked at her mobile phone and she decided to call Katlego who answered immediately.

Katlego:Nene?

Neelo:Aone's mother is here, we are on our to the hospital.

Katlego:Got it. I will leave in a few minutes.

Neelo:Thank you. You can come back after we leave, I'm sure Aone appreciates your presence there.

Katlego:It hurts seeing him like this.

Neelo sighed and rubbed her eyes.

Neelo:I am still praying for him..

Katlego:Does God even hear your prayers?

Neelo:I'm in no state to question God Kat. Okay bye.

She hung up and pushed her braids back. She stood up and walked to the door which was abruptly opened by Aone's brother.

Neelo:I was well on my way Kago.

Kago:You are delaying us. We don't have all day.

Neelo:Okay.

She looked up at him expecting him to move from the door but he just stood there looking at her. Kago wondered what a young lady like her saw in his older brother.

Neelo:Kago kopa go heta(Kago can I pass)

Kago:You are beautiful..

Neelo:Mhmm...

He moved from the door and Neelo walked ahead as Kago trotted behind her, noticing the slim curves and her derrière. He shook his head. That was his

brother's wife, the one whom his family thought was a gold digger because she was 21 years younger than his brother. Neelo found her mother in law tapping her shoe and she gave her a look.

Ma Aone:Let's go. Kago?

Kago:Ma? I'm here...

They all walked out of the house and Kago walked to his car. He unlocked it and Ma Aone got in the front passenger seat while Neelo got in the back. Kago was the last person to get in the car and he looked at the two ladies to make sure they were buckled up. He started the car and silence filled the vehicle.

Neelo looked at her nails, these days she didn't even have time to herself. It was either she was busy taking care of Aone or she was depressed about his state. She didn't have nail polish on her nails and her hair was already old. How can she strive to look good when Aone was sick? He has done a whole lot for her and he was her best friend. She sighed and brought her hands together saying a silent prayer to God just asking for His will to be done. At this point she didn't know what to do. She prayed and cried but

nothing changed.

The car started moving and Kago fixed the rear view mirror as he looked at Neelo through it. She was beautiful and so humble. He looked ahead as he reversed the car.

At Nyangabwe Referral Hospital

Kago parked his car and his mother was the first to get out of the car. Neelo looked out the window and spotted Katlego walking to his car. Just in time so they won't see him. She breathed in a sign of relief as she got out the car with her phone and small bag. Kago got out and locked the car as the ladies walked to the hospital entrance. He slipped his hands in his pockets as he walked behind them.

Neelo didn't have to direct anyone to Aone's hospital room. They all knew it and she wondered wha

excuse Aone's father gave just so he doesn't check on Aone. Neelo sat by the benches as Kago and Ma Aone walked inside the room.

At Francistown Police Station

In the cells, Rhys sat on the bed. It has been three hours of thorough thinking about his life and future. The police had nothing but sooner or later he was going to get caught for real and do prison time. He wasn't happy about that and the funny thing is he wasn't lucky with love. The woman he loved turned out to have sold him out to the wolves. Oh dear Ruby why did she have to do that?

At Nyangabwe Referral Hospital

Ma Aone talked to her son who was so weak. No wonder she hated that gold digger of his. She must've done something to him with all their

witchcraft from her home village just in order to get his riches.

Ma Aone:You'll get better papa autwe?

Kago shook his head. What exactly was eating his brother up?

Aone raised his hand to try and remove the oxygen mask to speak. His mother removed it and he coughed.

Aone:Ne-Ne-elo!

Kago:Neelo?

He nodded and Kago exited the room. He found Neelo staring at the ceiling. He cleared his throat.

Kago:Aone wants to see you..

Neelo quickly got up and walked to the room. She ignored the look she got from her mother in law as she sat on his other side.

Neelo:What's wrong? Do you want food?

He shook his head as he coughed. He held her hands with tears in his eyes. This was it, he could feel his soul slowly leaving his body and he wanted to thank Neelo for everything. She had been such a darling and was more like the sister he never had. He knew she would keep the secret till the end. Neelo looked into his eyes as he coughed and held her hands.

Aone:Th-thank y-you..

He let her hands go and looked at his mother. She had tears in her eyes and Neelo decided to leave the room. She wasn't even going to be in that room for long or else she was going to break down. As soon as she left, the EKG started to beep abruptly loud and Kago rushed out to call a nurse or a doctor or anyone.

Aone's mother cried as she hoped he was going to be okay. Aone closed his eyes as he took his very last breath and the sounding machines went silent.

TROUBLED

#05

At Nyangabwe Referral Hospital

The nurse rushed in as Ma Aone wept holding her son's hand. They were too late. Kago stood at the door as his face fell. It was over. Aone was gone just like that. The nurse took out her notebook and looked at her watch.

Nurse: Time of death 19:00 hours.

Neelo's heart shuttered. If hers was shuttered then this was definitely going to kill Katlego. She sat down on the bench and processed the news. Aone? Gone? Wow! She covered her mouth as the tears rolled down her cheeks making her hot and those tiny hiccups were starting. There was a huge weight in her chest and it was burning. She gasped for

breath as the hot tears rolled down relentlessly without stopping. Kago turned his head hearing her sobs. Both women were broken and although he was lost for words and still shocked, they both needed his support.

He turned on his heel and walked to where Neelo was as she cried. He kneeled in front of her as he lifted her face. Her face was a mess and the crying made her ugly but it was the pain. He pulled her into him and rubbed her chest as she let down all her defenses and cried into his chest. Wailing like a little child who just lost their favorite dog, this was going to be hard for her and she was now a widow. A young as such.

Ma Aone covered her face asking God why but she didn't have any answers. She watched more nurses and a doctor enter as they conversed. She couldn't hear what they said but they disconnected the machines and covered his body with the white sheet.

She was speechless and she couldn't even bring herself to utter a word.

Their whole world just came to an abrupt halt.

The following morning

Ma Aone had forced Neelo to pack her bags, they were going back home to bury Aone. Of course she had to lay on the mattress as per tradition and wear black clothes from now onwards. She was his wife, no matter how gold digging and how fake she was.

Kago put Neelo's bags at the bag. She had red puffy eyes and she wasn't in her normal state. His death should have been expected but in a way it was a surprise to them.

Neelo got in the car. She had finally gathered the

strength to tell Katlego before she fell into a dark sleep last night. She couldn't even imagine how he was like. She told her parents this morning and she was sure they were going to be there for her. This was going to be a very difficult week for her. She rubbed her chest when she felt the tears.

At Ruby's house

Ruby looked at the mirror and rubbed her still sensitive nipples. She did what she had to do, their baby would have been cute if she had let the foetus live long enough in her womb but he didn't know that. She sighed and rubbed her eyes as she wore her bra. She was finally going to see him. It has been a day but she was sure he hated her.

She finished getting dressed and wore her shades, grabbing her handbag. She was sure if the media was going to spot her, they were going to bombard her with questions. Unnecessary ones at that. She

wasn't even hungry.

She walked out of her room and found her mother in the lounge drinking tea.

Ruby: Mama I'm going to see Rhys.

Ma Ruby: Are you okay?

Ruby: I have to see him mama.. That man is still my fiancé.

Ma Ruby nodded. Her daughter said that with so much conviction. She really loved him through thick and thin.

Ruby touched her head. She needed a hat too. What if the papers write about her going to visit him in prison? What will her superiors say too? Her job with this Rhys and McKnight case was done and dusted. She should have no contact with him whatsoever but the heart was a traitorous organ.

She said bye and checked her bag for the car keys. She found them as she closed the door and unlocked the car. She walked to the car and opened the door. She leaned back on the seat and sighed. Maybe she should go back.

At Prison

That morning, they had moved Rhysand to prison and he was no longer at the police station holding cells. He was sure he would be out in six months or less, depending on the evidence they had. Rubs tampered with his future and at this point he was not going to trust the female specie ever again. No matter how tempting they may be. His mother must be in a horrible state and he didn't even want Alex to tell him how his mother was. For as long as he was here, Alex will have the reigns on everything till he comes out and everything goes back to normal.

With chains and all he was led to his new cell and he

looked around. Life wasn't going to be hard here. The three men in the cell looked at Rhysand's well built body structure and then went back to what they were doing. They hoped he wasn't one of those guys who was going to force them to have sex with him. Their crimes weren't that deep and they have been living in peace the past year they have been here. The prison officer removed the chains around his hands and feet and Rhysand could finally move freely. The cell was closed and locked then his eyes landed on the far corner. He saw the empty bed and walked there.

The other prison mates pretended that they couldn't see him as he sat down.

Meanwhile Ruby was let inside the prison buildings, she used her police officer status to get in even though she knew she was wrong. Why didn't they tell her they had moved Rhys to prison now? She hoped he was going to be okay and would get out of prison

still the same.

Minutes later, the warden was walking to the prison cell where their newest inmate was. He already had a visitor and everyone knew it was the notorious Rhys. He had to admit that the man was well built and was gangster. The street smart type who didn't give anything away.

Warden:McKnight you have a guest.

Rhysand got off the bed. He had already made himself comfortable, the sleeves were tied around his waist and all his ink was out on display. The metal chinked against each other as the door was opened and he was put in handcuffs. There was an officer behind him and the warden led the way. He silently followed the warden.

When they got to the visitor's room, his eyes immediately locked with Ruby's as she just removed

her shade and placed her hat on the table. Ruby took a look at him and he was one hot inmate. She didn't know that orange would look good on him. He was led to the table she was at and he sat down with his hands on the table. The officer moved away but he was still within ear shot distance.

Ruby:Hi..

He smiled and her heart fluttered. That organ was a darn fool.

Rhys:Hey. Your eyes are puffy.

Ruby:You still care?(softly)

Rhys:I don't hate you if that's what you want to ask. Just your mission and job.

She looked down embarrassed. He wasn't all that bad.

Ruby:For what it's worth, I'm really sorry.

Rhys:For what it's worth precious thing, I don't hold you accountable.

She sighed. She wanted to touch him or anything.

Rhys:I'll be out in six months. Can you wait for me?
One last time officer?(smiling)

She smiled and looked into his eyes.

Ruby:Okay.

Rhys:It's a done deal my love. See you in six months and take care of yourself. Don't let those other police officers put pressure on you. You did your best(laughing)but you can't outsmart me.

Ruby:Kante wena o rileng?(what's wrong with you?)
you should be angry at me and throwing tantrums that I betrayed your trust.(laughing)

Rhys:I don't do tantrums and my temper doesn't allow me to get angry precious. So that's that and this happened.

Ruby:I love you.

Rhys didn't say it back but just smiled.

Rhys:In six months I will be out. Just one more time.

She nodded and he looked around before he stole a kiss. He stood up and faced the officer who brought him here. Ruby watched him turn his back in her and he was led back to where he came from and she wanted to scream. If they met in another life, under different circumstances thing would have been different.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#06

At Tutume

A week later at Aone's home village, Neelo was laying on the mattress like the widower they thought she was. At this point her tears had dried up and she didn't have the energy to cry. Her heart was hurting for Katlego now. He lost a lover and she didn't think he was going to ever recover from losing his lover. They always made her believe love was beautiful even though they hid that beautiful love from the world.

She sighed as she picked her phone up and looked at it before she placed it back down. Tomorrow was the day of the funeral and she didn't know how she was going to react seeing Aone in a coffin. By God's

grace she did manage to make Katlego come to the funeral for final goodbyes even though he will be coming as just Aone's "friend" . She laid on her back and stared up at the ceiling. She was a widow weeping for a man that was never hers but a man who was more like a brother and friend. She faced the other side as someone rasped on the door. She was pretty sure it was not her mother in law nor her father in law. Those two didn't give a damn about her in any way and she was sure they would be happy if she came out with nothing. She didn't want anything, they could keep their son's belongings, they didn't have the memories she shared with Aone so that was more than enough for her.

Neelo:Who is it?

Kago:It's me.

Neelo:It's me ke mang?(who is it's me?)

Kago:Kago!

She shook her head and got up from the mattress. She walked barefoot to the door and she opened it.

Neelo:Hello.

Kago:Hi, can I come in?

Neelo looked around as she pulled the black shawl closer to her chest. There was no one around.

Kago:I brought food too. You haven't been eating.

Neelo:I'm not hungry. What do you want?

Kago:To talk.

She relented and moved away from the door. Kago stepped in as she closed the door behind him. Although she was not eating, she seemed better than the time they told her of Aone's passing. She was distraught at that time and he had been her shoulder to cry on.

He sat on the chair in the room placing the food down as she sat on the mattress. Black suited her.

As he always said Neelo was a beautiful woman. Awkward silence filled the room and he brought his hands together.

Kago: how are you holding up?

Neelo:Okay. He is gone right? Your brother is gone and nothing can bring him back.

Kago:It hurts but it will be okay. The whole family is still shocked.

Neelo:Yeah.

Kago:If you need anything, anytime I'll be available.

Neelo just nodded and Kago stood up. He wanted to hug her or something but instead he shoved his hands in his pockets and nodded as he walked to the door. He walked out of her room and bumped into his mother at the door. Her mother gave him a look as he walked away. Ma Aone walked into the room and looked at Neelo. She wanted to slap the living daylights out of that gold digger.

Ma Aone: my son's body isn't even underground yet here you are wanting to stick your claws into his brother.

Neelo:M-ma?

Ma Aone:O sefefe mosetsana ke wena(you are a whore, you girl)

Neelo looked down. She shouldn't even let this get to her. They had to bury Aone and the will will be read. She would be out of their lives for good. Three years of being part of this family was hell.

Ma Aone looked at Neelo expecting her to say something so that she could make her shut up with a slap but Neelo kept quiet. Ma Aone clicked her tongue and walked out of the room, closing the door with a loud bang on her way out. Neelo jumped a bit before she rubbed her arms. She picked her phone and called her mother.

Ma N:Hey Nono, how is it going?

Neelo:Can you and dad come over mama?

Ma N:Okay baby. We are on our way.

Neelo:Thank you mama.

At Bobonong

At Ma Rhys' house

She sat down on her couch. Her youngest was doing his best to take care of her even though he left a day ago after dropping her off home and it was slowly sinking in that her son would be in prison. Alex assured her that it wasn't for long and that they got the wrong information and he was innocent.

She shook her head and drank her tea. She had resigned into staying indoors till everything dies down, that was what Alex said was best for her

given her weak heart. It was a surprise that she didn't faint when Rhys was arrested right in front of her eyes.

Meanwhile outside the house Ruby parked the car at the gate and she looked around. His mother had always been fond of green plants and the whole yard was filled with potted plants and flowers. She hoped her visit wasn't going to be in vain.

She opened the gate and walked inside. She looked around and she sighed. She was the reason Rhysand was in prison and she hated herself for that but she was going to wait for him. He had such a big heart to forgive her and that made her fall more for his charming nature. She knocked on the door two times before she heard the voice inside. She waited anxiously at the door till it was opened by his mother.

Ruby:Hi.

Ma Rhys:Hi my child come in.

She looked at the old woman and she felt so guilty, Rhys did everything for his mother and took care of her. He didn't have a father and that was something he didn't talk about so did his mother. Her heart lurched in her chest and she bit her lower lip to stop the sound that was going to come out. She loved him like no other and she made a mistake. She could've quit the police force and followed her heart but it wasn't too late was it.

The old woman stopped in her tracks and looked at Ruby who was still stuck on the same spot. She could see the tears in Ruby's eyes that she wanted to cry. Maybe she needed a shoulder to cry on. That was why she drove all the way from Francistown to see her here. She must've asked Alex. She walked to Ruby and the short old woman put her arms around Ruby who was taller than her. Ruby held onto the old woman, if only she could turn the hands of time.

Ma Rhys:It will be okay, he will be out and you two will get married. You love each other very much.

Ruby:I-I just miss him so much(sobbing)

Ma Rhys:We all do but Rhysand can take care of himself.

She broke the hug and wiped her tears.

Ruby:Sorry about that(sniffing)

Ma Rhys:It's okay. Come sit down. I have scones and tea.

Ruby:Thank you..

She was led to the couch and sat down. She looked around and saw the pictures of Rhys and Alex she hung around the cozy living room. She lived for her children and was content with that.

.

TROUBLED

#07

At Ma Rhys' house

Ruby chuckled as Ma Rhys explained how she came to name her child a name like that.

Ma Rhys:I was really into books and I saw the name. I swore to myself that I would name my first born that.

Ruby:Kana lona bathong le ne le bala (you guys were readers)(laughing)

Ma Rhys:We didn't have anything to do kana Ruby.

She smiled. Rhys had her eyes and since they never talked about Rhys father she couldn't put a face to the man who might be Rhys' lookalike.

Ruby:Rhys is a nice name, it has that thing..

She laughed a bit.

Ma Rhys:Maybe when Rhys gets out you can try for a baby..

Ruby forced a smile and stopped herself from moving her hands to her flat stomach. They all didn't know she was pregnant and managed to have an abortion. She was sure Rhys was going to blow a fuse if he knew but he didn't and that was all that mattered.

Ruby:Soon.

Ma Rhys:I am getting old and Alex ene looks like he won't be getting a girlfriend or a wife any time soon.

Ruby:He will get settled. Eventually.

The two ladies went about talking about everything and anything that came to mind, avoiding talking about Rhys.

At Tutume

Neelo wore her shoes as she heard her parents' voices in the lounge. She got her phone, she just needed to breath fresh air. Away from the people in this house and Katlego had sent a message that he had just arrived.

She walked to the lounge as she greeted her in-laws who snarled at her. The things she had to endure to keep Aone's secret safe. Aone had said they were going to judge him for his sexuality. Before he married her, they had started to ask him questions of why he wasn't married or why he didn't have kids at his age. She sighed.

She looked at her mother and she smiled a bit.

Neelo:I will be back..

She walked out first and her parents looked at each other. They sighed and apologized as they followed Neelo. Neelo sucked in the fresh air as she looked around the village. She looked at the ring on her finger and she removed it and looked at it. She was going to put it away, somewhere safe.

Her mother touched her shoulder and she turned.

Ma N:Are you fine?

Neelo:Yeah. I just wanted to breath and thank you for coming.

She hugged her mother who held her tightly.

Ma N:it just doesn't take a week to get over someone you loved.

She chuckled and hugged her mother much more tightly. This was going to be her little secret. She promised that she would keep it till the end, even in her wildest dreams she couldn't see herself being in

a romantic relationship with someone old enough to be her father.

Ma N:after tomorrow we will hear the way forward.

Neelo:Mama I don't want anything, they already hate me.

Ma N:But you were his wife..

Her mother broke the hug as the wind blew across their way and Neelo's father trailed behind.

Neelo:I don't want anything tota mama. It's okay. If there was a will they can still keep everything.

Ra N:Nono are you sure?

She turned and squinted her eyes.

Neelo:I am sure papa. It's okay.

They walked out of the yard and her mother opened

the car.

Neelo:Can you take me to the bus station? I have to see someone..

Her father raised an eyebrow and she leaned back.

Neelo:I wouldn't be asking if it wasn't important. Ka le kopa.

Her mother looked at her dad and he relented as he got inside the car. She sent a text to Katlego telling him that she would be seeing him in a few minutes. He was only here for the funeral. She knew she was in all black, looking like a widow already.

At Ma Aone's house

She clapped her hands. Neelo was so disrespectful, her son hasn't been buried and already she wants to gallivant around the village. She must've been seducing Kago but this time she won't get anything. Not a single cent from her son's properties or money.

That must've been her plan.

Ma Aone:Ga a na tlhong waitse (she doesn't have shame)

Ra Aone:Let her be.

Ma Aone:She never really loved my son did she?

Mxm. Ka and tswa e le boloi jwa kwa gabone (it must be witchcraft from her home village)(clapping her hands)

She stood up and went to the backyard where they were expecting a tent to be set up a bit later.

Everything was going well underway for the funeral and the insurance had paid out. She was next to Neelo when they paid out, what if she steals the money and her son doesn't get the dignified funeral he deserved?

She could never put anything past that girl.

Meanwhile Kago sat on the bed. Maybe months after

this passes, without her mother around or anything, he would have the guts to ask her out. Once she had fully grieved and stopped wearing all black like she did now, she did use their family surname right? People addressed her with that surname when she was here at the village. He wasn't sure about Francistown because he lived in Gaborone and he saw his brother occasionally.

At the bus station

Neelo got out of the car and rubbed her eyes, Katlego said he had parked somewhere. She looked around trying to find his car. When she spotted it and was sure he spotted her because she was the only lady wearing all black and in a long dress, he got out of the car. He met her half way and hugged her.

Katlego:You lost weight..

Neelo:So did you. Thank you for coming.

Katlego:I am eternally grateful to you for doing this

for me.

Neelo:I had to. My sincere condolences for your loss, he loved you till the end and I am sure he is in a better place.

Katlego: he didn't have to die like that..

Neelo looked down and sighed. There was nothing the doctors could do and all they had to do was pray for his well-being.

Neelo:God gives and God takes. We just have to be grateful for the time we spent with him. Hold onto the memories, they will hold onto you.

Katlego faced the other way holding back tears, ten full years with that man and his body failed him.

Neelo:I know you might not cry when I am around but let it all out. See you tomorrow.

She hugged him one last time and he chuckled.

Neelo:Soon it will get better. I don't know how soon

or if soon will ever happen but I pray you find the closure you need.

She let go and she smiled as the sun hit her small face and she flashed a smile.

Katlego:There is also something that belongs to you.

Neelo:To me?(frowning)

Katlego:Yes. Thank you and for being there for him through it all. You made everything seem brighter. You are one remarkable young lady Neelo Jones.

Neelo laughed. She didn't change her maiden name when they got married. The three of them knew what was happening so there was no need to change her maiden name but they made her in-laws believe otherwise.

Neelo:I try. I try. I will call but sending love and light. Bye.

She waved before she walked away.

.

TROUBLED

#08

The following morning

At Ma Aone's house

In the wee hours of the morning, the close family members were gathered in the lounge where the coffin was. Aone's mother held back her tears as she saw the white coffin, they were really going to bury her first born son and it clicked that he was gone and never coming back. Neelo looked down in an all black dress and a black head wrap. She was saying bye to her friend and she hoped he was in a better place. She cried and prayed for him but she couldn't defy destiny nor fate. Not by a long shot.

They all slowly started to walk around the coffin to look at the deceased one last time. Neelo was the last one to stop by the coffin and she smiled sadly.

Neelo: Rest in perfect peace my love (softly)

She looked down and walked away as one of the old ladies started singing a hymn.

Se mphete wena yoo rategang

Mmoloki waaka

Fa o ntse o sesa ba bangwe, se mphete le nna

Kgosi Jesu!

They joined in singing the hymn as some wiped their tears. It was a really sad time for the family.

A few hours later

At the graveyard

Katlego was sitting in the guests tent as the funeral proceedings went on. He held back the tears trying to be strong, the songs that were sung didn't make anything better. He blinked several times before he placed his hands on his knees and sniffed a bit. His eyes got watery and he wanted to cry it out but people will then start asking themselves questions. He maintained his posture as he watched as family members spoke about the deceased. His lover and friend. He was going to make sure Aone's wishes would be granted.

Neelo looked around and she saw Katlego. It must be so hard trying to hide that pain and grief, she sighed. She faced the front as the pastor started his short sermon on life and death.

Pastor: And let your hearts be at peace knowing that he is in a better place, by our Father's side.

The people said amen and Neelo brought her hands together. They started the anchoring process, his coffin was lowered into the ground.

Pastor:From dust we were made and to dust we shall all return.

He got the fist fistful of soil as he sprinkled it on the lowered coffin. He then called out family to come do their part. Ma Aone was inconsolable at this point and she had been crying the whole of this ceremony. Neelo could understand, it was supposed to be the child burying the parent and not the other way round.

Once all the close family members had thrown soil in the lowered coffin, the men started to fill the grave with soil as they shoveled it into the grave. A hymn was sung and it was the saddest, it had Neelo wiping her tears away and her mother just hugged her.

Ma N:It will be well. Gomotsega ngwanaka.

She nodded.

An hour later everything was concluded and they washed their hands as they left the graveyard. Neelo told her parents to wait for her as she walked towards Katlego. Kago watched from the sidelines. The man she was walking towards looked older than her, more like his late brother's age. He didn't stand a chance with her did he?

Neelo:Katlego..

Katlego stopped in his tracks. Today was a hard day and he just needed to rest.

Neelo caught up and started walking with him.

Neelo:If you need anything, I am here okay?

Katlego:You have done more than enough young lady. Thank you for everything.

Neelo:Don't sweat it. I would do this over and over with no hesitation.

Katlego let out a fade smile.

Neelo:Call me and t will be fine old guy.

They shared a hug and she walked away. Katlego looked up as rain clouds started to gather. The chapter was closed and done. There would be no more Aone to come back home to or Aone to tell him about his day at work. Or Aone who was obsessed about the dogs at his house and Aone who would go on and on about how Neelo needed to find a man. Air chocked him and the hot burning tears rolled down his cheeks, this was going to be the most difficult part. Trying to heal or repair the broken heart. He was sure no one was going to be able to fill that void in his heart. His other half was gone, the brain tumor was discovered way too late and there was nothing that could be done to stop his inevitable death. He shook his head angrily and wanted to scream at the God who took our his loved one. Why couldn't He save Aone like he did for all His children? Why?

He kept on walking till he reached his car and got in. He closed the door and placed his head on the steering wheel crying silently.

At Aone's mother's house

Neelo and her parents got out of the car and that was when her mother noticed that Neelo wasn't wearing her ring. She decided not to comment on that, whatever that was going to help Neelo heal.

They walked to the house and Neelo decided that she wasn't going to be staying here any longer. Any developments they will call her.

Neelo:Mama, I want to go home..

Ma N:Home?

Neelo:At Bobonong. I told you I don't want anything. I can get my stuff from the house I shared with Aone

at Francistown but I want nothing from his properties. To avoid fights.

Ra N:Are you sure?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Ma N:You do know you are their daughter in law and if you want to get married in future you have to go through them..

Ra N:Your mother is right.

Neelo:I am sure they will be happy to send me off...

She opened the door and greeted the elders in the lounge before she headed to the bedroom. Her mother followed her.

Neelo:Can't you give them their magadi back? I don't want anything to do with this family mama..

Ma N:Your father can sell his last cows to give them their magadi back.

Neelo:Or forget it, papa doesn't have to sell his cows.(sighing)I will see what to do.

Her father walked in and they looked at Neelo.

Ra N: Nono ngwanaka, we would do anything to see you happy even if it means selling my last cows to repay their magadi.

Neelo: I will pay it back and even work at the farm while you are at the village.

Ma N: You don't have to do that.

Neelo: It will also take my mind off things. It's been a while since I have been at the farm gate.

Ma N: Ne o ipitsa city girl (you were calling yourself a city girl)

Neelo laughed.

Neelo: Mama mma! Ijoo! Thank you guys so much.

She hugged both of them. She wanted to close this Aone chapter. She will leave with all the memories they shared and hoped one day they will meet again and talk like old friends. For now she wanted to

detach from his family, they never liked her anyway. Even if the Will will be read, she was going to give his family everything that belonged to their son. They will see what to do with everything.

At Prison

Rhys sat with chains on his hand and legs as he looked at his little brother. This was the only time he was going to let Alex visit him.

Alex:How are you holding up?

Rhys:You are talking about Rhys kana Alex.

Alex chuckled. He had everything under control and the police weren't going to find anything but this? This just opened a can of worms because the police would be on their every tail. All because of blood fucking Ruby.

Alex:Ruby visited mother.

Rhys:Uhu...

Alex:I was just as surprised..

Rhys:Bro, women? Descendants of the devil.

Alex:Trust me I know..

Rhys:Your on and off with your girlfriend is annoying.

Alex:Yole ke setsenwa. She will be back in a month or so.

Rhys laughed and Alex joined in.

Rhys:We have to lay low on all operations(whispering)

Alex:Got it.

Rhys:I will be out in six months and can you make sure they clean my house?

Alex:Where:

Rhys:I want to disappear to the farm. Not the one close to Francistown. The other one.

Alex:Alright. On it bro.

Rhys:And leave Ruby to me.

Alex raised an eyebrow and Rhys pointedly looked at him.

Alex:Don't think with your dick Rhysand. Look where it got us.

Rhys:Wa ntlwaela tlhe o marete.Ke motona mo go wena (laughing)

Alex:Sure bro. See you in six months.

He nodded and Alex stood up leaving. He saluted and Rhys winked back as the prison officer looked at him. He stood up and the officer was on standby waiting to take him back to his cell.

.

*

SIX MONTHS LATER

TROUBLED

#09

At Ruby's house

She got ready for the court hearing. She had taken this six months as a break from life and to reform. She was so excited to tell Rhys that she finally managed to resign from her job and she won't be a threat anymore. She made a mistake once and she couldn't lose the man she loved over that. It took sending Rhys to jail for her to see that but she loved him dearly to want to lose him. It was a bit of a hassle to resign from her line of work but it had to be done and she was going to use the small package to start a business or something.

She twirled in front of the mirror and looking at those white pants she wore that Rhys liked seeing her in.

She smiled. A clean slate and he was never going to know about the abortion, she was still dumb but she got her head out of the gutter now and she can think clearly. Her future was with Rhys, that was the man who was going to be in her life.

She grabbed her hand bag and she smiled. She was crossing fingers. She walked out of her room making her way to the lounge. She had cleaned this house and had wanted to go clean his house but the current key she had couldn't unlock the door. She never found the time to ask his mother or Alex about that. She walked out the door and locked it before facing her car. She unlocked it and got inside. She was going to see her man. Finally!

At Francistown High Court

People made their way inside the court room as Rhys saw his mother and Alex. His lawyer was sure that the State didn't have enough evidence to put

him in jail let alone keep him there for years. He was basically a free man, all they had to do was verify that he was and he could go and live his life but on the right side of the law of course. Ruby took a good look at Rhys and she didn't know that he could get any buffer, so he was working out in prison. She mentally smacked herself, of course they do manual labor in prison and that on it's own is a full workout. She sat down and looked at her engagement ring.

Rhys frowned when he saw Ruby making her way inside the court room. He hid that frown with a well calculated smirk. He didn't expect her to show up here but oh well he might as well start the show. No one messed with Rhysand McKnight and from what Alex had told him the day before it was well planned. Unfortunately he was always careful with most of his things except those few bank statements that Ruby managed to get her hands on. She wasn't really that gullible to believe that things would go back to normal after her betrayal did she? After this, the police would always be onto him and he would have

to watch his back ten times more than he already did.

Everyone settled down once the judge arrived. Silence filled the room as the people awaited to hear about Rhys' fate.

At Ra N's farm

Neelo got rid of the boots as she got inside the small two bed roomed house. She had been surprised when Katlego had given her the card that had all the money Aone saved up for her. Apparently he knew that his family might not give her a cent and she didn't blame him, his family was cruel. Too cruel. She didn't even want to know what they did with the big lump sum that the insurance had paid out and Aone's house. She had removed herself from that equation. Now she looked more like a farm Julie and it didn't bother her one bit. She didn't even miss the city lights or the people, she could breath here and there was peace. Her father did say it was

dangerous that she was a lady and living all alone but there was the herd man who came every morning so she assured her father she was safe.

The relief she felt after Aone's family agreed to let her go and get their magadi back, they couldn't say no to money and she was a free woman. She did have plans to develop this small farm and maybe manage it. Her father didn't have time and besides he was getting old. Her being the only child and he didn't have an heir, she had to help using the money she got from Katlego.

She closed the door and locked it as she looked around. Maybe buy a bull or two then cows and a horse. Breeding was going to be expensive but it would give her father really good cows that he can sell and make money from. She will quiz him up on it when she goes back to the village.

At Court

Rhysand's heart stopped for a minute when the judge said he was free. He was finally a free man. Ruby beamed with happiness. He was out. Finally! Never ever in her wildest dreams will she repeat what she did.

Alex secretly punched the air. For now this was progress and they will see the rest later. All the police had to do was to escort Rhys back so he can fill out the necessary documents along with his lawyer. Alex would wait for him in the car with their mother to take him to his house in town. To at least get his car since he said he wanted to disappear.

Court was dismissed and Ruby walked to where her future mother in law was.

Ma Rhys: You are so happy.

Ruby: He is out. Finally.

Ma Rhys:My heart can finally relax.

Alex interrupted the conversation.

Alex:Hey Ruby, Ms McKnight let's go wait for your first born in the car. They are going to take some time sorting out the paperwork.

Ruby:Good idea..

All three of them walked outside and Ruby could see that she had parked her car far from Alex's car. She let them walk away and she made her way to her car. She got inside her car and waited anxiously for Rhys.

Meanwhile inside the court room

Once all the documents were signed and all the terms were understood by both parties, Rhys was officially out of prison.

He walked out of the office with his lawyer who shook his head.

Lawyer: You heard them mona Rhys.

Rhys: I did and thank you so much.

Lawyer: Just doing what you hired me for.

Rhys and rubbed his face. Time to join civilization once again and he was in no mood to do that.

Lawyer: Enjoy freedom Rhys.

He nodded and saluted as he parted ways with his lawyer by the court door.

Rhys: I sure will.

He slipped one hand into his pocket, making his way to the parking lot. He was sure the media had got tired of waiting and he was glad there were flashing lights and cameras. He spotted Alex's car and he walked there. His mother saw him first and tears filled her eyes which were wrinkled at the corners.

Rhys:I am home mother.

Ma Rhys:Welcome back.

He kissed her cheek before he fist bumped with his brother.

Rhys:The house keys Alex..

Alex handed them to Rhys.

Rhys:We will talk. Mother I have to see Ruby okay?

Ma Rhys:The poor child has been miserable ever since you left.

Rhys:I'm here. I'll take you home the day after tomorrow okay?

She nodded and he kissed her cheek again. He straightened up and looked around the parking lot.

Alex:Look harder and you'll spot her car.

Rhys:Okay..I-Uh-I found it. Bye.

He walked away and Alex rolled up the windows. He picked his phone expecting a message from his on and off psycho girlfriend but there was none. She was in one of her moods again. He sighed before he started the car.

In Ruby's car

Rhys knocked on the window and Ruby gasped before she quickly opened the door. She hugged him and breathed into him. Alex must've given him his cologne. He smelled just like Rhys.

Rhys:I'm here okay.

She nodded as he rubbed her back.

Ruby:Rhys I am so sorry. I am so so sorry.

Rhys:It's okay. It is all water under the bridge.

She broke the hug and looked at him.

Ruby:For real? You are not toying with me?

Rhys:Not at all Ruby. Why would I toy with you?

She looked at him and the sincerity in his eyes. He really forgave her for taking him to prison? Tears gleamed in her eyes and she placed her head on his chest.

Rhys:There, there don't cry yourself sick Mrs McKnight.

She chuckled and breathed into his scent again and looked up at him again.

Ruby:I love you Rhysand.

Rhysand:I love you too.

He held the back of her neck as he slowly kissed her, it had been long since he had a woman under him. He broke the kiss and bit his lower lip. She rubbed his mustache and he smiled. You see that smile? That was going to be her undoing.

Rhys:Let's go home..

Ruby:Yes sir!

.

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#10

At Rhysand's house

Ruby parked her car inside the yard and Rhysand looked around the house he hasn't seen in months.

Ruby:I tried coming here last week to clean the house but the keys didn't fit.

Rhys:Don't worry about that, I had Alex do all that.

They both got out of the car and she looked at his car, for a person with a lot of money he wasn't using the most expensive car on the market.

Ruby: Babe why don't you buy another car?

Rhys looked at his Legend 45. It was fine and working just fine so he didn't need a new car.

Rhys: This one works just fine.

She nodded as she followed him to the door and he unlocked his house, he let her get in first and she looked around. It was clean but then Rhys' house was always clean. He was the cleanest man she knew and has ever dated in her entire life. Rhys looked at her as he shook his head. She was so gullible that it made him sad, she was an undercover cop and she was used to source information on him by any means possible. It wasn't something one let go so easily. He didn't even want to talk about prison because he did not want to find himself locked up in that hell hole again. He closed the door and locked it.

Ruby heard the lock turning and she turned to face him.

Rhys:I think Alex stocked up the shelves too. Want something to eat?

Ruby:I should be the one cooking and all that.

She placed her bag down and headed to the kitchen, kissing Rhys cheek on her way to the kitchen. She checked the shelves and they were stocked up.

Ruby:What should I make for you?

Rhys:Anything is fine love. I will be in the bedroom.

He walked to the bedroom and closed the door. He leaned against it and covered his face, he still had questions and a whole lot of things to do but it hasn't even been a day since he has been out. This love thing was all fucked up, you choose to love and trust someone and they sell you out like how Judas sold Jesus. He removed his t-shirt and placed it

neatly on the bed. He should burn these after the shower. It reminded him of court and court meant he was just from prison. He sat down on the bed and untied the shoes, removing the socks and placing them inside the shoes. He pulled down the black pants from his strong loins before he stood up walking to the shower in nothing but his briefs. He closed the door and stepped into the shower getting rid of his briefs. He opened the tap and the cold water hit his raw masculine body and he placed his head against the wall. Why couldn't she be like other women who sacrificed everything for a man? Or why didn't she abort her mission once she realized she fell for him which he greatly doubted. You don't send your loved ones to prison and come up with an insincere apology to be justified to be the good one. And why wasn't her stomach big? The last time he remembered, she had sensitive nipples and the night before the wedding he decided to google that small fact. He didn't have sisters and he wasn't the one to interact with the whole female specie to recognize pregnancy signs and he knew how Ruby was when she was on her period so he had ruled that out in the

google search. He punched the cold white tiled shower wall and humphed. He was such an idiot, he wanted her for better or for worse and he was genuinely in love. Feelings like that just don't disappear overtime. A part of him wanted her back and to believe her but he learned the hard way. If push comes to shove she will sell him out again. Besides she pledged to bring justice to the natio and he wasn't the country's most law abiding citizen.

He needed a clean hair cut and shave. He moved from the wall and stood in the middle as the water drizzled all of his sculpted and chiseled chocolate brown physique. He knew what he had to do.

In the silence that filled the house, Ruby leaned against the counter as she watched over the food she was making. He was probably lying down and she rubbed her chest, the guilt ate her up each and every day. The mere fact that he forgave her yet she was the reason he was in prison. He never

mistreated her and treated her like a princess, she usually refused traveling with him because in her heart of hearts she knew he was doing something illegal. His company wasn't that big to allow him to travel to South Africa time and time again. Of course she always came up with an excuse but now she quit her job and she can travel with him whenever, they were going to live their best lives.

She got the spoon and checked on the pots, stirring here and there. She closed the pots and walked out. He said he was in the bedroom right?

She walked to the bedroom and she knocked softly before she opened the door. He turned and smiled. The white towel was wrapped around his waist and all that in was out to play.

Rhys:Come here..

She walked to him and one arm wrapped around her

waist. He softly kissed her lips and bit her lower lip. He did check the drawers and there were condoms so he was good. He let go of her waist and smiled sadly looking at her. Why did she have to fuck everything up? They were so happy.

He removed her shirt and he kissed the top of her cleavage that showed in the lace bra she was wearing.

Rhys: Matching underwear?

She nodded as he removed her hair ribbon and slid his hands in her hair. A soft moan escaped her lips and he picked her up as she laughed.

Ruby: Rhys tlherra ke apeile.

Rhys: And I need you here, under me Ruby.

She blushed as he undid the buttons on her pants. He pulled them down her long legs. He kissed her thighs and looked deep into her eyes.

Ruby: I love you (mouthing the words)

He smiled and kissed her stomach. She held his head with a huge smile plastered on her face. Rhys went up till he reached her breasts and he undid the bra himself. He threw it in the floor and those nipples, the ones that should've been feeding his child. He couldn't bring himself to suck them so instead he kissed her breasts and went up to suck on her neck while she shuddered. Ruby wrapped her arms around his neck and Rhys proceeded to kiss her neck. He used his other hand to pull down her panties. Ruby let go of his neck and she got rid of the towel around his waist.

Rhys:Fuck!

He broke the kiss and looked into her eyes. All he could see was betrayal and deceit. Not the love he always saw whenever he was with her.

He got off her and sighed. This was not going to work and he wasn't going to deceive himself. He

didn't even get an erection. Ruby's bliss ended abruptly as she watched him wrap the towel around his waist again. She sat upright and looked at him.

Ruby: Is anything wrong?

Rhys: I'm not in the right head space.

She nodded as she covered her breasts. Maybe it was prison. Rhys covered his face and got off the bed. He headed to the bathroom and closed the door. Ruby placed her hands on her knees, he will come around and this was just the first day ever since he was out.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#11

At Rhysand's house

Ruby finished dishing the food as Rhysand quietly made his way to the kitchen. He watched her going on as if nothing happened and she didn't do anything. You see the going to jail part? It was much better than her choosing to get rid of his child. Did she despise him that much to not want anything tied to him? The child was innocent for fuck's sake.

Ruby turned and flashed a smile. He has been brooding the last couple of hours, it was going to take some time for him to adjust to normal life.

Ruby: I'm done with the food. You can wait in the lounge ke tla tliisa dijo. (I'll bring the food)

Rhys:It's okay..

Ruby:No sit down Rhys.

He decided to sit on one of the kitchen stools. Ruby placed the food in ring of him.

Ruby:You can wash your hands first.

Rhys looked at the food and he couldn't bring himself to stop the anger that bubbled within him. Ruby frowned as his jaw ticked. What was going on?

Ruby:Rhys what's wrong?

Rhys:Can we talk Ruby?

Ruby:sure(wiping her hands with the kitchen cloth)

Rhys looked around the house. A place where he could breath because the anger was suffocating him.

Rhys:Wear something warm, you'll find me in the car.

Ruby:okay(frowning)

He stood up and walked out. Ruby frowned as alarm bells rang in her head. Why did he want her to go to the car? His mood has been off ever since he showered. What was going on in that head of his?

She walked to the bedroom and opened the wardrobe. She picked one of his jackets and wore it. She brought it to her nose, his cologne had that thing that always had women turning to look at him. She walked out of the house and closed the door. Wasn't he going to lock the door?

She walked to the car and looked at him.

Ruby:Rhys? What's wrong? Where are we going?

Rhys:Ruby get in the damn car!

She took a step back and shook her head.

Ruby:Ng ng. Not until you tell me where we are going?

Rhys:Ruby I don't want to do this with you, get in the motherfucking car o ise o ntene (before you annoy me)

She looked at him and how the veins on his arm were visible. Ver very visible.

She pulled the jacket close to her chest and Rhys looked at her. She didn't have any right to refuse. He wanted answers and he was going to get answers.

Rhys:Ka go balela up to 3, ga o sa tsene ga re itse (I am going to count up to 3,if you don't get in we don't know)

He started counting and when he was in 2 she opened the door and got in. Rhys immediately reversed the car and drove out of the yard with a shaking Ruby in his passenger seat.

At Ra N's farm

Neelo sat cross legged on the bed as she read her novel. She was probably going to go to the village early morning. Spend a week with her parents and maybe start finding where she can buy bulls or someone who can help her with that. She wasn't completely blank but obviously she needed someone with expertise in the field.

She flipped the page and wistfully placed the book against her chest. She loved happy endings. These cheesy romance novels always got to her, the side that she never really explored because of one bad relationship. Varsity boys? Yah they shredded her heart into tiny pieces and worst thing was she was a first year student. All blank and clueless. A village girl they had said, all naivety and innocence. He played her like a violin and that was why she didn't have any problem playing pretend with Aone. She managed to finish school in their second year of

pretend marriage. From there on she didn't bother looking for a job and all she did was play housewife so she was sure by this time, her age mates got jobs and had experience. She sighed and continued reading her novel. Where happy endings were dreams and fantasy.

She switched positions and laid down on her tummy as she moved her legs up and down.

Somewhere in Francistown

Ruby sat on the passenger seat all quiet and still. Her heart was racing as Rhysand drove in silence. He didn't say a word after she got inside the car more than an hour ago. What if his car was empty? She looked at the meter and it was far from empty. Of course Rhysand wasn't a fool to drive a car that was running on an empty tank.

The sun was going lower and she looked ahead. It looked like they were around the bushes. She rubbed her chest as it constricted. She had no idea where he was taking her.

Rhys found a perfect spot to park his car and he did so, being careful not to scratch it. He opened the compartment and took out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. He got out first and he took out one cigarette from the box. By the time Ruby was calm enough to get out of the car, he was snubbing the cigarette to the ground. He took another one and Ruby's eyes gleamed with unshed tears.

Ruby:What's wrong?

Rhys chuckled as he sucked on the cigarette and let the smoke escape through his nostrils.

Ruby didn't know Rhys was a smoker. In the whole year they had been together, she didn't know he smoked and it looked like he was used to this. If it was a first time smoker, he would be coughing right

now but it looked like he was in his second cigarette.

Rhys:Can you be honest with me?

Ruby:Yes.

Rhys:Do you loathe me that much?

She shook her head.

Ruby:No, not at all. Rhys I love you?

Rhys looked at her as he blew the smoke. Well it seemed like they had two different definitions in the word "love"

Ruby:Rhys stop speaking in riddles, what's wrong? Did something happen in prison?

Rhys:You love me Ruby?

Ruby:Without question Rhysand.

Rhysand:Do I look like a clown Ruby?

Ruby:Rra?

Rhys:Do I look like a fool? Ke tshwana popae ye ko tshamekang ka yone Ruby?

She moved back while he stood in the same spot. He didn't want to put his hands in her because he might throttle her.

Ruby:N-no, you are not a clown..

Rhys:But you keep on making me a clown waitse.

The ten seconds of silence passed as he smoked before he looked at her.

Rhys:And I haven't even got to the main issue.

He threw the stub on the ground and stepped on it. He slipped his hands in his pockets as he moved towards her. She took steps back and unfortunately she tripped on a rock and fell on the ground. The thorns on the ground pricked her butt and she quickly placed her hands on the ground trying to stabilize her body but the thorns pricked her hands as well. Tears rolled down her eyes as Rhys and looked at her, she forced herself to stand up on

wobbly knees.

Rhysand:Prison? Okay, you were an undercover cop and I presume you had a “job” to do..

Ruby:I am sorry, I even resigned. Rh-Rhys I was serious about what I said. I love you an-

Rhysand:Shut the fuck up! Were was I? Uh prison...is there something you did behind my back that I need to know.

She shook her head.

Ruby:I was an undercover cop Rhysand, tha..that was all it was and you know that. I-I ga-gave them your bank statements. I fa-failed to tap your phones because yo-you never gave me the password to access it. I am sorry, I-I(crying)

She went on her knees, regardless of the thorns that pricked her.

Ruby:Kopa maitshwarelo(Forgive me)

Rhysand clapped his hands.

Rhys: You should really look into acting it would suit you. Is that all there is?

She nodded while on her knees. He had every right to be angry, his anger was justified and he needed to let it all out.

Rhys couldn't believe this. Ruby looked at him with tears rolling down her eyes but it seemed as if her tears didn't move him one bit.

Rhys: So you didn't kill my baby?

Her eyes widened as her heart thumped in her chest. Rhys looked at her and he got his answer.

.

*

Tomorrow it is guys.

TROUBLED

#12

Somewhere in Francistown

Ruby tried to get up on her feet. Rhysand chuckled as he stepped away. He didn't want to do anything he might regret one day.

Ruby:Rhy-Rhy I..

Rhys:Don't try to explain your mind because what comes out of your mouth is lies and more lies.

She let the tears roll down her eyes as she saw his eyes dim and go hard. He hated her again.

Ruby:I-I had a miscarriage..

Rhys looked at her and laughed. She really thought

he was a clown. The fool in this one sided relationship.

Rhys:One I didn't know of so we could grieve our child together? I thought you were smarter than that. That child did nothing to you..

Ruby went silent. There was silence between them as Rhysand looked at her in disbelief. He actually loved a conniving woman like her? God damn,love was blind and he had been too blind to see what was beneath the surface of the well polished girl he thought was the love of his life.

Ruby lifted her eyes to look at him and she could see the hurt she caused him. Aborting his baby was one thing he would never forgive her for. She could only hope but-

Ruby:I had no choice.

He chuckled.

Rhys:You had a choice and you chose to kill a child

we made, didn't I get to have a say? The child you killed was my motherfu-(he fisted his hands as he stepped back again)

Ruby's lips quivered. She had never seen him lose his temper like that. Rhysand was always calm and he rarely raised his voice to make himself heard though he had one hell of a deep baritone voice but that was not the issue.

Ruby:You we're going to jail and I-I never meant to start a war Rhys. I never meant to hurt you.

Rhys:Rich coming from you. You orchestrated my arrest and you were like get rid of his seed too. Great Ruby..

She cried as he looked at her and clicked his tongue.

Ruby:I am so sorry. I-

Rhys:and you decided that he is a fool I will tell him I quit my job to get intel on him so he can serve time. Nice work officer but I am not falling for your tricks

this time around.

Ruby:I love you Rhysand. More than life itself at this point. I am sorry. I know y-(sobbing)you are angry and you are justified. My world is nothing when you are in it and it took taking you to jail for it to click Rhys.

Rhysand took out a cigarette and lit it up. He sucked in the smoke and exhaled it, watching it dissipate. Women? Liars, conniving bitches who looked out for only themselves.

Ruby watched him smoke till he stepped on the little stub. He walked to the car and opened the door.

Rhys:Get inside.

She looked around. What if he decided to kill her wherever he was going?

Rhys closed the door and walked to his side. He opened the door and got inside. He started the car

and Ruby looked around. It was getting late and it looked like he wanted to leave her here. She half ran to the car and opened the door. She sat down and Rhys reversed out of the parking spot.

She wanted to say something at his stoic face stopped her and the words died on her tongue. The drive was silent, too silent for her liking and she shifted in her seat.

An hour passed and they were still on the road.

Ruby:R-

Rhys:Wa ntlhodia, ke tla go didimatsa ka mpama. Sentene (You are making noise, I will make you shut up with a slap. Don't irritate me)

She bit down her lower lip and looked down. She didn't know where he was taking her and she didn't recognize this road. Half an hour later, she saw the city lights and she silently thanked her lucky stars. It

took Rhys twenty minutes to arrive at his house and he drove inside the yard.

He got out of his car first and left her there. She got out trying to keep up with him. She was already cold and needed a shower to get clean.

Rhys and found her car keys on the sofa and threw them her way.

Rhys: Get the fuck out my house..

Ruby: B-B..

Rhys: When I come back from the kitchen I want to find you gone because seeing you makes me want to throttle your throat. Don't test me Ruby...

Tears welled in her eyes and already she was tired. He can't expect her to go. It was late.

He walked to the kitchen and Ruby sat on the couch.

She placed her thorn inflicted hands over her face as she sobbed. Seconds later Rhys was out of the kitchen with a knife and gun in hand.

Rhys:Aren't you past the stage of playing victim?

She looked up and he was holding a gun and a knife in both hands.

Ruby:Rh-

Rhys:I wasn't playing. Try me and this becomes a murder scene. It's not like I mind prison officer.

Ruby:You h-

He threw the knife and it missed her ear by an inch as it bounced off the door.

Rhys:Try me.

Her heart raced as her blood went cold. He would never right? Did he throw a knife her way? More tears rolled down her eyes as she quickly got up and got her keys.

She walked to the door and he was looking at her. Like how a calculated murderer would look at his next victim. She opened the door and closed it. She couldn't breathe properly. That was his anger talking. Rhys loved her. More than the word love itself.

Rhysand placed the gun down and covered his face. If he was going to stay here any longer, he was going to suffocate. He went to the bedroom.

Meanwhile Ruby got inside her car and placed her head on the steering wheel. What if she gives him a week to calm and cool down before they sit down and talk. Her job didn't require her to have any attachments to the suspect and the baby was one huge attachment.

More tears made their way to her eyes. She cried to the point where she gasped for breath. This was her

fault, she caused this mess and she will fix it. She didn't know how but she was going to fix it.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#13

At Rhysand's house

For the second time that day, Rhysand was under the shower. A lot of regrets. He has been fucked over and over. He wasn't okay at all. Tears filled his eyes as he closed them. He was usually the best judge of character but this one? Wow!

Took him by one hell of a surprise, he wasn't okay. He needed to get away from it all, considering he also just got out of jail. He got out of the shower after while and he wiped his whole body before wearing his white robe. He opened his wardrobe and looked at the clothes inside. It was late but he wasn't even going to spend the night here.

He picked a duffel bag and filled it with the necessities he was going to need. He got his phone and sent his brother a text. He hated disappointing his mother but Alex will have to take her back home. He will see her there.

He sighed as he sat on the bed. Defeated.

At Ruby's house

Ruby cried against the shower wall. The weight of what happened today just hit her and it clicked to her just how much she hurt Rhysand to the point of him wanting to kill her. She didn't mean for that to happen, sh-she....

She broke down again. She didn't mean to hurt him, God knows she never meant to break his heart. I only he could give her a chance to explain and state her reasons but he didn't want to hear none of it. He

was justified. She didn't blame him, not on bit.

She got out of the shower after that much needed crying jag and walked to the bedroom. She sat in the carpet in her towel and sighed. She could feel a headache coming. A bout of sleep would do her good.

At Rhysand's house

He pulled the jacket close as the cold chilly air hit him. His duffel bag was on his shoulder as he locked the door. He looked around and sighed. An estimated 6 months away would do him good. He unlocked his car and threw the bag at the backseat. He got inside and started the car, he switched on the radio to distract himself from his thoughts. He reversed out of the yard and got out of the car to close the gate. After that small process he walked to the car and he paused as another song started playing. It hit too close to home, he was still raw with

emotions and he didn't know how to handle that.

A broken heart is all that's left

I'm still fixing other cracks

Lost a couple of pieces when I carried it, carried it,
carried it home

I a, afraid of all that I am

My mind feels like a foreign land

Silence ringing inside my head

Please carry me, carry me, carry me home

I spent all the love I saved, we were always a losing
game

Small town boy, in a big arcade

I got addicted to a losing game

All I know, loving you is a losing game

He sucked in a deep breath as his heart physically hurt him. He was a fool. Stupid was the word and he couldn't really believe it. The song played as thoughts played out in his head. She didn't love him, that was not love.

He finally joined the road and off he went.

The following morning

At Ra N's Farm

Neelo held her small bag as she locked the door and tucked in the key inside that bag. She was going to the village this week to see her parents and also discuss what she had in mind for the farm. Now she had to wait for the herd man with his donkey cart to at least take her to where there was tarred roads and she will catch a bus or a ride or anything that side

that was a vehicle.

She looked at her small watch and sighed. He might be here an hour later so she might as well go back inside the house. She opened the bag and that was when she heard the bells. He was on time today.

Neelo:Dumelang.

Herdman:Dumela. Re ka tsamaya(hello. We can go)

Neelo:Ee rra.

She ran to the donkey cart and when she got there, he helped her get inside.

Neelo:Tanki.

Herd man:O lekgoa lame.

Neelo laughed as he hit the donkeys' backs and the cart started moving. She looked around, she will be back a week later with progress and all that she had to do. If her father does agree.

Two hours later, the herd man and Neelo were by the road as cars passed by. He was kind enough to wait till she found a ride, if she was lucky like all the other days, she might find a bus and she will just join the passengers.

Thirty minutes passed and still nothing. She sighed.

Neelo: Maybe I should go back.

Herd man: Koloji e etla (a car is coming)

The herd man stopped it for her and the driver swerved to the side of the road. The window rolled down and the driver looked at Neelo and the herd man.

Herd man: Dumelang, o kopa lift to the village.

Neelo: Hi, I will even pay. I can't see any buses.

The driver thought about it and the driver opened the

passenger door. The herd man thanked the driver and so did Neelo as she got it.

Neelo:I'm sorry. This never really happens and I can honestly pay. I am Neelo.

She extended her hand.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#14

In the car

The lady brushed her off.

Her:No need for that. I'm Wapelo by the way.

Neelo:Thank you Wapelo.

Wapelo:So you were by the farms, I know gore that road ke ya distance o tswa from the farms.

Neelo:Yeah. I am going to check on my parents and thank you so much for the ride.

Wapelo:Don't sweat it, nna I'm just going to see my parents as well..

Neelo nodded as she buckled up with the small bag in top of her thighs. Wapelo reduced the volume and

looked at Neelo.

Wapelo:Okay, ka itse ga o nkitse and we just met(I know you don't know me)but ka bo e le wena ne o ka dira jang?(but if it was you what would you do?)

Neelo stifled a laugh and Wapelo was so damn serious.

Wapelo:I'm being serious here. So here is the thing, I have a boyfriend. Well we broke up a week ago. Kana mma(letting go of the steering wheel to clap her hands once)

Neelo:I am listening, not sure if I will be of great help but shoot.

Wapelo:We are always on and off mma wena. He refuses to introduce me to his parents. My parents know him, I introduced him after five months of dating. Whenever I ask him about the introduction he is always like hewehewe one day not now. Wawa wa lapisa and all that crap.

Neelo:So why did you guys break up?

Wapelo:He is cheating.

Neelo:O sure?

Wapelo:Not sure but I raised the introduction issue and he dismissed it. He was so dodgy with his phone, he no longer calls and nna? Wawa call him? Never. Okay maybe till I feel it's enough of the break. Bottom line Neelo is why now? We have had issues and in the past, like when we celebrated six months together. He went out and got drunk, jikijiki there was drama in his family. I am not sure if you know the family but well they don't know me shem. He keeps me a secret. Nvla..

Neelo:Slow down, okay. There was drama, then what happened?

Wapelo:We break up then he goes out and cheats. Like on me? Nna Wawa?

Wapelo turned on the curve and she shook her head. Why did she even bother with this man at this point?

Wapelo:He was like we broke up? He didn't love me

enough to at least let the break up settle and he moves on. Long story short, we got back together again and I just can't trust him.

Neelo: Why don't you guys call it quits?

Wapelo: I always want to do that but sejeso ke sejeso.

Neelo: The heart wants what it wants neh?

Wapelo: Mhm. I just needed to get that off my chest.

Neelo: Feel better?

Wapelo: So much better. But I still want him back (sighing wistfully)

Neelo laughed. No, this lady had some psycho tendencies and she could see that.

Wapelo: When we get to the village, direct me to your house. So I can drop you off and make sure you are safe kana you can never know these days.

Neelo: Thank you.

Wapelo: You are welcome Neelo. I haven't seen you here before, I mean mo gae.

Neelo: Seems like I will be here to stay. I think.

Wapelo:Alright.

Wapelo increased the volume of the radio as she drove. Neelo seemed like a kind person and she didn't have any friend. She shook her head, she might turn on her like the other snakes she used to call friends. She just gave her a lift and that was all there was. Half an hour later, Neelo was directing Wapelo to her parents' house. Wapelo parked her car in front of the gate and Neelo smiled.

Neelo:Thank you so much. I can pay so yo-

Wapelo:No payment needed.

Neelo:I owe you one.

She got out of the car and she waved as Wapelo drove off. She smiled and opened the gate. She checked up on them each and every month end. She walked to the door as she took out her phone switching it on. There was network here so she could see if she had any messages.

She knocked on the door with her head low.

Neelo:Ko-ko!

Ma N:Coming.

She punched in her PIN before the door opened.

Neelo looked up and smiled.

Neelo:Hey mama. I'm back for a week as usual.

Ma N:Your skin is glowing.

Neelo:Akere ke single mama.

Her mother laughed as Neelo walked inside the house.

Neelo:I am going to lie down, are there any errands you want me to run?

Ma N:It's month end and I am too lazy to go the shops to buy food.

Neelo>List and the car keys. Maybe I should do that

now..let me change my shoes.

She walked to her bedroom and threw her phone on the bed as messages started to report to her phone. She wore her sandals and removed her head scarf. She smelled it and almost vomited. A hair wash and new hairstyle. If Wapelo could smell her head, she was relieved that Wapelo was kind enough not to mention anything.

She opened the wardrobe, grabbed a clean headscarf and wrapped it around her head. She got her small bag and walked out.

Neelo:Mama I am done. List.

Ma N:On top of the stand, the keys are on the table with my card. You know my PIN.

Neelo:Okay.

She walked out of the house, leaving her phone in the bedroom.

She unlocked the car and got inside. The money she had didn't allow her to buy a car and she was almost 25, living in her parents house with no job in sight. Just vibes. Disappointing. She shook her head as she started the car.

At Rhysand's house in Bobonong

Rhysand finally woke from his deep slumber. He arrived here an hour past midnight and he was exhausted to the bone. He didn't want to think about it all. He was going to be here long enough to see his mother before he disappeared to the farm.

He yawned and looked at the wall clock. He rubbed his face and sighed. It was going to be hard to get over this but he knew in his soul that it was time to go. He will heal alone and peacefully. Sometimes walking is the one thing that would open up the

healing journey. He gave it his all and she gave back lies, deceit and broken trust but he will bounce back. He always does.

He got out of the bed and walked out of the bedroom heading to the bathroom. He looked at his eyes and his unruly hair. He sighed and opened the tap, he splashed the water in his face and rubbed his eyes.

At Rhysand's house in Francistown

Ruby waited outside thinking that he would be back because she couldn't see his car. She checked her watch and it has been over than two hours. She got out of the car and looked around in the shades she wore to hide the baggy eyes. Ruby opened the gate and she walked to the door. She knocked a couple of times and there was no answer. She searched her pockets for her phone. Empty.

She sighed and walked back to the car. She got the phone and leaned against the car as she dialed Alex. She didn't have Rhysand's new number because she just got out of prison yesterday.

Ruby:Hello.

Alex:Hi..

Ruby:Where can I find Rhysand?

Alex:I have no idea. Isn't he with you?

Ruby:No. he is not at home, I went back to my house last night.

Alex:I have no idea Ruby.

Ruby:Do you have his number? I want to make sure he is okay..

Alex:Nope. Maybe he went out for a drive or something. He is your fiancé, you should know him by now.

Ruby cleared her throat.

Ruby:Yeah. Thank you.

Alex:Sure. Bye.

He hung up and she looked at the house. How can Rhysand disappear and his brother knows nothing? Maybe because he has pride and he didn't want to tell his brother that he had a fight with his woman. He will come back around. He needed space and she should probably go back home and rest. She got inside the car and started it before driving off.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#15

At the mall

Neelo put the rest of the plastics in the car before she touched her head. She checked the time and she still had time for a wash and the simplest of hairstyles. She closed the car door and locked the car as she walked to the salon where she knew the hairdresser. Well the hairdresser could work with her and she wanted to wash her hair before she plaited a few carrot French lines. They wouldn't last a whole month but at the farm who takes notice of your hair?

She looked sideways before she crossed the road. As she crossed the road, she opened her bag. Flip! She forgot her phone. She was almost done so it wouldn't be a big deal. She reached the other side

and walked a few feet before she got inside the salon. Meanwhile at the parking spot, Rhysand parked his legend 45 next to the small car at the side. He did so carefully because the person parked badly and he could bet on his last money that it was a woman. He didn't need any groceries, just a clean haircut. He had already shaved before coming here so a haircut would do.

He stepped out of his car and closed the door. He looked around. He knew this place like the back of his hand, growing up in the village and all. He had to know everything.

In the salon, Neelo greeted her hairdresser who wasn't busy.

Neelo:Hi. I came to do my hair.

Her:Take a seat.

She sat down and removed the head scarf.

Her:Well look at this..

Neelo:I promise I will do better, I am always so lazy to do my hair.

Her:That's why I am here.

She got an afro comb and a detangling spray. She sprayed the hair for a few seconds before she started to comb through the knots.

Neelo:Be gentle tlhemma, o botlhoko.

Her:I applied a detangling spray Neelo, bokgarabe jwa itshokelwa.

Neelo:Ha se gore re lese mme (shouldn't we just leave it then)

Her hairdresser looked at her and Neelo chuckled as she faced the mirror.

Neelo:Okay. I'll be quiet.

Her hairdresser finished combing her hair before she asked Neelo to stand up so they can head to the wash basins. As she stood up, the chatter that had filled the salon quieted down as Rhysand walked inside and looked around. Neelo still had a towel around her shoulders as she frowned. Why was everyone quiet? She didn't quite get it.

Rhysand sighed. A quick haircut was all it was going to be and he would be gone. He walked to the side where the barbers were cutting and in seconds the chatter started to louden.

Neelo looked at her hairdresser then back at where the guy was heading. Why did it go quiet while he was here. She had blatantly ignored the fact that he was good looking, minus that why?

Neelo:Why did everyone quieten down?

Her:Let's go by the wash basins and let me fill in you in. O slow gore Neelo.

They walked to the wash basin and she lifted her head, her eyes locked directly with his as he turned

his head. He stopped talking to the barber as Neelo kept the eye contact for what seemed like eternity as a chill travelled down her spine accompanied by a racing heart beat. She broke the eye contact and walked to the sink where her hairdresser was already waiting.

She sat down as she brought her head down.

Her:I'll tell you when you are seated. For now close your eyes.

Neelo closed her eyes as she calmed herself down. She breathed in and out as her hairdresser worked on her hair. After ten minutes they were done with the wash and she stood up with a towel around her shoulders. She took her seat and waited for her hairdresser.

The hairdresser opened her cabinet as she took out a hair dryer and some hair food.

Her:So that is Ricesand.

Neelo:Ricesand?

Her(laughing) something along those lines.

Neelo:Rice?

Her hairdresser lightly slapped Neelo's shoulder,

Her:Not so loud.

Neelo:Sorry. I forgot we are gossiping. So what about Rice?

The hairdresser laughed so hard and Neelo looked down to stifle her laughter.

Her:Neelo tlhemma.

Neelo:Rice? Like tastic? Bathong wee...bua mma..

Her:The newspapers wrote about him, well we have all been suspecting that he is into illegal things mma.

Neelo:Bo bad boy?

Her:Ee, the tattoos.

Neelo smiled. When will village people get it into their harass that tattoos don't mean that someone is bad? Well the guy does look like bad news. Red flags.

Red! Red!

Her:He got arrested six months ago.

Neelo:Uhu!

Her:on his wedding day..

Neelo:O bua dilo tsa di movie tlhemma wena (you are speaking of things that only happen in movies) but I feel sorry for his fiancé. It must've been traumatic shems.

Her:Ka bo mma, apparently she cried for him mma.

Neelo shifted her head as the hairdresser started to blow dry her hair.

Neelo:Ishu! I need to keep up with the times then.

Her:You don't know him?

Neelo:Nope...

Meanwhile in the other side, Rhys moved his head looking at the mirror. The barber did a fine job. He opened his wallet and took out a P100 note.

Rhys: Thank you and keep the change.

He stood up and walked out. All Neelo could see was his backside as he walked out of the salon. She had no idea why they locked eyes but it must be nothing.

Rhys crossed the road. He brushed off his thoughts as he got to his car and unlocked it. He got inside. The whole female specie was the same, after all they all had the same descendant which is Eve.

He started his car and waited for a few minutes before he reversed out of the parking spot.

Meanwhile in the salon, Neelo listened to all the latest gossip from the hairdresser.

Her: Oketsa braid. (increase the braid)

Neelo did so and handed her the braid. She did her hair for the next hour and by the time she was done she smiled.

Her:You look nice.

Neelo:Thank you.

Her:Bona skopo se dule (look at your forehead popping)

Neelo touched her forehead and laughed. It was shining bright Shem.

Neelo:Thank you. Let me pay.

She took out a P200 note from her handbag and handed it to the hairdresser.

Neelo:See you month end.

Her>Welcome.

Neelo said bye and walked out, she could feel a

headache coming on and it was so painful. She wanted to cry. She crossed the road and made her way to the car.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#16

At Neelo's parents

Neelo leaned against the driver's seat after she parked her car. Her communication with Katlego has been sketchy these past few months and she

guessed he was still silently dealing with the grief. She knew that no matter what she said, he will still hurt. She sighed, maybe after another six months she might visit Aone's grave just to clean it up and say hi to her old friend. May his soul Rest In Peace.

She opened the boot and she got out of the car, she got the plastics and walked to the house.

Neelo:Mama open the door.

The door opened seconds later as Neelo headed to the kitchen.

Neelo:I bought everything on the list, if I forgot something I will buy it tomorrow.

Ma N:That hairstyle suits you.

Neelo:Thank you mama.

She walked out to go get other plastics.

Neelo:Papa o kae?(where is dad?)(pausing in her

tracks)

Ma N:He took out his old van for service.

Neelo:Why doesn't he sell that old skoro skoro kante?

Ma N:Iyoo! It's his car.

Neelo:But the car is always repaired. Le ha gotwe first car..

Her mother shrugged as Neelo walked out of the house. In minutes all the plastics were in the kitchen and all she had to do was to put the items in the pantry.

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand sat alone in the house as he scrolled through the channels before placing the remote down. He sighed. He had to keep busy so that he doesn't think about what Ruby did. He was still angry about the fact that she aborted his child. She said

she loved him but she really do? He was here to let go and find peace that it happened. Two days ago he had been set on revenge but when he looked at her, he couldn't even see the baby bump. The baby she killed herself. Willingly. That was not love in his books. He knew that was not it.

His phone vibrated and he picked it up.

Rhys:Hello.

Alex:Hi, your ex-fiancé called earlier looking for you.

Rhys:Doesn't she rest kante?

Alex:You broke up with her?

Rhys:In not so clear terms but yeah.

Alex:Okay whatever you say bro.

Rhys:Yeah, I need to lay low. I'm fresh out of prison and the police are obviously waiting for me to do something wrong.

Alex:Got it. How long will you be there?

Rhys:Not sure. Will update you every now and then

once I get to the village for proper network.

Alex:Alright bro. Bye.

Rhys:Don't tell anyone where I went.

Alex:You can trust me. I dropped mother off at her house two hours ago.

Rhys:Alright.

He hung up and Rhys put his phone down. His mind wandered to the salon. He didn't know what to make out of the intense eye contact he made with that girl. She was shorter than Ruby and wasn't really the type of girls he went for. He liked his women tall, not taller than him but all long legs. He sighed. Why would he even think of her as a girl he would go for? He is just fresh out of one his worst relationships and he was far from trusting females. It wasn't as if he will see that short girl again.

He switched off the tv and leaned back. He would see his mother tomorrow before he headed to the

farm.

At Neelo's parents

Neelo picked her phone as she finally sat down to read all the messages that had been sent over the past month. She frowned seeing a message from Kago. Just then her phone rang. Speak of the devil.

Neelo:Hello..

Kago:Hi, I have been trying to call and your phone didn't go through this past month.

Neelo:Mhmm..

Kago:(sighing)There is a problem at home..

Neelo:Okay. No offense but how is that any of my business?

Kago:You might be the only one who could help an-

Neelo:when my uncles repaid your family's magadi it meant I was done. Have a good day.

She hung up and threw her phone on the bed. The nerve. They mistreated her for three years and that was why Aone preferred not to go home. Kago was just a spectator so she was going have nothing to do with that family.

She replied Katlego's text before she placed her phone down.

Neelo: Mom did you make lunch?(shouting)

Ma N: I have a daughter who is unmarried to do that.

Neelo: lyoo! Tshele mama. It hasn't even been a year...

Ma N: but you look better each time you visit.

Neelo arrived in the lounge.

Neelo: We have to move and life has to go on even though the ache stays there forever.

Ma N: True.

Neelo:Let me make something to eat for everyone.

At Ruby's house

She sat on the bed as she looked at her phone, she wished she didn't wipe out all their memories on their ruined wedding day. She sighed and placed the phone down. All she had was to give him space. Then they will talk calmly and she will state all her reasons for doing what she did.

.

A WEEK LATER

Side note: Let's all work together to like the sponsor's page before 9pm to get your bonus insert.
Thank you

TROUBLED

#17

At Neelo's parents

She got inside the car and buckled up while waiting for her father. He walked out minutes later wearing a coat.

Neelo:papa I don't trust your car.

Ra N:this car has been here for years, even before you were born.

Neelo:it's old. What if it dies on us?

Ra N:it won't..

Neelo:hmm..

Her father buckled up and she leaned back.

Neelo:So I should start implementing what we talked

about immediately when I get there?

Ra N:you made up your mind Nene and it is a wonderful idea.

Neelo:Okay. I think I will be moving to and from the farm this week.

Ra N started the car and he reversed out of the yard.

At Ruby's house

She had been by Rhysand's house yesterday and there was still no sign of him being home, how can he disappear? They had issues to solve and they needed to talk.

He dialed Alex's number and it was answered immediately by a female voice.

Voice:Hello?

Ruby:Hello, can I talk to Alex?

Voice:And you are?

Ruby:His sister in law. I am looking for Rhys.

The lady at the end of the line got out of bed and headed to the kitchen to give Alex his phone. Alex looked at her and she shrugged.

Alex:We talked about it.

Her:Your sister in law wants to talk to you.

She walked away and Alex stood there sighing. He placed the phone against his ear.

Alex:Hello.

Ruby:Hi. Alex even now Rhys is not here.

Alex:I don't know tota motho wa Modimo.

Ruby:(sighing)Sure sure you don't know where Rhys is? It is important I talk to him.

Alex:I don't know Ruby. We last talked before he went to you after the court case.

Alex lifted his head and found her looking at him. She clapped her hands and he shook his head.

Ruby:Okay. Thank you. Bye.

He hung up and Ruby sighed.

Ruby sat upright as she dialed her mother in law's number.

Ruby>Hello...

Ma Rhys:Hi Ruby. How are you?

Ruby:I am fine. Rhys isn't home yet.

Ma Rhys frowned.

Ma Rhys:I was with him here a few days ago. He said he was going home shortly after.

Ruby squinted her eyes. Rhys was in Bobonong?

Ruby:Okay. Maybe he is at his house. He once mentioned something about building a house that

side last year.

Ma Rhys:Probably. Call him and ask him if he is at his house.

Ruby:Ee mma. Go siame.

Ruby hung up and bit her tongue. Rhys was in Bobonong? And he didn't tell her?

She called her mother.

Ruby:Hello.

Ma Ruby:Hello my child.

Ruby:I will be there later on mom.

Ma Ruby:What is wrong?

Ruby:I want to check up on you guys.

Ma Ruby:I would like that.

Ruby:Bye and I love you mom.

Ma Ruby:I love you too.

Ruby hung up and she got off bed. They were going to talk about everything and she was going to let him pour his heart out, she saw the light after his arrest and she wanted to make amends with the love of her life. It was time and she hoped he was calm.

At the farm

Rhysand walked around as he made sure everything was up to par. The horse stables were fine and he wanted to take his horse out for a ride around. For a graduate who didn't use his degree to the fullest, he was doing well for himself. After all farming was what he studied so that was an advantage.

He walked to the stables in his black boots and those jeans that clung to his legs. He looked up and assumed it was midday. He wasn't really keeping up with time, he could breath and here at the farm he

had a lot of business ideas to implement.

He walked into the stables and looked at his five horses. There were enough for this farm. He opened the door and rubbed his horse's back. He smiled and led it out of the stables.

Rhys:Hey boy..we are going out on another one of my lonely rides.

He got on the horse and used his boot to kick it and it started to move.

Meanwhile Neelo looked at her father as his car started to make sounds.

Neelo:papa will we arrive on time?

Ra N:Nene this old skoroskoro of mine will arrive and will still take me home tomorrow.

Neelo:Ah papa!

His father drove through the gravel road leading to the farm. Neelo knew they were probably far from the farm and if this car dies on them she didn't know what they were going to do.

The old man maneuvered through the bushes with his car and just as he was about to turn the car stopped.

Neelo:Papa...

The old man restarted it again, he didn't want Neelo to panic. If she panicked he was screwed.

It didn't restart.

Neelo:Papa..

Ra N:calm down Neelo.

Neelo:I am calm papa...

She got out of the car as her dad got out too. Her father opened the bonnet and Neelo peeked inside. She didn't understand most of the things involved

here, she just knew how to drive and how to use a pump for tyres.

Neelo:Papa what's happening? Ke lost..

Ra N:It's nothing..

She moved back as she walked a few feet and stopped.

Neelo:It will be fine?

Her father walked to the van and removed his toolbox from behind the seats. Neelo walked to the van and sat down on the seat. She didn't know what was going on exactly.

An hour later her father's overalls were smeared with oil but the car still wouldn't start.

Neelo:I think we are stranded papa.

Ra N:And there is no network, I would've called my mechanic.

Neelo:Walking from here to the farm is going to kill you. Myself? I can absolutely walk but dad o mogodi and you can't walk long distances. Let me walk maybe I might find someone who can help, akere there are neighboring farms around here.

Ra N:You don't have to do that.

Neelo:I should try.

She picked up her hat and a 2 liter fanta bottle that was filled with water.

Neelo:I will be back in four hours or so. It will be dark but I hope you stay safe papa. I will be back and love.

She started to walk as her father looked into the bonnet. What was wrong? Last week he had took the car for maintenance.

Neelo looked and sighed. She had a long way to go but let's see if she still remembers the road from memory now that she was making the trip via foot.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#18

Along the way

Neelo stopped and placed the bottle down to hold her knees. She was tired and she has been walking around. She hasn't seen any farm or anything. She

wanted to throw herself on the ground and rest. The winter sun was hitting her and the cool wind made the heat and cold go hand in hand. She breathed in and out before she stood up right, picked the bottle and continued with her trek. She hoped her dad was okay.

She walked for ten more minutes and half screamed.

Neelo:Yoh! I think I am lost here...

She looked around and she saw trees and shrubs and more trees. Kante where were the other nearby farms?

Neelo>Hello!(shouting) Thusaaang!

She walked as she screamed that over and over again. She looked behind and the tress looked the same. She didn't know if she remembered her way back.

Neelo:I am screwed.

She kept on shouting for help, she hoped her voice was audible enough. When she was tired of that she sat on a big rock and drank her water, emptying it down her mouth. She threw the empty bottle on the ground and stood up on the rock.

Placing her hands around her mouth she screamed for help. She was a bit higher.

From a distance Rhys could hear the plea for help. The voice sounded female.

He kicked his horse as it picked it's pace. The more the horse moved he could hear the voice much more closer. He slowed down his stallion as he got closer.

Neelo heard shrubs and the twinge of small branches breaking. She stopped shouting for help and relented sitting on top of the rock as she placed her head on her knees. She was stranded and her

father was stranded too. Couldn't today get any more worse?

Rhys moved closer and he stopped as he saw a girl on top of the rock. Neelo sensed a presence and she looked up with her hands still on her knees. That face looked familiar and the two looked at each other for what seemed like a lifetime before Neelo tore her gaze away from the man. She shook her head as if she was getting out of a trance. He was the same man she locked eyes with at the salon a week ago. She got up and almost lost her balance but quickly regained it as he got off his stallion. Rhys shook his head, he swore he saw her lips part slightly when their gazes locked.

Neelo: This is very very weird..(dusting the back of her pants)

Rhys: I can't hear you.

Neelo wanted to roll her eyes. Her voice was audible enough and why the hell was his voice sending shivers down her spine? She shook it all off as weird

as it already was and looked at him again, avoiding his eyes.

Neelo:okay. Hi. I know you don't know and you might be a rapist or a murderer. Very likely to be the case.

Rhys moved back. Wow! A rapist or a murderer? The female specie.

Neelo:But I am stranded and my father is stranded ahead there. His car broke down and I lost my way and there is no network here. Will you please help me?

Rhys:First you called me a rapist and a murderer now you want my help?

Neelo was distracted by his voice and she didn't catch what he was saying.

Rhys:are you even listening to me?

Neelo:Uh-yes, you were saying ?

He shook his head irritated.

Neelo:I really need help, for my dad not me. Please!

She pleaded with Ricesand.

Neelo:I will pay for your help. I promise, just help my dad.

Rhys:You can lead the way...

Neelo:Neelo. Neelo Jones.

She looked back and grinned rubbing the back of her neck.

Neelo:I kind of forgot the way.

Rhys rubbed his stallion's back as it neighed.

Rhys:How long have you been walking?

Neelo:for over two hours..

Her eyes moved to his hands and she saw the ink. She looked at him as he scanned the area.

Rhys:Sure you are lost?

Neelo:Preeety suuure.

Rhys rubbed his head before he looked at her. She was tiny and short. He still wasn't going to think about the eye contact that they keep in making.

Rhys:do you know how to ride a horse?

Neelo:No..

Rhys looked at his stallion and it was bigger and stronger than her, one wrong move it was going to let her fall.

Rhys:Come here and let's look for your father.

Neelo got off the rock and approached him. She looked up at him and Rhysand averted his gaze. He held her waist and she shot a dangerous look at him using the look to hide the thump of her heart and the blood that rushed in her veins.

Rhys:I am not going to "rape" you, you need to get in

the horse..

Neelo faced the other way, he had strong hands. He picked her up effortlessly and placed her on top of the stallion.

Rhys:Don't move or else it will throw you over.

He still had his hands around her waist. So small. He got on the horse and instructed her to hold his waist. As she sat behind him, she inhaled his scent. Not deliberately. It was all in her face and it wasn't cologne, just all raw masculinity and testosterone. Her heart beat erratically in her chest and she prayed to her God that he couldn't feel her stellar heartbeat.

Rhys:So you don't fall, I am a rough rider.

It took a few seconds for Rhys to realize what he said and Neelo kept to herself. She could feel muscles beneath his t-shirt.

Rhys:I-I didn't mean it that way...

Neelo:It's okay(softly)

Rhys:Hold on tight.

She let go for a second to adjust her hat and the stallion took off, she half screamed as she wrapped her hands around his torso.

Rhys:I warned you.

Neelo:I got the warning, trust me..

Rhys:Look around and tell me if you recognize the places you have passed..

Neelo started to look around as the horse moved. Her hold over him got tighter and Rhys felt it, small hands on his torso. He closed his eyes for a second before he opened them and focused on helping her.

Neelo:I think I passed that tree(pointing at it) or are there similar ones? This is all confusing.

Rhys:It's not. You passed that tree(slowing down)

Neelo:I think so..

Rhys:You took long because you were walking, I think we will find your father in no time.

Neelo: Thank you so much..

He nodded as they rode through the bushes. After what seemed like a hour of Neelo trying to remember the way and directing today's savior to her father's car they spotted the car.

Neelo: That's the car.

Rhys: You came with that? To a place like this?

Neelo: Yes.

Rhys: You guys wanted to be stranded.

Neelo: Tell that to my dad.

Rhys stopped the stallion and got off first before he helped her get off. He held her waist a little longer before he let go and Neelo placed her hands on her hips.

Neelo: Papa...

She walked to the car and opened the door. He was asleep. She laughed and closed the door. She turned to look at Rhys.

Neelo:He is asleep. Let me wake up and my apologies for inconveniencing you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Rhys:You already said thank you.

Neelo nodded as they looked at each other again. She cleared her throat and turned to open the door. She gently shook her father.

Neelo:Papa? Tsoga, ke boile (dad? Wake up, I am back)

She shook him some more till he woke from his slumber and he blinked looking around in alarm and distress.

Neelo:It's me papa, Nene.

Rhysand watched from the sidelines. He never had a father to do all that with him, he hated that man with every fiber of his being. He kicked the rocks as Neelo spoke to her father.

Neelo:Okay dad we got help and I don't know what is going to happen ka the car but yeah.

Ra N:are you okay?

He touched her face with his hands and she held his hands.

Neelo:Yes dad, a bit dehydrated but fine. I don't know what's going to happen but yeah.

His father got up from the seat and looked at the lad that was next to the horse. Neelo moved from the door and her father got out.

Rhysand looked up and he smiled. Not a full smile but one out of respect for the elder before him.

Rhysand:Dumelang.

Ra N:Hello my boy. You look familiar...

Ra N tried to juggle his memory but nothing came at the moment.

Ra N:I forgot but thank you and thank you for keeping her safe. She thinks she can do everything on her own.

Rhys:I see(looking at Neelo)

Ra N:my car died on us when we were in our way to the farm.

Ra Neelo looked at the young lad in front of him once more and then it clicked. He remembered who he was and he smiled.

Ra N:McKnight..

Rhys:Yes sir..

Ra N:You don't have to call me sir(smiling)what's your name again..Rice or something.

Rhysand laughed.

Rhys:Nnyaa. It's Rhysand..Reesand....Reece if shortened.

Neelo tried the name on her lips silently. Rhysand. Not Rice? Yoh!

Rhys:Can I take a look at your car first?

Ra N:Of course.

Neelo watched him open the car bonnet as he glanced over to his horse. Rhys hoped his horse would stay put.

At the village

At Ruby's parents

Ruby opened the door as she greeted her parents.

Ruby:Dumelang.

Ma Ruby:That was fast.

Ruby:I was already on my way when I called. I am dog tired mama, let me go rest first then we will catch up.

Ma Ruby:Okay my baby.

Ruby walked to her room, opening the door before she threw herself in the bed. She sighed into the pillow. She hoped Rhys was at his house like his mother said. She really wanted them to solve and work through their issues.

Along the way

Rhys closed the bonnet after he was done.

Rhys:I think I dealt with the problem but the car needs to be taken for service.

Neelo:Really?

Ra N got inside the car and he started it.

Neelo mouthed a thank you. Their eyes locked and Neelo fought to tear her gaze away. It just happened that they lock eyes every now and then, completely normal thing to happen to her... she told herself but a voice in her head kept screaming and she did know what it said. She raised her eyes again and he was looking at her again. She shivered once more and rubbed her arms. Everything about him screamed TROUBLE in capital letters and she would be in a hot mess if she was going to allow herself to be TROUBLED by the mere fact that he exists and he sends her heart into an uncontrollable overdrive.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#19

At the farm

Rhys and his trusted stallion arrived as the old car made noise from behind. Even though it was okay for now, he didn't trust that the car would arrive at their farm. The old man parked the car under the tree as Rhys jumped off his horse. He led it to the stables. He made sure it was safely locked in and he patted its back.

Rhys:Good boy..

He walked out as the cold chilly air of the winter hit him. He rubbed his arms heading to where his guests were.

Rhys:It's already late unless I can drive you to your

farm.

Ra N:That would be inconveniencing you further after being so kind to us.

Rhys:It's no problem at all.

Ra N:I will be heading to the village tomorrow.

Rhys:I can drive you there, I doubt that your car will take you any further.

Ra Neelo looked at his car and he had to agree.

Ra N:You are right but I just can't abandon my car.

Rhys:it's old..

Ra N:This was my first car and back in the day, the ladies would go crazy when I drove past.

Rhys laughed. He looked over the old man's shoulder and Neelo was still in the car and the hat was off. He could see that forehead shining.

Rhys:You guys can stay the night. I have a spare bedroom.

Ra N:You are a gentleman.

Rhys:Not many say that..

Ra Neelo chuckled. Meanwhile in the car Neelo rubbed her arms it was getting chilly and around this time she would've been in bed with a cup of coffee and a book in hand or her obsessing over her new plans for her dad's small farm. She looked through the window and Rhysand was so comfortable with her father around. She was just going to be invisible, by the looks of it they weren't going to their farm were they?

She got out of the car and the cold wind blew past her. She got goosebumps and she gritted her teeth. She had a hate-love relationship with the winter season.

She walked over to where the men were and she looked at her father, avoiding Rhysand's eyes.

Ra N:Nene we might spend the night here.

Neelo:I figured.

Ra N:You are cold.

Neelo:I will be fine.

Rhys:You guys can follow me.

He noticed that she avoided his gaze and decided to talk to her father as they walked to his farm house. He opened the door and Neelo was grateful for the warmth that hit her over chilled skin.

Rhys:Make yourselves comfortable. I'll be back.

He left them in the sitting room as he headed to his room to get a fleece blanket. He was back in a minute and his eyes fell on Neelo who was looking around. He was behind the sofa she had decided to occupy. He just gently placed the fleece around her shoulders as his fingers lightly brushed against the nape of her neck and Neelo swallowed as she ignored that touch that sent mixed signals to her brain.

Rhys:I wasn't expecting guests and I didn't cook..

Ra N:It's okay son. Your kindness is very much appreciated.

Neelo pulled the fleece closer and she craned her neck to look up at him.

Neelo:I will help. If you wish, you have already done a lot for us today.

Ra N:Nene warm up first.

Neelo:Dad don't worry about me too much.

She removed the fleece and stood up.

Neelo:Where is the kitchen?

Rhys:Follow me...

She walked behind him, looking at his physique. He had a nice backside. They got to the kitchen and she put her hands together.

Neelo:What do you want me to make?

Rhys:Anything you can manage. You look pale.

Neelo:I'm fine. Is it okay if I have a glass of water?

Rhys:Sure..

She picked a glass and opened the tap, filling it with water. She drank the water slowly, as it wet her parched throat. She placed the glass down and awkwardly looked at Rhys.

Neelo:Sorry about that.

Rhys:You don't have to apologize for anything.

Neelo:So-okay..

She looked around the cozy warm kitchen. She didn't know what to make and if Rhys would agree. At this point she had to agree that everyone was starved but she will cook. This man did help her and her father today and it was only right she helped around too.

She moved from the sink and walked to the fridge

where she opened the freezer and found mince meat.

Neelo:Is mince meat okay?

Rhys:Yes. Let me give you space, if you need help I'll be with your father.

Neelo nodded and he walked out. She breathed out and held her chest. She had to make something fast and see what to do.

She opened the cupboards looking for a starch to add to the meal.

Two hours later, five glasses of water later Neelo was done coming and she served the men.

Neelo:That was the best I could come up with.

Ra N:I told you she was going to cook a nice meal.

Neelo:Papa!

Rhys looked at Neelo who walked back to the kitchen. She washed her hands and looked around. She had cleaned it and made sure she returned everything to their rightful place. She leaned against the sink and looked at the plate of food she had dished up for herself. She picked it up and had a few mouthfuls of food before she placed it down.

Ra N:Nene are you joining us?

Neelo:I'm finishing up this side dad.

Ra N:Okay.

The men went on talking and Neelo sighed picking up her plate heading to the sitting room.

Ra N:Nene I was just telling Rhys about you wanting to manage the farm.

Neelo smiled as she brought the fork to her lips.

Rhys:It is not very common for a woman to be interested in this aspect of the agricultural sector.

Ra N:She is smart..

Neelo listened as her father talked about her as if she wasn't here. She placed the plate on her thighs as they got into a heated discussion about livestock and the Botswana agricultural sector. They had now forgotten about their plates. She picked them up silently and walked to the kitchen to wash the plates.

As soon as Neelo was gone Ra N chuckled.

Ra N:I think she was bored to death(yawning)

Rhys:Let me show you the bedroom.

They both stood up and he led the way to the extra bedroom. Ra Neelo looked around and thanked the young lad once more before Rhys closed the door. Rhys put his hands in his Jean pockets and walked to the kitchen where Neelo was leaning against the sink.

Neelo:Papa went to sleep?

He nodded and she looked down. Obviously she wasn't going to share a room with her father. He

needed to rest more than her even.

Both:I'll take the couch..

They looked at each other and Neelo averted her gaze clearing her throat.

Neelo:I will take the couch, you can't be inconvenienced in your house..

Rhys looked at her. She looked like a portable little thing, someone you can flip and turn in the bedroom and he bit his lower lip. At first he had thought she was faking the modesty and her nature but he found out she wasn't as he had talked to her father. She sure was her father's pride and joy.

Rhys:Neelo it's already late..

Neelo paused. She wanted to reply but he called her by her name?

Neelo:Okay(softly)

Rhys:And you are not taking the couch.

Neelo looked at herself. She was in no position to

take the bed, she was sweaty from today and she was sure she smelt of grime and sweat. She silently followed him as he started to switch off the lights in the house and led her to his bedroom.

Rhys:You can take the bed, make yourself comfortable.

He opened his wardrobe to take out a blanket and a pillow. He looked at her one more time and he walked out, closing the door on his way out.

Neelo stood in the middle of the room and looked at her clothes. She wasn't sure if she should sleep in his blankets in her clothes or if it would be appropriate for her to sleep in her bra and panties. She opened the door and walked out of the room, leaving the door slightly ajar. She walked to the sitting room and she was face to face with his back, he seriously had ink all over his body.

Neelo:Rhys(small voice)

Rhys turned as he placed the t-shirt in the couch.

Rhys:Mma?

She got shivers from the way he responded.

Neelo:Is it okay, I sleep in these clothes?

Rhys frowned. He looked at her for a seconds before it clicked.

Rhys:Whatever you feel comfortable in Neelo, I don't know how many times am I supposed to say this.Your questions are starting to be annoying and very unnecessary.

She didn't mean for it to annoy him, she just hated being in a position to inconvenience people.

Neelo:Sorry. Uhm, goodnight...

Her small feet walked her along the passage and Rhys covered his face. He quickly followed her.

Rhys:Neelo, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

She stopped by the bedroom door and he stopped. He didn't know why he was apologizing too.

Neelo:It's totally okay.

Rhys sighed. As much as he wasn't an expert at reading ladies, this one had a certain quality to her he couldn't quite pinpoint.

Rhys:That came out as rude and I'm sorry.

Neelo nodded.

Neelo:As I said it's okay. You don't have to apologize, you just stated what was on your mind.

She was about to walk into the bedroom and he held her hand. She looked at his big hand over her small one and lifted her eyes to look at him. Her eyes didn't miss the six pack and his v line that disappeared into those jeans he was wearing.

Rhys:Neelo o ngadile?(Neelo are you upset?)

Neelo:Nyaa rra..

Rhys:Ke rile sorry tlhemma(I said sorry)(smiling)

Neelo had no choice but to smile. He had one hell of a smile, one that would make any lady want to do everything for him, no matter how bad it was.

Rhys:Ga wa ngala akere?(you are not upset?)

She shook her head and he found himself rubbing her chin as she looked up at him, she wasn't even doing anything to stop him.

Rhys:Good. Goodnight.

He let go of her small hand and chin as she stepped inside the room. She closed the door and he moved back taking in a deep breath.

He walked to the sitting room and he switched off the lights. He found the couch he had placed his stuff and he sat down. He proceeded to lay down and cover himself up with the blanket.

.

TROUBLED

#20

At Rhysand's farm house

Neelo woke up a bit disoriented. She looked around the room and it didn't look like her room. She rubbed her eyes and sat upright. A yawn escaped her lips and she placed her hand over her mouth. She got out of bed in her bra and panties. She figured that the clothes would make his blankets dirty and to smell, she didn't want that. Not at all. She picked up her clothes from the mat and she looked at the clothes. She had no choice but to wear them all over again. In minutes she was done and she just needed to splash water on her face, use mouthwash if it is available and pretend she is clean when she is not. What a nice convenient method to get through the day.

She opened the door and walked out. There was nothing cooking, no smell of food or anything and she figured that maybe she was going to make food.

Meanwhile outside, the men were a far away distance from the house as Rhys showed Mr Jones the cattle and everything.

Ra N:These are really great breeds.

Rhys:There are and since you said Neelo wants to expand your livestock, she can look into this breed. She just needs one bull to mate all the cows, artificially of course.

Ra N:You can help her, to also find where she can buy a pure breed bull.

Rhys:Okay sir.

They kept on talking as Ra N asked about Rhysand's horse, of course Rhysand had thought about horse breeding but it was expensive as compared to cow

breeding and he opted for the latter. This farm was what he was going to focus on while he was MIA.

After what seemed like eternity, they walked back to the house. Neelo had their voices and the door opened.

Ra N:you finally woke up.

Neelo:Yeah. Morning.

Rhys:Morning.

Ra N:Nene I have to go back home but Rhysand will drop you off at the farm when he comes back okay?

Neelo:Okay. It won't take long to go the village?

Ra N:I don't think it will.

Neelo nodded as she stood up to go hug her father.

Neelo:I will miss you and tell km I love her.

Ra N:alright.

He broke the hug and lightly kissed her cheek before

he walked out, followed by Rhys.

Neelo: Thank you and safe journey.

Rhys: We-welcome and thank you.

He walked out and closed the door in his way out.

Neelo sat on the chair and looked around. She stood up and headed to the kitchen to cook up something.

At Bobonong

It was three hours later when Rhysand's car stopped by Ra N's gate.

Rhys: I will look for someone who can help me tow the car so it can be fixed this side.

Ra N: Thank you son. God bless you abundantly.

Rhys nodded as Ra N got out of the car.

Ra N: Wait here for a moment.

He opened the gate and walked to the house. He immediately opened the door and disappeared inside the house. Rhys checked his watch and he knew that he had time to go back and take Neelo to their farm but he wasn't going to leave like now. He leaned back as Ra N came with a small backpack.

Ra N: this is for Nene, I don't know how she forgot the bag yesterday.

Rhys: Oh okay. Have a good day sir and I will make sure she is at the farm safe.

Ra N: if you can, please check on her every now and then..

Rhys: Ee rra.

The old man smiled as he walked back to the house and Rhys and drove off.

At Ma Rhys' house

Ruby parked her car outside and she opened the gate. Maybe she will find him and they can finally

talk. She knocked down the door and his mother opened up.

Ruby:Hey ma.

Ma Rhys:Hello Ruby, come in.

Ruby followed her inside and sat down as Rhysand's mother sat down.

Ruby:I kind of got lost looking for Rhysand's house.

Ma Rhys:It is not far from here though.

She began to give Ruby directions as Ruby listened attentively.

Ruby:Thank you so much ma. Let me go and tomorrow I am coming over so we spend time together.

Ma Rhys:I would like that. Bye.

Ruby stood up and walked out replaying all that Ma

Rhys said. By the time she reached her car she was sure she got it. She got inside and started the car.

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand parked his car in the yard and unlocked the house. He just wanted to delay time so he doesn't have to take Neelo to their farm. It wasn't as if she was going to take herself there, she didn't know how to ride a horse and there were no other cars that side. He sat down on the couch and stared at the blank tv screen. Did she bath? There was no geyser and he was sure she knew that, she didn't have any other clothes on her.

Ten minutes later Ruby parked her car outside the house. He was here, bingo. She would recognize his car from anywhere. She got out of her car and walked inside the yard since the gate was open. The door was open too, she knocked softly and walked inside.

Rhys and looked at the door and he just looked at her. For a short while he had forgotten about her existence. The first few days he spent nights thinking about how she did him wrong. Now she followed him from God knows where. A part of him had been hurt at true fact that she aborted his child but he guessed it was her choice and that happened six months ago even before their wedding day. Was there any use crying for spilt milk?

Ruby:Hello.

Rhys:What do you want?

She sat down next to him and tried to touch his hands but he pushed her hands away. She cleared her throat embarrassed.

Ruby:I came to talk, I just want us to talk..

Rhys:What's there to talk about Ruby?

Ruby:Us, our future. I know you are still angry..

Rhys:At this point in time, it's way past the anger. Your actions sent me a clear message and taught me some hard lessons.

Ruby sighed and looked at him. Where was the gentleness in his eyes? She couldn't see it anymore.

Ruby:I am sorry that I saw the light after it was too late, I hurt you badly and I know nothing I will ever say will take away the pain. But I love you Rhysand. So much and I can't bear not being with you. It will take some time to work on us but we can get therapy to work out our problems.

Rhysand sighed and looked at her. He didn't she was living in her own fantasy world where you hurt people and still expect the same people to be there with you.

Rhys:Ruby, me leaving last week signified the end of our relationship.

Ruby's eyes widened as her heart broke. He was breaking up with her?

Ruby:You are still angry, you don't mean that(tears welling in her eyes)

Rhys:I do. I cannot be with a woman who I cannot trust and you killed my child. A whole innocent child with no remorse. It's your body and you can do what you want but you never asked me if you can kill the child but it's okay. It all happened.

Ruby:Rhys you can't leave me(tears rolling down her eyes)I quit my job for you.

Rhys:Did I ask you to? No I did not. You did all of that in your own free will. All I did was love you but people like you always want back the love they gave away. You drove us off the road, you had me in the palm of your hand and you thought that since I love you I will forgive everything you did. Ruby I will never forgive you for killing my child and there is no coming back from that.

Ruby covered her eyes crying as Rhysand said that with a straight face.

Rhys:you brought us here, with all your actions,

deceit and lies.

Ruby: You are all I want Rhysand. I am so so-sorry.

Rhys: It's done. That was not love, I realized that I was never in love but was rather in love with the idea of having a family with a stable woman whom I would dedicate myself to.

Ruby's lips quivered as he said that in an indifferent tone.

Ruby: I'll wait for you. Just don't leave me Rhysand.

Rhys: It's over Ruby. You ended it all on your own.

She used her jacket sleeves to wipe her snot as more tears rolled down her eyes.

Ruby: Rhys we planned a future together, you sent your uncles to my house for magadi, I am still traditionally your wife.

Rhys: I can send my uncles back to get the magadi back and give them the reasons why, that their so called daughter in law saw it fit to kill our child and she is playing victim.

Ruby cried more. This was not her Rhysand talking.

Rhys:Your choice Ruby, the elders will still be told about our break up. Just accept that it's over and move on.

Ruby:I don't want to move on. I want you.

Rhys:Too bad. You are disturbing my peace, kopa o ntswele ka ntlo mma (please leave my house)

She looked at him again and he was serious. This wasn't Rhysand. She looked around the house trying to see if there was maybe a woman who was around. She was the apple of Rhysand's eye and now he wanted nothing to do with her.

Ruby:Who is she?

Rhys chuckled.

Rhys:Please leave my house, I want to go out.

Ruby:You can't leave me Rhysand. Not in this lifetime.

Rhys:Ehe mma..

Was he patronizing her?

Rhys:Ruby wee, I am trying my best to be as civil as I can with you. O motona breakups happen, ntswele ka ntlo.

Ruby:I am supposed to be your wife, you gave me this ring(flashing her engagement ring)promising to marry me and you sent your uncles to pay magadi, I can take you to court for that. Try me..

Rhys:Am I supposed to be scared now?

She huffed and folded her arms.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#21

At Rhysand's farm

Neelo walked out of the house and looked around. There was no sign of his car and she had no change of clothes here. She sighed. She had long finished cooking and he should be on his way back or she hoped he was on his way back.

She relented and closed the door before she walked to the kitchen. She took out the biggest pot there was and filled it with water before she placed it on the stove. She walked to the bedroom and got rid of her clothes. She unclipped her bra and removed her panties. She did see a towel on top of the bed. She picked her clothes and walked to the bed, she placed the clothes on top and the bra before she wrapped

the towel around her body. She walked out of the bedroom and went to the bathroom where she filled the sink with water and picked the hand soap there to start washing her panties. She had no choice and she needed to get clean. She had no clothes on her, just her small bag that had her phone and wallet. Akere she thought that they would arrive at their farm yesterday but the skorokoro betrayed them.

After she finished washing her panties she hung them on the rail so that they would dry. So she was going to be naked underneath the towel after her bath? Great! Just great!

She sat on the toilet seat, doing nothing at all. She was bored out of her mind and she wouldn't go outside, she had no clean clothes, her panties were drying and Rhysand was taking his sweet time coming back here. She knew the panties weren't going to dry immediately, they would dry faster if she hung them outside but imagine her naked

underneath a towel going to hang panties outside? She didn't picture herself doing that. She was going to have to wait, take a bath in the meantime and see what she could do. She regretted forgetting her bag back at her parents house.

At Rhysand's house

Ruby saw that he was unrelenting and just stared at her make crazy tantrums and demands.

Rhys:Do as you please but you are no longer a part of my life Ruby. What we had is gone.

Ruby:you loved me.

Rhys:Highlight the word "loved".

Ruby:Feelings just don't have an on and off switch you can press when you decide that you no longer want someone.

Rhys:Are you hearing yourself right now? You forgot the role you played in all of this. You are the reason this relationship is non-existent. Who was an

undercover cop? Who sent me to prison? Who killed my motherfucking baby?

She went quiet.

Rhys:Answer me dammit!

Ruby:I-I did.

Rhys:Exactly now get the fuck out wa ntiya.

She stood up and looked at him. She slowly walked to the door expecting him to at least stop her and say he wanted to work on them. Rhys watched her walk out, she was never there for love in the first place. He wondered why she bothered and why it had hurt so bad on the day he came out of prison.

Ruby turned to face him and he wasn't saying a word.

Ruby:I still lo-

Rhys:Tswa!

Tears choked her. He was saying all of this to her? Her? She walked out as more tears rolled down her eyes. Her knees failed her by the time she reached her car. She couldn't breathe, he was leaving her? He was done? Like done with her? She cried by her car as she opened the door. She got inside and cried fully when she was inside the car. He was really done with her? It hurt so bad.

Meanwhile in the house Rhysand walked to his kitchen and looked around. The kitchen back at the farm was fully stocked though so there was nothing short. He made his way to the bedroom and he sent his brother a text before he opened the wardrobe and took out his laptop. He walked out of the house and Ruby's car was still parked outside. He put his laptop in the car before walking back into the house. That made Ruby cry some more in her car. He honestly didn't care if she was okay or she was breathing fine?

She started her car and weakly placed her hands on the steering wheel. Her hands shook as she joined the road and drove off with tears blurring her vision.

Rhys leaned on the kitchen door as he called his mother.

Ma Rhys:Hello...

Rhys:Hi mother, I am not around but I will be around next week. I wanted you tell my uncles that the wedding is off.

Ma Rhys:Why?

Rhys:Do you honestly want to know mother?

Ma Rhys:There will want a good reason and as the family we should talk it out if there is a problem that you too cannot solve. Akere we are always there.

Rhys:I will be around next week when they visit her family, she did a lot of things that I can't move past tota. Tla ga gotwe ke mmua bosula.

Ma Rhys:What happened?

Rhys sighed as he checked the time. There was no way Neelo can go home right now.

Rhys:Oh she aborted our child.

Ma Rhys:Babirwa ba ntsetse. She did what?

Rhys:She did that, she is not even remorseful but then again Ruby has been dishonest from the beginning. We will talk more about this next week.

Ma Rhys:tlhe Ruby wa teng o mowa maswe jang, she was here looking for you kante...

Rhys:Yes. She just left.

Ma Rhys:I can't believe I trusted her with your heart, are you fine my boy?

Rhys laughed.

Rhys:I am fine mama.

Ma Rhys:Are you sure? You can come over and I can

cook for you.

Rhys:It's okay mom. I'm fine. Next week I'll be there.
I have to g back to the farm okay?

Ma Rhys:Safe journey.

Rhys:Thank you and bye. Take care of yourself and if
there is anything that you need call Alex.

Ma Rhys:Alright.

Rhys hung up and walked out of the house. He
searched his pockets for his keys which he found
and locked the house.

He was going to go to the shops first to buy a few
things before he headed back to the farm.

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#22

At Rhysand's farm

Neelo pulled back the curtains and the sun was setting already. She was probably not going back today was she? She sighed and sat down in the couch still in that towel but she had added a fleece to keep her warm. The magazines that were on the table did not interest her one bit, if she had at least found a novel. She laid down on the couch and pulled the fleece close as she shut her eyes. Maybe by the time she wakes up it will be tomorrow.

At Ruby's parents

Ma Ruby rubbed Ruby's back as she cried.

Ruby:Mama he left me. He doesn't want to marry me anymore(crying)

Ma Ruby:Why? What happened?

Ruby:I-I don't know.

Ma Ruby:Someone just cannot leave you for no reason.

Ruby:I-maybe he left me for another woman.

Ma Ruby:Now now, let's not jump into conclusions. I will tell your father to tell your uncles so this issue can be addressed.

Ruby looked at her mom and her mother hugged her.

Ma Ruby:It will be fine..

Ruby:When? I love Rhysand so much.

Ma Ruby:I know my child. I know..

She sniffed and placed her head on her mother's shoulder.

At Rhysand's farm

Rhysand parked his car under the tree and looked around. The lights were not on, was she sleeping or she opted to stay in the dark. It was just a few minutes after 7pm so he didn't think she was sleeping. He got out of the car with the bag her father gave him and the plastics filled with snacks. He will be back for the laptop in a few minutes. He opened the door and switched on the lights. She was asleep on the couch.

He headed to the kitchen and placed the plastics down. He walked to the bedroom and placed the bag in the room. He was about to walk out when he saw her clothes and bra on top of the well made bed. She didn't have changing clothes and she was probably banking on going back today. He walked out to go get the laptop from the car. Neelo opened her eyes and closed them as the cold air blew over her face.

She yawned and sat upright before she opened her eyes. She slept with the lights off.

The door closed and she pulled the fleece up.

Rhys:Hey.

Neelo:Hi. Uhm I fell asleep, how was your journey?(softly)

Rhys:It was fine. Did you eat?

Neelo:I made lunch, it's in the kitchen.

He placed the laptop down as he sat on the sofa next to hers.

Rhys:Thank you.

Neelo:Uhm will you be able to take me to our farm tomorrow?

Rhys:Ee mma.

Neelo:Thank you.

She pulled the fleece closer and just looked at him. From what her hairdresser said, she said he was in prison and had a fiancé.

Neelo:Uhm, excuse me.

She stood up and fixed her towel as she picked the fleece as well. Rhys kept his eyes on her as she walked to the bedroom. She placed the fleece down and frowned seeing her bag. She opened it and checked if what she had packed in was still inside. Okay she had a change of clothes but she still won't be able to sleep with the clothes. They would be for tomorrow's journey. She walked out of the bedroom and headed to the bathroom and closed the door. She checked if her panties were dry and she was glad to say they were dry. She quickly put them on and washed her hands. She was going to be in the room because what she was wearing was inappropriate and besides she didn't have to bother the man. She might as well sleep.

Rhys walked out of the kitchen with a plate of food. She did not have to cook but she did. He placed the plate on the table and walked to the bedroom. He knocked on the slightly ajar door.

Neelo:Come in.

He walked inside. She sat upright on the bed and flashed a smile.

Rhys:I brought my laptop, if you want we could watch a movie. There are a few movies inside.

Neelo thought about it. She had been bored out of her mind the whole day and what harm could a single movie do. She looked at what she was wearing and before she could say anything.

Rhys:You can find one of my shirts in the wardrobe and you can join me in the sitting room.

He walked out and she got off the bed, she walked to the wardrobe to take out one of his shirts. She could smell the distinct cologne on the shirt. She removed it from the hanger and dropped the towel

before she started to button it up.

Meanwhile in the lounge Rhys went to put his food away and came back with the chips, marshmallows, juice and glasses. He placed the snacks on the table before he opened the laptop to switch it on.

Minutes later, Neelo came and he looked at her again. That shirt looked like a dress on her.

Neelo: Is something wrong? Or it's not the shirt I was supposed to take?

Rhys: No, nothing is wrong. Sit down. You can pick a movie.

She joined him on the carpet and looked at the chips there. She loved marshmallows and she looked at them for a few seconds before looking at the laptop screen.

Neelo: Let us see which movies are there.

Rhys wasn't sure if it was lust but he wanted her. He watched her read the movie titles silently. Neelo felt his eyes on her and she turned to look at him. His eyes were fixated on him and that sent chills down her spine.

Neelo:Is something wrong?

Rhys:No.

She picked a movie and she clasped her hands.

Neelo:Can I have the marshmallows?

Rhys:Sure..

She got the full packet and she opened it as the movie started. Rhys looked at the duration of the movie and leaned back against the sofa as he watched it with her.

30 minutes into the movie, Neelo had found herself

pausing the movie. The main character was so annoying.

Neelo:Sorry for that Keore waitse....

She went to rant about the movie and Rhys was focused on the way her lips were moving, kissable.

Neelo:Rhys? Okay I was just over heated. Urgg!

She turned her head but his hand moved to touch her chin and with no warning at all, he brought down his head to peck her lips softly. His hand moved to hold the base of her neck and Neelo's heart skipped a thousand beats at once, this escalated real fast. He looked at her and smiled. Why did he have to smile at her right now?

Rhys:Goriana wa bua?(smiling)

She blushed and he chuckled still looking at her. He let go of her neck and he pulled her to him. Portable alright.

Neelo awkwardly looked at the laptop screen as she

unpaused the movie. His arms were wrapped protectively around her shoulders. As she watched the movie she unconsciously snuggled into him while she ate the chips. She moved her head and looked at him.

Neelo:Chips??

Rhys:You can have them..

Neelo:Sure?

Rhys:Yes.

She faced the screen again and placed her head back on his chest. He wasn't really concentrating on the movie just her.

When the movie ended she sighed.

Neelo:Finally! She was starting to get to me.

She moved her head and looked at him.

Neelo:Did you enjoy the movie?

Rhys:I did.

Neelo:So what happened?

He bit his tongue. He didn't know what happened.

Neelo:I figured. Thank you for letting me watch a movie.

Rhys:The pleasure is all mine..

Neelo:Are you always such a gentleman?

Rhys:Babe I'm far from being a gentleman...

Neelo:Really now?

They eyes locked and Neelo was unaware that she was stoking a flame she would never be able to put out. Rhys held her cheek, there was no way they were going back with the way they were looking at each other. He smiled before he brought his head down to kiss her lips. He gently kissed her and Neelo's blood ran hot and cold in her veins.

They shared that kiss that felt like something foreign to Neelo. He moved to her neck and kissed her gently before he sucked on her neck and Neelo released a small whimper. Rhys inwardly cursed as he picked her up without breaking his kiss. He walked to the bedroom and closed the door with his foot before he pinned her against the wall.

They kissed fervently and he groaned, it has been a long while since his blood was running like this. He broke the kiss and looked into her eyes, she had an innocence about her. He smiled and pecked her lips. What was supposed to turn into a simple peck turned into another full blown kiss. He kissed her while he undid his pants, his boner was already straining his jeans and it hurt. He stepped out of his jeans as he picked her up to place her on the bed. He got rid of his t-shirt in seconds and was left in his briefs. Neelo was still recovering from those kisses when he kissed her again and got between her legs. Neelo could feel all the blood that hummed in one area, remembering that it has been years since she

last had sex. She breathed into his neck as her hands slid under his t-shirt. She felt his muscles and packs while Rhys pulled down his briefs too before he removed his t-shirt.

He lifted the shirt he was wearing and he started to rub on her and she moaned.

Rhys:F-fuck! I don't have condoms with me right now.

Neelo:Mmhmm(moaning)

Rhys could feel her wet panties and he groaned. He removed the shirt she was wearing before he roughly pulled down her cotton panties. He rubbed himself against her flaps and her moans got louder.

Rhys:Uh-fuck! We should stop this bef-fuck!

Neelo:stop-Uh. Mhmm..

The motion of him rubbing himself up and down on her was so good.

Rhys:Ga ke tsenye ee(kissing her neck)we'll stop ee..

There were no condoms around here but fuck he wanted to fuck her. He touched her cheek kissing her lips again as she moaned into his mouth. He was going to just risk this, just this one.

His hands moved to her thighs as he opened her legs wider and #EXPLICIT

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#23

At Rhysand's farm

The following morning

Neelo was fast asleep when Rhys walked in with breakfast in a tray. He looked at her small figure resting in bed and he knew she was tired. She turned to face the other way with her eyes still closed and he chuckled. He hasn't met anyone who looks this cute in their sleep. He placed the tray down and walked out of the room to go check on the water he boiled in the kitchen. He poured the water in the bucket and refilled the kettle. A yawn escaped his lips as he covered his mouth, they didn't get any sleep so he understood why she was still asleep.

He walked back to the bedroom and watched her sleep. Minutes later he found himself waking her up gently. Neelo's eyelids fluttered open and she looked at him. Rhys smiled and softly kissed her lips.

Rhys:Morning.

Neelo:Hi..(softly)

She smiled and tried to sit upright. Her thighs hurt so bad, her womanly parts even worse.

Neelo:What's the time?

Rhys:a few minutes after 8.

Neelo:Okay.

Rhys:I made breakfast. Eat up and I will be back.

Neelo forced herself to sit upright as he placed the tray on her lap. He kissed her lips again and walked out. In the kitchen he poured water in the bucket before he refilled the kettle once more. The bucket was almost full but he will ask her if she does want

to take a bath now.

The bedroom door opened and she looked up as Rhys walked back inside.

Neelo: Thank you for the breakfast.

Rhys smiled. He watched her take tiny bites out of the food before she drank down the juice. She placed the glass down and flashed a pretty smile his way and he wanted to kiss her.

Neelo: Done.

Rhys: There is hot water you can use to bath unless you want to sleep and bath later. I have no problem with that even if you want to spend the night again.

Neelo laughed softly.

Neelo: Okay.

Rhys: Okay?

Neelo: I will take a bath. Thank you Rhys.

He kissed her once again and she let him.

Rhys:Neelo?

Neelo:Rra?

Rhys:Don't go today.

She looked at him before laughing.

Neelo:You promised to take me back to my father's farm Rhysand. You promised.

Rhys:Just for today.

Neelo:Ng ng. Even tomorrow tla bo o re just for today. Help me off the bed.

He did so and she wrapped a towel around her body while Rhys bit his lower lip but he held back as she picked her panties and walked out of the bathroom. Rhysand followed her to the bathroom.

Neelo:What?

Rhys:O montle..

Neelo: Thank you. Uhm where is the water?

Rhys: Theemma don't go!

Neelo: Rhysand!

Rhys: Please!

Neelo: I should leave Rhysand. You're engaged to be married and it will eat me up knowing I am destroying someone's relationship.

Rhysand pulled her to him and held her waist.

Rhys: Who said I have a woman in my life?

Neelo: People talk..

Rhys: Baby girl, I don't have a woman in my life. You're the woman in my life.

Neelo frowned. This must've been the weirdest way to say someone is now your girlfriend. You have sex the day before and the following day you two are an item.

Rhys:Don't let people lie to you.

He kissed her lips slowly and gently before picking her up.

Neelo:Rhys, I'm still sore. Tlaya ka metsi.

Rhys looked at her and her soft spoken nature. She wasn't difficult and that in a way allowed him to respect her wishes because she got her point across without fighting. He placed her down on her feet and walked out. Neelo sat on the toilet seat and looked around. Just like that? Maybe she was sleeping and she needed to wake up from that dream. No way did she meet a man who screams TROUBLE from miles away and there is no way in hell she allowed herself to be mercilessly get fucked and enjoy it. It was absolutely impossible that he just said she was the woman in his life. Does this happen in Botswana or she is back in her fictional world again?

The door opened and he placed the bucket down. He cleaned the bathtub and filled it with some cold

water before pouring hot water inside.

Rhys:Your water is ready.

He kissed her cheek and closed the door on his way out. Neelo got inside the bathtub, last night was intense and she needed to listen to her raging nerves that hadn't been active in years. He was a rough rider alright. She found herself laughing at that statement, in a way he had warned her now here she was.

At Ma Rhys house

She served the uncles tea and scones.

Ma Rhys:Rhysand told me yesterday.

Uncle:A reng motlogolo?(what did my nephew say)?

Ma Rhys clapped her hands. Once. Then twice. She still couldn't believe Ruby could do that to her son.

She couldn't believe it.

Ma Rhys:He just got out of prison akere, gatwe Ruby o sentse mpa (apparently Ruby had an abortion)

Uncle 2:Hee banna!

Uncle:Jesu!

Ma Rhys:Rhysand said he doesn't want her anymore. He wanted me to tell you so that we tell this to her family. He will be here next week.

Uncle:I support his decision, what was her excuse to do that to our nephew?

Ma Rhys:I do not know.

Uncle 2:we will set a meeting and get to the bottom of this but even without the full story, Rhys did well. She didn't have to kill the child.

Ma Rhys:Not at all.

Uncle:Rhys should be here by next week.

They all agreed and the uncles agreed that they will set up a meeting at Ruby's parents to discuss this.

Rhys was done with Ruby.

At Tutume

Kago had tried Neelo's phone and it wasn't going through.

Ma Aone: We need to go to their house and we need to get out bride back, she still uses our last name and them returning the magadi means nothing.

Ma Aone said. Ever since that girl left the family while in mourning everything went south. The money was gone and all they had was Aone's empty house in Francistown. They had to sell the furniture to sustain them. Maybe if Kago married her, since seantlo was still practiced things will go well in their family.

Ma Aone: Next week, we are sending your uncles to go discuss that matter, she is still our bride and is part of the family.

Kago:Yeah.

The only reason why Kago was not against this was because he loved Neelo from a distance and having her as his wife would be a dream come true. Having to hold her close and wake up next to her each day and her even having his babies.

At Rhysand's farm

Neelo sat on the bed and massaged her thighs. Her panties were still wet and she was going to have to wait till they dried and then get ready to leave. The bedroom door opened and Rhys walked in his boxers.

Rhys:Bored?

Neelo:Mhm. Don't you have novels?

Rhys:No. Tlhemma tla kwano (please come here)

She looked at him and she got off the bed walking to

him. His large frame engulfed her and he looked at her.

Rhys:Don't you want to eat something?

Neelo:Still full from earlier. Since you got what you wanted, you can stop being a gentleman Rhysand.

He chuckled and kissed her neck, sending butterflies to her stomach.

Rhys:You still don't know me. If I wanted sex I wouldn't have to work for it Neelo.

Neelo had a said that because she had been used back in her varsity days. That boy played her like a yo-yo and she told herself she won't allow herself to be used like that. She wasn't going to hurt herself with hope that he meant what he said earlier on. At this point in her life, all she wanted was a love that lasts and a good guy. We're her expectations too high?

The explicit might be posted at night or tomorrow morning. Thank you

TROUBLED

#24

At Rhysand's farm

Rhysand pulled Neelo closer to her as he told her about the breeds he currently had in the Karl.

Neelo:Where should I buy from?

Rhys:I recommend farmers from Tuli block.

Neelo:Duly noted.

She stopped walking and looked around in her hat.

Rhys pulled down her hat and she slapped his hands away laughing.

Neelo:I can't see tlherra wena.

She fixed it and looked around. Operation build up

her father's farm was well underway.

Neelo: Still on the cattle issue, if I do venture into rearing cattle for meat how far will that go?

Rhys: Not very far. BMC is closed in Francistown and the current BMC branches do not pay farmers on time. Well it's either that or they pay peanuts. Imagine putting in love the work for your cows to be healthy and you are underpaid yet you spent more than that in raising those cattle.

Neelo: Makes a lot of sense but there are butcheries around.

Rhys: Don't tell me they will honestly pay a lot of money for your cow? They are small butcheries
Neelo.

Neelo: I don't know then.

Rhys: Why are you so focused on the livestock aspect of agriculture?

Neelo: Livestock is better than crops, look at Botswana's seasonal rainfall. If it doesn't rain when expected I am doomed and the money spent in

tractors. Besides papa doesn't have that much land to be able to grow crops and sell them large scale hence I'm more into the pastoral farming of it. I won't be able to manage both.

Rhys nodded.

Neelo:I will think about it, I think papa agreed just because it was me who was suggesting such.

Rhys:Maybe he saw potential.

Neelo laughed.

Neelo:I know nothing. I was bad at agriculture at school Rhys. I am sure papa kept on asking himself if I was his daughter.

Rhys:But you can learn.

Neelo:Mhmm..

They slowly walked back to the house, it was a ten minute walk and she liked that everything was close by. Made it easy for him to monitor it all. His arms were around her and she smiled. She hoped he did not forget to take her to her father's farm.

When they arrived at the house, she removed her hat and yawned. She was walking even though her thighs hurt? She surprises herself sometimes. She sat down and yawned.

Rhys:You should rest.

Neelo:if that's an attempt to make me stay here another night, it won't work Rhysand.

She got off the couch and walked to the bedroom. She stuffed her dirty clothes in the bag and she picked the bag along with her small one. She walked to the sitting room and placed the bags down.

Rhys:That's a clear message.

Neelo:I hope it's loud too.

He chuckled.

Rhys:You want to go now?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Rhys:Let me go start the car then.

He picked his car keys from the table then walked outside. He unlocked the car as he approached.

Meanwhile Neelo looked around the house, she still couldn't believe that she was his girlfriend already. The way he put it, showed that he was not debating with her at all.

She placed her hands on her lap waiting for him to come. Minutes later he stepped inside the house.

Rhys:Let's go.

He got her bags even though she could carry them herself.

Neelo:You don't have to.

At Ruby's parents

Ruby was done crying. Maybe he forgot how it felt when they were in love. This was just one of the problems couples encountered, he forgave her for sending him to prison so that was not a factor. The abortion was not supposed to happen and she could have talked to him about it. She admits she made a mistake but she still loves him. One does not get over the person they love in just a week.

Ruby:God help me fight for my man please, Lord show me the way.

She was trying to make the worse seem better, he had a million reasons to quit on them and walk away but he needed one good reason to stay. She was going to remind him about everything they had. How they met, how they fell in love and when he proposed marriage.

Ruby found herself smiling as she went down memory lane, okay she knew him but he didn't know

her. She had to admit that he looked so much better in person than in the pictures. All raw masculinity and muscle. How that ink made him one of the baddest boys to ever walk into her life. Okay he was a bad boy but that bad boy was willing to move heaven and earth for her. She was going to make amends.

She sat cross legged on the bed as she thought of ways she was going to use to remind him. She should also check on him tomorrow.

At Ra N's farm

After a 20 minute drive, Rhys parked his car and he looked at the small house. It looked cosy.

Neelo looked at him and smiled. He kept his promise this time.

Rhys kissed her and she leaned more into him as his tongue expertly explored her mouth. He moved his

hand to her left breast and squeezed gently eliciting a moan from her. His other hand move to the waistline of her tights. Why did she have to wear tights? He wanted to push them down along with her panties, if it was up to him she wouldn't have to wear panties when he was around.

Neelo:Uh Rhys. Stop...

He stopped immediately and looked at her.

Neelo:I'm still sore.

He sighed and nodded. He kissed her cheek. She was probably still exhausted and he had seen how she had been walking half the day even though she didn't want to elaborate on the soreness. He got out of the car and got her bags from the backseat. Neelo got out of the car and walked behind his large frame. He got to the door and she got her small bag from him. She searched for the house keys and she used them to unlock the house.

Neelo:Uhm you can have a seat.

Rhys:I'm not staying for long babe.

She nodded. This sounded like a goodbye. The one where the guy got what he wanted and was going to let her down slow so it doesn't seem like he used her. She was a big girl and she had anticipated this in a way, besides she agreed to the sex and it was mind blowing.

Rhys watched her facial expressions and frowned. There was a deep hurt in her eyes. She shrugged and smiled at him.

Neelo:Alright. Thank you so much for bringing me home.

Rhys:Is there anything wrong?

Neelo:Not at all.

The bag was already on the floor and he was still on his feet.

Rhys:Come here.

She walked to him and he lifted her head up.

Rhys:Sure?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Rhys:I am not a mind reader Neelo. If there is anything that is bothering you do tell me, I hate having to guess why you're upset or your mind is suddenly off.

Neelo:Ee rra.

Rhys:So there is nothing wrong?

Neelo:Nothing at all.

He looked into her eyes trying to search for the emotion he saw earlier in her eyes. He kissed her forehead.

Rhys:If you say so. I have to go okay?

Neelo:Okay. Bye!

He kissed her forehead again and let her go. He walked out and Neelo sat down in the sofa. She wasn't even going to ask him if he is coming back or it was all a hoax to make her sleep with him regardless of the fact that he had a fiancée. She sighed and leaned back closing her eyes. She should focus on improving her father's farm.

.

.

*

*

*

A WEEK LATER

N.B:Let's work together to reach the target people. We still have three more inserts to go and the explicit. Let's reach the target. I don't want to talk much about reaching the target. Do best.

TROUBLED

#25

At Neelo's parents

Ra Neelo was having his morning tea with his wife by his side when a door knock disrupted their morning peace.

Ma N:Who could it be?

Ra N:I have no idea.

His wife stood up and went to open the door. She was astonished to see Aone's mother, what where they doing in her yard?

Ma N:Good morning, how can I assist you?

Ma Aone:Good morning, Ma Neelo..

Ma Neelo was amazed at the level of humbleness in

her tone. What was going on?

Ma Aone:There is something that we would like to discuss..

Ma N:Okay. Come in.

She opened the door wider and Ma Aone walked in along with her husband and two other elders. Ra Neelo frowned as he placed his tea cup down. Now he has to leave his cup of tea to attend to these people whom he knew very well mistreated his daughter but Neelo being the dignified and humble girl he raised didn't want to start squabbles and just told them she'll be alright.

Ra Aone:Dumelang batsadi.

Ma Neelo sat next to her husband as her husband greeted back.

Ra Aone:We have an important and burning issue we have to discuss with you.

Ra N:We are listening.

Ra Neelo listened carefully as they laid their cards on the table. He didn't want to react in any way to what they were saying while his wife was just shocked. She didn't know what to say to these people.

Ra Aone: In other words, Neelo is still Aone's bride and she is still our daughter in law. She uses our last name and therefore it won't be wrong for Kago to take care of his brother's wife.

Ra N: You want my daughter to marry Aone's brother.

Ma Aone: Ee.

Ra N: Why did we return magadi?

They all kept quiet.

Ra N: My daughter is not obligated to marry your son or is she forced to agree into this nonsensical idea of yours. She left without a cent and returned the magadi money. Ngwana yole wa re nna, ya gore o dirisa sefane sa mang ga di nkame mme ngwanake ga a nyale ko galona. (that child is mine, it doesn't

matter whose surname she uses but she is not marrying into your family)It will happen over my dead body.

Ra Aone:It's culture.

Ra N:Seantlo is a thing of the past, my daughter won't be trapped into such nonsense. You got your magadi money so leave my house please.

Ma Aone:where is Neelo? She can speak for herself..

Ma N:Ng ng. No one is stressing my daughter, where she is is no one's business. Please leave my husband's yard and never come back.

Ma Aone chuckled.

Ma Aone:This issue is not over, we will be back to discuss it when Neelo is around so that she can make the decision herself.

They said their good byes and left leaving the Jones amazed. Wow!

Ra N:ba tlwaela ngwanake.(They don't take my child seriously)

Ma N:Thata. Emete ba ka rathwa ke tladi (wish they could get hit by lightning)

Meanwhile in the car, Kago tried Neelo's phone as his parents approached. Her phone wasn't going through. It was most probably off.

Ma Aone got in the car followed by her husband and the two elders.

Ma Aone:Neelo wasn't around. We will come back when she is around. We will wait for a few days and keep coming to check. I knew they would be angry but the more they think about it, the more they will see that it makes sense.

Kago started the car and hoped he could get a hold of Neelo before they tell her so he could woo her and see where to take it from there.

At Ruby's parents

Ma Ruby checked on Ruby who has been in a much lighter mood this week.

Ma Ruby: Don't forget that tomorrow, Rhys and his elders will be here.

Ruby: Ee mma.

Ruby nodded. She will go check on him tonight to see if she can convince him otherwise with their memories. Right now she should chill and relax.

At Ra N's farm

Neelo's nails tore into his back as he pumped in and out of her. Her soft moans kept him going as she spasmed beneath him and he twitched while buried deep inside of her.

Neelo: Uh... Oooh!

He was about to come when he pulled out and came

all over her flat stomach. He cursed under his breath and kissed her lips. He was following her command, it had been hard to pull out first time especially when she had kept him on lock with her legs and fuck, he wanted to nut in her but he had to pull out. She was near tears two days ago saying that she doesn't want to fall pregnant and all that.

Neelo breathed hard as she opened her eyes, she looked at him and rubbed his beard.

Rhys:I listened this time mam.

She chuckled feeling his sticky cum on her stomach. He got off her and got a towel to wipe it off.

Rhys:Wa bona go nna mo masimo, there is no hot water.

Neelo yawned.

Rhys:Don't sleep yet, it's still morning.

Neelo:I know. You kept me up last night.

Rhys:Sorry babe..(kissing her cheek)

He laid next to her and pulled her to him.

Rhys:I'm going to the village later on.

Neelo:Okay.

Rhys:Come with me.

Neelo:It's okay, you can go.

Rhys:Neelo?

Neelo:Rra?

Rhys:We can go together and we can get tested the day after tomorrow or even tomorrow in the afternoon.

Neelo turned to face him, he does have a point and they have been having unprotected sex.

Neelo:Okay.

Rhys:You'll go with me?

Neelo:Ee rra.

He kissed her neck. They needed to wash up and maybe pass by his farm today going to the village.

Rhys:We should get up or else we are going to fall asleep.

Neelo:Okay.

She said as she placed her head on his chest and he laughed.

Neelo:Ke lapile..(I am tired)

Rhys:You are going to have to keep up little mama..

He moved her head and laughed as she whined.

Rhys:Let's go boil the water.

Neelo:There is nothing sexy about boiling water.

Rhys:O rata dilo, tla reye (you like things, let's go)

He picked her up and placed her down on her feet.

Neelo:It's cold.

Rhys raised an eyebrow and she looked at him with a straight face. He wore his boxers and grabbed a

fleece blanket wrapping it around her.

Rhys:Happy?

Neelo:It's better than nothing.

He shook his head and she laughed as she walked besides him.

Neelo:Just so you know there is nothing sexy about boiling water on a stove Rhysand. Just saying.

Rhys:O tshaba metsi.(you are a scared of water)

Neelo:Me? No, it's still too cold for a bath.

Later that day

Neelo got dressed in her woolen dress and she got her bag. Rhys had left earlier and said he was going to the farm to get ready.

She sat down on the chair as she thought about the events that took place the past week. She really

hoped she wasn't setting her up for disappointment. It was not too late to stop whatever that was happening between her and Rhysand and move on as if he didn't exist.

She heard the car engine and she assumed he was back. She pulled the sleeves of her dress as she stood up. She had her small bag with her and she made a mental note to get more books from her parents house. She will also let her father know about the progress she made.

Rhys stepped inside and Neelo looked up.

Neelo: We can go. We won't arrive there late?

Rhys: a little after seven.

Neelo: Okay.

She walked out as he followed. She locked the house and both of them made their way to the car.

Rhys: We will pass by the shops when we get there, for something to eat. (pulling her seatbelt.)

Neelo:You don't have to. You can just drop me off
my parents house.

Rhys:Aren't you hungry?

Neelo:I am b-

Rhys:No buts babe.

He reversed and drove off.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#26

At Bobonong

Rhys parked his car and looked at Neelo.

Rhys:Let's go buy something from the shops.

Neelo:You go a-

Rhys:Ypu are not remaining in the car mma.

Neelo:Fine.

He got of the car and waited for her. She walked to his side and he extended his hand for her, she took it and they walked to the shops.

Rhys:You're not cold?

Neelo:It's a bit chilly though.

He let go of her hand and removed his jacket, placed it on her shoulders and he was left in his black

turtleneck.

Neelo:Rhys the gentleman(laughing)thank you.

Rhys smiled as they walked hand in hand talking. He was just watching her talk and the way her eyes lit up when she was narrating the latest novel she read this week.

Rhys:Which course did you study?

Neelo:Archives and records management. Anyway as I was saying babe...

She stopped and a smile curved on his lips. It was the first time she addressed him as such and she didn't know whether to jump for joy or freak out that she might get attached to a man that is not hers.

Rhys:I'm listening.

She just let that slip slide and she went to tell him as he got a basket and they headed to different aisle sections while they talked and kissed in between

Rhys:Tsaya di marshmallow.

She picked them from the shelf and placed them in the basket. She stopped walking as she spotted her parents. She was sure her mother saw her because they were looking at each other.

Neelo:Flip! Ema ha pele ga me.(Stand in front of me)

Rhys was confused as he looked at her. Neelo looked down and pretended to be heading the other way so that they won't see her. Rhys was left in the middle of the aisle wondering what the hell was going on. He looked ahead and he saw someone he was sure he recognized. He looked back and Neelo was nowhere to be seen. He looked ahead and that was Mr Jones. He was walking out of the store with his wife. He kept on placing things in the basket and out of nowhere Neelo appeared.

Rhys:And?

Neelo:You saw those two? My parents? They did see me did they? Bathong they are going to ask questions when I arrived at home late. Ke bo past seven and they act like interrogation officers where I am concerned.

Rhys burst into laughter and Neelo lightly slapped his bicep.

Neelo:Therra se tshege.(please don't laugh)

Rhys:Neelo you are acting like a teenager who is going to get scolded if her parents knew she was dating.

Neelo:I am not going to get scolded but it's weird. What if they saw us kissing Rhys? Modimo waaka!

Rhys placed the basket down and held her shoulders.

Rhys:Babe?

She looked up at him.

Rhys:Breath in and out and remind yourself that you are a grown woman my sweet thing. Do that.

She did that over and over again.

Rhys:You are what?

Neelo:A grown woman. I am a grown woman.

Rhys:Repeat it over and over again.

Neelo:Yoh she saw me!joh joh!

Rhys laughed and she wanted to hit him over and over again. It was not funny at all.

Rhys:Even if you get upset we are here and I am not sure if I will be heading back to the farm in the next few days.

Neelo:What?(eyes widening)

Neelo:Rhysand o moloi tlherra...

He laughed as her small voice rang in his ear while walking to the till.

Neelo:And you are smiling. You are so going to pay for this..

Rhysand bent his head and whispered in her ear.

Rhys:O ska leka go ntima kuku Neelo. Ya re nna yeo.

Her cheeks reddened and she pushed him back as

he gave her a naughty smile. People were watching and he was saying such.

He laughed and kissed her cheeks as they joined the line. It was not a long one and Neelo was silent till after he paid.

Rhys:You are quiet now?

Neelo:You are going to laugh at me, number two wa lowa tlherra wena! Number three I am scared of going home..

He laughed and she looked at him.

Neelo:Exactly my point.

Rhys:Spend the night and I will drop you home in the morning ee.

Neelo:Gore o lale o nja bosigo jotlhe? Nnyaa rra.

His eyes widened and he laughed. Did she just say that? With a plain face Neelo got the keys from his jacket pocket and unlocked the door. She opened the backseat door so he can put the plastics there and she walked to the passenger seat, waiting for

him to join her.

Rhys:You are going to have to eat first and at my place and there is food and you are scared of going home now(smiling)

Neelo:it's not even funny. I hate you.

Rhys:No you don't, buckle up sweet thing.

She buckled up and handed him his car keys so he can start the car.

Rhys:Even if you sulk, you know you are spending the night because you don't want to answer questions at home.

Neelo:Don't talk to me.

She faced the other way and he burst out in uncontrollable laughter. His laughing got to Neelo and she smiled a little bit while folding her arms. He kissed her cheek and she playfully pushed him away but he kept on kissing her cheek till she laughed.

Neelo:Ga o kgatlhe Rice(you are not funny Rice)

Rhys:Rice?

Neelo:Ee. Rice as in tastic rice, spekko rice.

He stopped laughing and she laughed.

Neelo:See? Now I have the last laugh.

He shook his head chuckling and he reversed out of the parking spot.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo looked at her husband and frowned.

Ma N:Is it because I miss Nene too much or is it old age?

Ra N:what is it?

Ma N:I think I saw her at the shop.

Ra N shook his head with a light chuckle.

Ra N:Nene is at the farm. What would be she doing here? If she was here, she would've been here before mid day because she is big on keeping time.

Ma N:No, I know what I saw. That was Nene through and through.

Ra N:let's eat our supper and sleep.

Ma N could see her husband did not believe her so she let it slide.

At Rhysand's house

Rhys placed Neelo on top of the kitchen counter as she ate her marshmallows. Rhys had made something to eat before they had a shower and she wore his shirt. He was in his boxers and the house was warm so it wasn't cold at all.

Rhys:You see..

Neelo:I'm only here because I swear mom saw me

and she is going to ask questions.

Rhys:Should I dr-

Neelo:Noooo. I'll take a taxi home.

Rhys:Bathong Neelo!

Neelo:You won't understand.

Rhys placed his hands on both of her sides and bit her lower gently. Neelo felt wetness pooling between her legs and she didn't know why he had insisted she doesn't wear her panties.

Rhys:I know I love sex but this?(shaking his head)

He picked her up and made her wrap her legs around his bare inked torso. Her back was against the wall in seconds and she didn't know when he lost the boxers but she screamed as he penetrated her already sore p***sy.

He kissed her neck gently while he fucked her against the wall. The orgasm wave hit them so fast

that they came at once and Rhys didn't have time to pull out, he offloaded his semen into her groaning.

They both breathed hard as he slowly put her legs down. Her kitten spurted the white liquid as it flowed down her legs. She placed her hands on his torso trying to regain her marbles. She didn't know what the hell that was but it was intense. She blinked rapidly and closed her eyes before opening them again. She looked down and felt the sticky liquid that flowed between her legs. He did not just...

She breathed in and out. She looked at him and he kissed her.

Rhys:I'm sorry.

Neelo:I-I..yoh!

Rhys:I'm sorry autwe, hey babe look at me.(holding her chin)

Rhys:It wasn't on purpose..

When he wanted to say more a door knock sounded

from the lounge and she just moved away from him.

Neelo:You can answer the door.

She walked out and he pulled up his boxers walking out of the kitchen.

Rhys:Ba-

She had already disappeared down the passage and he sighed. She will be fine. He walked to the door and opened it.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#27

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand covered his face. Not this again. Not now. He already had a pin upset woman in his bedroom and she was sulking away and he didn't need this one.

Ruby:Who is she?

Rhysand looked at her. Why couldn't it click in her head that it was over already?

Ruby:Who were you talking to?

She tried to look past Rhysand but he wasn't moving from the door.

Ruby:Wow! A little squabble and you are already

bringing sluts into the house?

Rhys:Are you hearing yourself right now? Ruby this?
Us doesn't exist..

Ruby:Rhysand who is she?

He shook his head and she took a good look at him.
He looked like a man who has satiated, his needs
satisfied and she was disturbing him.

Tears welled in her eyes as she looked at him.

Ruby:Don't do this to us Rhys. We still have a shot at
this love thing.

Rhys:Ruby sit down and think about what happened.
It's all on you and you still think the world revolves
around you. Get out of that little bubble and know
that you hurt a human being but you don't see that.

Ruby:I know and I apologized. We can work this out.

Rhys:Ruby it's over.

Her tears rolled down her eyes. She tried to look past

the door but his large frame was hiding the view.

Ruby: You little slut, I hope you sleep with an eye open knowing that you are sleeping with a man who has a fiancée and his family knows her. Ga o na kgala (you have no shame) (shouting)

Rhys moved from the door and closed it.

Rhys: Ruby not in your wildest think you can do as you please in my house. Get the fuck out!

He pushed her and she kept on screaming profanities at the woman who was in the house.

Meanwhile in the house Neelo listened silently. She knew it. She should've listened to her instinct but stupid Neelo gave in to the heat. She was stupid. He was trouble and she was being cursed for breaking another woman's home. She didn't want to cry but she might just leave at this moment, no matter how late it was.

She got rid of his shirt and wore her panties silently

singing in her mind so that she doesn't cry.

Meanwhile Rhys shoved Ruby towards her house.

Ruby: So you have a little cheap tot in there and that's why you left me?

Rhys: Get out, you are crazy. There is no us.

Rhys closed the gate as Ruby cried in front of the gate, here she was trying to fix their relationship and he was sleeping with another woman. The pain intensified and she wailed outside there while Rhys looked at her. He wasn't going to be fooled by her antics, you can't do a person wrong and act like the victim. This was the real world.

He walked to the house and opened the door. He found Neelo putting on her dress and her shoes. Her small bag was in hand.

Rhys: Where are you going?

Neelo:I can't do this.

Rhys:You can't do what?

Neelo:Yo-

Her chest constricted and she looked down. Her tears blurred her eyes as her lungs felt like they weren't receiving enough oxygen. This seemed like a panic attack to her.

Rhys:Fuck!

Rhys bent down and sat her down slowly and gently. He bent in front of her.

Rhys:Breathe babe. Breath.

She breathed and more tears filled her eyes. Rhys and rubbed her knees as the tears rolled down her cheeks. He wanted her to talk.

Neelo:I-You have a fiancée.

Rhys:Neelo babe, I need you to fully trust me okay?

She didn't say anything or move any part of her body to show that she agrees or disagrees.

Meanwhile outside Ruby wiped her tears and opened the gate, as gently as she could. She took small soft steps to the house. This was not over, not by a long shot. She stood by the door and listened.

In the sitting room Rhys looked at Neelo.

Rhys: Babe is your breathing fine?

She nodded and he sighed. He helped her up on her feet and hugged her rubbing her back.

Rhys: Listen to me, I said you are the woman in my life right now. Mo le ke setsenwa sa ex and she hasn't gotten over the fact that we are over. When you are much more calmer I will tell you more about it. Right now, I only have you autwe babe?

She nodded.

Rhys: Good. I know people talk and moving forward I need you to be strong my little sweet thing okay?

He wasn't only on the Ruby issue. He was a wanted man and he was into crimes he wouldn't dare mention to Neelo. She was as innocent as they come so not now.

Rhys:Are we clear? Breathing fine?

She nodded again and he lifted her head. He used his thumb to wipe the tears and placed her head back on his torso.

Outside Ruby was fuming with anger. He hasn't mentioned her name but she knew he had a woman inside there. Her gut intuition never lies. She wanted to burst the door open and rip that woman's hair off but he just called her a crazy ex and that would fuel to the ex part. She needed a plan. She needed to think.

She moved from the door and walked outside the yard, she didn't bother closing the gate. She will see

what to do at her parents house. Tomorrow was the meeting and she would make everything work against him. A few weeks in the village and already he was selling dreams to some poor village girl. What a shame. That man was hers.

Rhys held her in his arms. She jumped to conclusions and he was going to address this tomorrow morning. Right now, she was distraught.

Rhys:Let's get you to bed.

He picked her up and walked back to the bedroom. He placed her down and started to pull the dress over her head. He grabbed the shirt she just took off and made her wear it, buttoning it up.

Rhys:I'll join you in bed later on okay?(placing her on the bed)

He covered her up and kissed her forehead. From sulking to crying? Women were wired differently.

He walked out and closed the door. He walked to the lounge and switched on his phone. He waited a few minutes for all messages to report and he clicked the first message from Alex. He had sent the information via email. He should look into it before sleeping.

At Alex's house

Alex's phone beeped with a message and it was from his brother. He said he just saw the documents. He smiled and placed the phone down. Less than a minute later, his girlfriend had snuggled up against him. How he chose this crazy woman? He had no idea too.

Her: So if I was pregnant what would happen?

Alex: Simple Wawa, I would take care of you and the baby.

She looked at him. She hadn't been expecting this

and she didn't know how she never read the signs or she was too pre occupied with always fighting with him.

Wawa:I am pregnant.

Alex's jaw dropped.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#28

At Alex's house

He closed his mouth and looked at his girlfriend. She was pregnant? He was surprised but he was expecting a child?

Wawa:Alex? Say something.

Alex:I am just surprised that's all, how far along are you?

Wawa:You don't sound happy or excited about this but then again what was I expecting, me and this child will be a secret.

She stood up and Alex held her hand.

Alex:Now you are upsetting yourself.Sit down.

He pulled her down and wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

Alex:Wawa wee?

Wawa:Rra?

Alex:A lot has happened in my family and when the time is right, everything will fall into place. Don't stress your pregnant self okay?

Wawa:Okay. I found out today using a pregnancy test kit.

Alex:We ca go to the clinic or hospital and register your pregnancy.

Wawa:I would like that.

Alex:I am not sure when my brother will be back here but I can introduce you guys.

Wawa:Whatever you say Alex. Wait, you mean Ri-something?

Alex:Rhysand.

Wawa:Rise?

Alex:That's not the correct pronunciation.

Wawa:Okay his name then however way it's pronounced.

Alex:Yes.

Wawa laid her head on his chest and he ran his fingers through her hair. He sighed and looked at her. The more he thought about it, Wawa might not be crazy after all. It might be his fault that she was like this. He knew she knew about the cheating and he always used the fact that they had broken up to cheat when he had been cheating all along.

He kissed her forehead and she just smiled as she changed tv channels. He will try to do better, for her and the child.

The following morning

At Rhysand's house

Rhys woke up first and she was still fast asleep with her head comfortably on his chest. She moved closer and he could feel her soft breathes against his nipple. He had to go but a part of him wished his family could handle everything on his behalf so he didn't have to show up.

He ran his fingers down her back and she murmured something in her sleep.

Rhys:Babe?

He woke her up again and she finally opened her eyes.

Rhys:Morning.

Neelo:Morning..

He attempted to kiss her but she moved her head.

Rhys:Neelo what's wrong?

Neelo:I think I am going to go home.

Rhys:Neelo?

She sat up right and removed the blankets. Rhys looked at her, she was getting on his nerves so early in the morning.

Rhys held her small hand as she tried to get out of bed and forced her to look at him.

Rhys:Neelo I am not a mind reader, I told you this. If there is something bothering you, you talk or I am going to fuck the attitude out of you Neelo.

Neelo's eyes moved to his hand on hers and back at him. He wasn't joking was he?

Rhys:I am waiting.

Neelo:You have a fiancée Rhys and I don't want to be the other woman. My conscience won't let me be.

Rhys:And I told you,you are not.

Neelo:With an ex that still shows up and insults me, I have dealt with enough insults and mistreatment to last me a lifetime. I am seeking peace and I don't want this if it disrupts my peace Rhysand.

Rhys:Neelo me and her have been over for some time and today is just a meeting to notify the parents.

Neelo sighed.

Neelo: Let go of my arm. If kgang e sa ntse e rerisiwa it means there is a chance of you guys getting back together and I don't want to risk it.

He let go and she got out bed.

Neelo: You have my number, when all of this has been addressed and you are sure your ex and family understand that it is over you can call me. I just don't want to be so sure of something and then all of a sudden you are in love with your ex and it turns out you fixed things. Tla bo go ntse gotwe "we have been through a lot" le raya nna. I am not going to be made a clown third time around.

She walked out of the bedroom leaving Rhys there on the bed. Damn Ruby for planting seeds of doubt in Neelo's mind. Seconds later Rhys heard the bathroom door close and the shower water running.

He got out of bed and rubbed his face. He couldn't wait to get this over and done with. He picked up the clothes that were on the floor and placed them in the laundry basket. Minutes later Neelo walked inside the room, they locked eyes and he walked out.

She quickly got dressed. Her bag must be in the sitting room. She wanted to go home, breath and think with no Rhysand around. Ten minutes later Neelo was in the lounge and ready to leave. She checked for coins in her bag and those were enough for a taxi. Rhys walked out buttoning up his shirt.

Rhys:You are seriously leaving?

Neelo:I'm giving you time to get your affairs in order.

Rhys:Wow! Okay.

Neelo:I have to go. Have a good day.

She walked out of the house and didn't even turn to look at him. She looked around with burning eyes as she closed the door.

Rhys' phone rang and he picked it up.

Rhys:Mother?

Ma Rhys:We are ready to go.

Rhys:I will meet you guys there in a few minutes.
You can go with bo uncle.

Ma Rhys:Okay.

She hung up.

At Ruby's parents

Ruby was in a long dress as she waited in the lounge with her parents and uncles.

Uncle S:They are taking their sweet time.

Ruby:They will be here, uncle.

They waited and two minutes later there was a door knock.

Ma Ruby:Enter.

The McKnights walked in and Ruby looked up as Rhysand's intoxicating cologne filled the room. He always knew how to catch one's attention. Those inked arms, chest and back. His sharp jawline and the mustache he kept net for control. They all added to his irresistible allure and she was not going to kid herself. Her heart beat for him and she didn't want him to leave her. He was willing to forgive him for sleeping with another girl but after they solve their problems with the help of the elders, she was going to do everything in her power to keep him. Bad boys were the best of lovers and she flopped but he was still hers.

Ma Rhys gave Ruby a disgusted look. She was failing to keep it to herself, Ruby was acting the saint yet she killed her grandchild? Disgraceful.

Ruby didn't miss the look her mother in law gave her and she frowned. What was going on? She shook

her head. Maybe she was reading too much into it.

Rhysand's uncles murmured between themselves before they cleared their throats and looked at Ruby's family.

Uncle:Well our nephew here, told us that he no longer wants this union to continue.

Ma Ruby:why? Ruby told me this last week and she was heart broken that Rhysand no longer wants her.

Uncle:Motlogolo you can speak.

Rhys:Did Ruby tell you?

Ruby's family looked at each other then at Ruby.

Uncle S:Tell is what?

Rhys:Ruby should I tell you or you should?

Ruby's heart skipped a beat and she looked at her family. She had to think fast.

Ruby:Uhm...he left me for another woman. I found

him with her last night.

Gasps filled the room and Rhysand took a deep breath.

Ma Rhys:Rhys is this true?

Rhys:I am not going to be petty and stoop to your crazy level but my family knows you aborted and a little minor detail I forgot to mention is that she is responsible for handing me to the police.

People in the room were surprised and looked at Ruby who had no comeback for what Rhysand just said.

Rhys:I don't want my cattle back. Keep it and your daughter, keep her away from me. It's over and it's all on her. Can I leave now? I have places to be.
Thank you,

With that he stood up and left.

Uncle:Our nephew has spoken and no one can change his mind. The marriage is therefore over and shall not be happening. Enjoy your day, sister let's go.

Rhysand's family stood up and left, leaving Ruby's family shocked and Ruby near tears. He couldn't do that to her. He didn't have to do that to her.

Ma Ruby:Ha.a. Go raya o moipolai o sa lelelweng. Wipe your tears my child and move on.

Uncle S: so she knew it was her fault and still let me come here. Ruby?

Ruby looked at them and wiped her tears. This was not over. It wasn't supposed to end like this at all.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#29

At Neelo's parents

Neelo was in her room relaxing when her phone rang. She looked at the caller Id and rolled her eyes. Why the hell was Kago calling? She was done with his family and wanted nothing to do with them. She dropped the call and placed the phone down. Ever since she gave Rhys that ultimatum, a part of her felt like she was taking it too far and overreacting but you can never be so sure with an indoda because an indoda can embarrass you shem. She put her novel down and sighed. She still had him all over her and could still feel his body over hers and those slow strokes. She closed her legs and shook her head. She really needs to cleanse her mind hey, like fire in the name of Jesus.

She laid on her back as she continued reading Ugly Love by Colleen Hoover. Her phone vibrated and she looked at the phone screen. She answered the call.

Neelo:Mmh...

Rhys:O raya nna o re mmh Neelo?

She sat upright.

Neelo:Nnyaa rra.

Rhys:I'm outside.

Neelo:Outside?

Rhys:Ee. I'm bing y five minutes to get out of the house Neelo.

He hung up and she stared at her phone for a while. He was outside? She got off the bed and rushed to the wardrobe to wear a cardigan over her oversized tee and tights. She slipped her feet in her slides not forgetting to grab her phone.

She walked out of the bedroom and passed her parents.

Neelo:I'll be out. For an hour or so.

Ma N:Really?

Neelo:Ee mma. I won't be long. Just with a friend.

Ma N:A friend?

Neelo:Ee mma..

Ra N: You can go.

Neelo:Thank you papa.

Ma N:is that why you have been in a mood?

Neelo:What mood mama?

Ma N:When did you arrive?

Neelo:I caught the bus in the morning. Bye.

She quickly walked out avoiding more questions.

Ma N:She is lying.

Ra N:You just want to force her to admit that she was in the store yesterday when she was not.

Ma N:Ehe. Okay.

Neelo opened the gate and she could see his car a house away. She pulled the cardigan closer. She walked towards his car and the door opened. She got inside and looked at him.

Rhys:Buckle up sweet thing.

Neelo:Rh-

She shut up and buckled up, placing her phone on her lap. He reversed the car with one hand and she could see his veins over the ink. Everything he did was attractive.

Rhys:Neelo?

Neelo:Rra?

Rhys:I want you to take a chance on us, on me. I officially ended things with my ex today and there is

nothing tying me to her. Nothing.

Neelo:Okay.

Rhys:I don't know what level of crazy she is going to reach because she still thinks we are meant to be together which is not the case. Take this risk of being with me.

Neelo:Nothing at all attaches you to your ex?

Rhys:Nothing Neelo.

He took a sharp turn and looked at her.

Neelo:Neelo I'm risking heartbreak here Rhysand.

Rhys:I have been hurt before and I wouldn't dream of inflicting the same hurt.

Neelo:Never say never, don't make promise which you won't be able to keep in the near future Rhys.

He took her hand in his and kissed it.

Rhys:There is a lot you still have to know about me

Neelo but we will break everything down slowly one of these days. Right now I just want to spend time with you and hold you in my arms.

Neelo:Okay(softly)

He smiled at her and she blushed.

Rhys:wa blusher naare?

Neelo:Ng ng. Keep your eyes on the road Rhys.

He still had his devil smile on and she was sure that was his second greatest weapon. He could melt her like butter just by looking at her and the bad kind of butterflies that would be in her tummy were so hard to contain.

It was midday and he just drove around the village. She never knew a drive around the village would be nice because she was always indoor reading a novel. He stopped God knows where and he got out of the car first before opening her side and picking her up.

Neelo:put me down(laughing)

He just placed her on his shoulders and she touched his head.

Neelo:Rhysand!!(giggling)

Rhys:I won't drop you.

The wind blew past her face and she smiled as the sun shone in her eyes.

Neelo:The sun is blinding me, Rhys.

Rhys chuckled as he walked around with her and she started to tell him about her latest novel. It was going to take her time but she could get used to this, the feeling of his fingertips on her skin, the feeling of his kisses. She could get used to this, like every tattoo on his skin memorizing every inch of his body.

Neelo:Babe put me down.

Rhys:No.

Neelo:O rileng wena?(what's wrong with you)

Rhys:Spending time with my woman outside the bedroom.

Neelo bent her head and kissed his forehead.

Rhys:Kiss me again.

Neelo:Ka gana rra..

She did kiss him again and again inhaling his cologne and she was sure she was going to smell him on her.

Neelo:Where are we going? You didn't lock the car.

Rhys:Shit!

He half ran with her and she screamed while he laughed.

Neelo:Rh-rhysand!(screaming)

He got to the car and it was still there.

Neelo:You'll give me a heart attack.

Neelo was smiling from ear to ear not having done

the proper research on the man whom she just agreed to risk her heart to. She knew he was trouble but what kind of trouble? That's what she didn't know, that he was wrapped in so many sins.

Rhys let her down slowly as she slid off his back. The moment her feet hit the ground he spun her and attacked her lips catching her by surprise. She smiled into the kiss as she kissed him back.

He opened the door to the backseat and he helped her get inside the car. He sat next to her and she was grinning like a little baby as he tongue kissed her. She didn't know where she was but she was loving the adrenaline it gave her. He rubbed her thigh and she broke the kiss.

Rhys:And we can get food then drive anywhere.

Neelo:Hee banna! Yes sir!

At Ruby's parents

Ruby was crying silently in her room as she listened to the song via headphones.

I don't want to another night of trying to find another you, another rock bottom

I don't wanna wear another wear another mini dress to impress a potential problem

I don't want to spend the night at someone's place and fill the space that you used to walk in

I don't want another number in my phone, someone to hold at three in the morning

I don't want someone like you, I only want you

Tears rolled down her eyes as she covered her mouth. It was her fault wasn't it? But why couldn't he forgive her? How did he move on so fast from her? Love was all about forgiveness and he didn't want to forgive her. He never really loved her too did her?

How could she fall for the subject? She was confused, she loved him regardless of what she did to him. In two weeks he replaced them like it was easy, he made her think she deserved it and it hurt. She didn't want a new man, she wanted him and now he was gone. In another woman's arms. Enjoying his love cause he loved a person wholeheartedly regardless of his bad side which came to play that only time when he was quizzing her on the abortion.

At the place

The sun was setting slowly as they ate the food they bought an hour ago and she was in his arms at the back of the car.

He let go of her and went to the front seat to connect his phone to the car aux system. He played a song and she smiled.

Neelo: Shawty is like a melody in my head, that I can't keep on, got me singing na na everyday, it's like my ipod stuck on replay

He laughed and kissed her head.

Rhys:You are ruining my song.

Neelo: Shawty is like a melody in my head (louder)

He shook his head and she chewed on her marshmallows.

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#30

At the location

Neelo laughed at something Rhysand said as he rubbed her back.

Neelo:It's late. I have to go back home.

Rhys:Do you really have to go?

Neelo:Ee. I live with my parents Rhys and I have to respect them.

Rhys:Okay. We should get going and drop you off before 8pm.

He planted kisses on her neck and she giggled pushing his head away.

Neelo:Rhysand!

Rhys:Okay, I'm stopping.

Rhysand let go of her and got out of the car to make his way to the driver's seat. Meanwhile Neelo jumped to the front passenger seat and when he got inside the car he found her. He laughed as she buckled up. She picked her phone up and placed it on her lap. Rhysand started the car with one hand on her thigh, eh squeezed it a bit and she placed her hand on top of his hand.

Rhys:We'll go test tomorrow. Is that okay?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Her phone screen brightened up as a message popped up on her screen. Rhys frowned as he read the first part of the message before it went dark.

Neelo looked at her phone. Did she just read correctly and did Rhys just see that?

Rhysand reserved his comment and pretended as if he didn't read the text. Neelo picked her phone and

opened it. She read the message fully from Kago. What the hell was wrong with Aone's family? Now Kago was sending messages confessing his undying love for her. She read the message over and over again then shook her head. She looked at Rhys as he drove. He didn't say anything but she knew he saw the message when it popped up.

Neelo:Rhys..

Rhys:Mma?

Neelo:It's not what you think.

Rhys:What am I thinking of babe?

He was calm and she couldn't stop her beating heart, he rubbed her thigh.

Neelo:Okay uhm. This is my ex brother in law. I have no idea why he is texting such nonsense.

Rhys:You were married?

Neelo:Not exactly but yes. He is late. Happened almost seven months ago.

Rhys nodded.

Rhys:Delete his number.

Neelo:Ee rra.

She went on to block his number on her phone so he won't be able to reach it when he tries to call or anything, why was he in love with her all of a sudden? She really didn't like Aone's family. Speaking of Aone, she should check on Katlego and see if he is alright. Time never heals such deep wounds. She still missed her friend and she hoped he was in a better place, away from the suffering and malice of this world. She placed her phone down.

Neelo:Done.

Rhys:Good. I am choosing to trust you Neelo. I hate being taken for a fool but if you do dare honey, I won't hesitate to put a bullet through your head.

Her blood ran cold as he said that in his calmest voice.

Rhys:Are we clear sweetie?

Neelo:E-ee rra.

He kissed her forehead and she wasn't moving. He just casually threatened her like that and went on as if what he said was normal.

At Neelo's parents

He parked his car a house away and kissed her cheek.

Rhys:Ga ba kake ba go omanyanya akere?(they won't scold you)

She shook her head.

Rhys:Thank you for today(kissing her lips)

Neelo:I enjoyed today too(smiling back at him)

He got out of the car and she followed suit. He held

her hand as he walked her to the gate just to make sure she was home safe. She let go of his hand and pulled the cardigan close with her phone in the other hand. They shared one last kiss as she opened the gate and he jogged to the car. Neelo breathed in and out walking to the house. She knocked on the door and guess who opened the door? Her mother.

Ma N:Hello..

Neelo:Hi mama, we lost track of time.

Ma N:I see.

Neelo passed her mother who could smell the foreign cologne on her daughter. She just let it be. Neelo was an adult and if she wanted to tell them she would. She won't achieve anything by making the girl talk.

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand was in the house and it had been thirty

minutes ever since he dropped Neelo. His phone beeped with a text from her. He chuckled.

Rhys:Miss me already?

Neelo:No, are you home safe? Did you eat?

Rhys:Not yet. We ate earlier babe.

Neelo:Eat something ee.

He laughed and sent laughing emojis. He shook his head placing his phone down as we went through his bank statements on his laptop and what the company was making. Things were not balancing and in a way, the police didn't have a case because the charges were dropped. He was a criminal and Ruby almost cost him and his brother years of hard work, alliances with the big guns and dangerous people.

Alex sent more documents via email and he opened them. He needed to fix this, he was here to escape but business awaited him. He had to be careful and devise a much smarter plan. Starting with calling in

favors from the top. He knows he will owe them his life to get things done for him. This time he wasn't going to be surprised. So his rest at the farm was cut short.

At Ruby's parents

She was fast asleep after crying so hard for hurting a good man. She had hoped he would give them one more chance but the odds were against them. She turned on her side and opened her eyes. They were so swollen and she wanted to cry again. She sat up right and rubbed her eyes. She got out of bed as her back aches slightly and she rubbed her chest. Her heart ached so much, she walked out of the room and she saw her parents having their dinner. She greeted them as she walked outside barefoot. She closed the door and walked to the chair that was by the tree. She sat down as the darkness of the night surrounded her.

she wanted to scream, for the universe to hear her that she did him wrong but she wants him. She wanted him to tell her that she is all he wants even if she breaks his heart but hey, it was all her. She was the one who burned them down to ashes and it clicked that she lost. She had him in the palm of her hand and she couldn't even stop her stupid mission for the man she loved.

Tears rolled down her eyes, she can't make it all go away by making him the villain. No one teaches you what to do, when a good man hurts you and you know you hurt him too.

Ruby:God take this pain away, please! I-I love him so much but the more I think about it, he was my happiness and I ruined it. I am a murderer God! I am losing my goddamn mind thinking of him with another woman who is not me. I want to fight him so bad and show him we still have a winning chance but the more I f-fight the more he breaks my heart with words and actions(crying)

She looked up the stars with the hope that the universe heard her. She cried into her hands again. She swore she loved him and still does. She needed to gather the courage to go with grace.

She looked up the sky. She was going to be alright right?

.

.

.

*

*

*

THREE MONTHS LATER

TROUBLED

#31

At Ra N's farm

Neelo rinsed her mouth after that purge. She wasn't dumb and she has been suspecting it a month ago. She shook her head. Rhys was coming to here first to pick her up. She had made so much progress with her father's farm and she was thinking of hiring someone who can oversee things from this side, someone they can trust. She will run it up with her father tomorrow morning.

She headed to the kitchen and boiled water on the stove before she walked back to lounge where she got her books and went over and the list of things she needed for the farm. She has been thinking of rearing dairy cows but then that needs modern

machinery which she didn't have money for. As much as Aone left money for her, it wasn't enough for the machinery dairy cows needed. Plus the sterilization process of the milk. It was a lot for her. Neelo closed her book and sighed. She rubbed her head and sighed again.

At Francistown

At Alex's house

Alex rubbed Wawa's bump as he told her of his brother's latest love interest.

Wawa:He moved on so fast.

Alex:In my opinion, the relationship has long been over when Ruby sent Rhys to prison.

Wawa:Ruby wa teng o bosula a sa jewe (she is bitter)

Alex:Kana Wena. Anyway I think all Rhysand had to do was to tell her after he left prison.

Wawa:Your brother is intimidating Alexie.

Alex rolled his eyes.

Alex:Alexie ke eng?

Wawa:It's your cute nick name. Anyway I wouldn't dare cross him, where did Ruby get the audacity?

Alex:I have no idea but she is a thing of the past and Rhys is happy.

Wawa:He never smiles.

Alex:He scares you?

Wawa:When you first introduced us, I nearly peed on my pants. He was like those guys from the movies who were all about business.

Alex:Even now you are still not used to him?

Wawa:Ng ng. Your mother is sweet mme tlherra wena.

Alex:She says you talk too much.

Wapelo laughed and looked up at him.

Alex:My son better not talk like you.

Wawa:Ijo! Let me get up, I am tired and want to sleep.
This tummy is heavy.

He helped her up and she kissed him before heading to the bedroom.

Alex:Wawa, I'll be back okay? In an hour.

Wawa:Lock the door. Bye.

He walked out and locked the door. Her stomach has been growing and she even takes half days at work so she could sleep. As crazy as she was, she didn't want to solely depend on him.

At the mall

Ruby sat down on one of the benches as she circled down job advertisements in the newspaper. She had downgraded and moved to a much smaller house to suit her needs while she was still looking for a job.

She didn't think she would be joining the police force anytime soon. That would always remind her of how she lost the love of her life. She was making progress with accepting that and she had to admit, not seeing him anywhere also helped. She closed the newspaper and put it inside her bag. She had handed out a few CVs today so she will see how that goes. Even if they don't hire for the job she is qualified for, it's still okay and it would be a welcome change.

She stood up and used her hand to cover her face as she made her way to Ackermans. She had to buy baby clothes because this coming weekend one of her cousins was having a baby shower. She had to hide her envy when her cousin announced the news. Ruby knew deep down that she regretted ever having that abortion. Two months ago she would've been a mommy and little Rhysand would be sucking on her nipple. She sighed and walked inside the store. She went to the baby section and picked up two rompers and some cute baby shoes. These would do for the

baby shower.

Ruby slowly walked to the till and paused as Rhysand walked inside the shop. She spotted him as he walked to the baby section. He was talking to the phone. He didn't even see her. She listened to him talking to the phone.

Rhys: Alex, you said you guys are having a boy or a girl?

Alex: A boy. Where are you?

Rhys: In the shops but I have to go.

Rhysand hung up and Ruby walked ahead. It must break his heart to buy baby clothes that aren't for his child and knowing it was her fault, tears filled her eyes and she blinked several times so they don't drop.

Meanwhile Rhys picked the clothes for his nephew. There wasn't any envy there, he was genuinely happy

that his brother was happy with Wapelo. He went to join the line and spotted Ruby who looked down as she walked away. He pretended he didn't see her as he kept walking forward till it was his turn to pay.

Ruby breathed in and out as she quickly walked to the parking lot. She had to pack up and go home for the baby shower. She wasn't ready to see Rhysand as of yet. The words that were going to come out of her mouth were going to sound bitter but she hoped his next woman would be a beautiful fool, who takes her spot next to him. She shook her head, this was the bitterness she didn't want to utter. He will meet the new her in due time, one that won't be affected by anything he does.

She unlocked her car and got inside. She buckled up and started the car.

At Ma Aone's house

They had managed to see Neelo a month ago and she had rudely said she won't be marrying Kago. Ma Aone always knew why she hated that girl and she had a glow to her that made her want to vomit. She killed their son and she was shining, enjoying her best life at her parents place.

Ma Aone: Let the gold digger be. She was never good enough.

Kago nodded. On the other hand, he was sad that Neelo blocked him without even hearing him out.

If it was meant to be, it was going to be. Right now, he needed to help pick up his family's dignity and sort out their crippling finances.

At Ra N's farm

Neelo closed her eyes as she let herself daydream. She had never had friends growing up but she

wished she had a friend she could to and share things with. Her mother was her friend but there were some thing she couldn't talk to her mother about. Besides that she was glad past her was never lost in the petty fights Aone's family picked up with her, her nemesis defeated themselves before she had a chance to swing. They got in debt and she didn't even touch their money. She wouldn't say she believed in karma but you get what's yours for whatever you do to people.

She smiled as she thought of Rhys. He passed by in her life rare as the glimmer of a comet in the sky and he felt like home. She was all about him now and all she does is just keep him warm. She wasn't sure when he was coming but she hoped it wouldn't be late because he knew how she hated him driving late at night.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo served her husband lunch and washed his hands. She placed the plastic bowl on the table and sat down.

Ma N:Didn't you see the change in Nene?

Ra N:What change?

Ma Neelo sighed. Her husband never saw anything.

Ma N:Forget it, eat your food.

.

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#32

At Alex's house

Rhys knocked on the door and Wapelo opened the door.

Rhys:Hey, I brought clothes for the baby.

Wapelo opened the door wider so he can step inside. She got the baby bag from him.

Wawa:Thank you so much.

She opened the bag and looked at the cute rompers, this was so cute. Already she had a nursery full of clothes and baby things. This was so thoughtful of him.

Wawa:This is nice Rhys. Thank you so so much.

Rhys:Welcome. I just came to drop those off.

Wawa:Okay. I don't know if I should hug or you or not, nna ka go tshaba.

For the first time Wawa saw her future brother in law smile.

Rhys:Mxm!

He hugged her and broke the hug.

Rhys:Take care of yourself and the baby. Bye.

He walked out and Wawa laughed. She talks too much. She should've kept that to herself but maybe Rhysand wasn't so scary at all.

Rhysand walked to his car and he slid his phone out, he was just about to call Neelo when he remembered that she was at the farm and there was no network there.

Rhys:Shit!

He checked the time. She was going to kill him, she

was big on time management and the last time he was there which was three weeks ago, he had said he will be at the farm before midday. She was probably pacing up and down or asleep. She was going to kill him and he hasn't seen her in three fucking weeks. She refused to go with him to the SA. He had business to take care of there and was hoping that the little time in between he would spend it with his pretty little lady but she refused. He let her be.

He joined the road and drove out of the street. He had to go to his house first to get a few stuff then leave for Bobonong. Spend the whole of Friday with her before he drive them to the village for the weekend. Maybe he can try to score a weekend sleepover from her too.

At Ra N's Farm

Neelo checked the time. He was running late or he

wasn't coming at all? She hasn't seen him in weeks and he does this to her?

She sighed and went to the door to lock it before she headed to the bedroom. She got out of her clothes and she released a contented sigh as she removed her bra, she might as well sleep because she wasn't going anywhere anytime soon. He had said he would be here by midday and promised to keep time. It was way past midday so...

She laid on top of the bed topless and closed her eyes, summer was here and it was hot so she didn't need a blanket, just fresh air.

Neelo:Mxm!

He had already bored the hell out of her by not coming on time.

3 hours later Neelo woke up from her nap. She

yawned and rubbed her eyes. She stretched her body and yawned once more. Why did she wake up again? She wanted to fall asleep again. Her stomach grumbled and she chuckled. Okay she should eat first then go back to sleep. She got out of bed and picked her gown from the chair. She walked out yawning.

At that very moment, Rhys was just turning by the trees on his way to her. In a minute he parked his car outside and he rubbed his head. He knows she was going to flip but in the cutest way possible. He got out of the car and knocked on the door. In the house Neelo tightened the gown belt and walked to the door.

Neelo:Coming!

She unlocked the door and opened it. She rubbed her eyes as he smiled at the door.

Rhys:Hey.

Before she could respond he picked her up and spun her around as she laughed.

Neelo:Babe hii(squealing)

He finally put her on her feet and held her in his arms.

Rhys:Hey love.

Neelo placed her head on his torso and breathed in his cologne. With her suspicions she thought the scent will repulse her but she liked it more and more. She wrapped her hands tight around him and he chuckled.

Rhys:Someone missed me.

Neelo:Mmhm..

She looked up at him with the cutest smile ever and he kissed her forehead. She had no business being this cute. He walked inside the house with her still holding onto him tightly. He closed the door and looked at her.

Rhys:What have you been eating?

Neelo:Food. Shut up tlherra I'm holding you.

He laughed and kept quiet. When Neelo was satisfied with holding and inhaling in his scent she let go of him with a little smile.

Rhys:You were asleep?

She nodded and walked to the kitchen. He followed her there.

Neelo:I was about to cook something because I figured you will be here late.

Rhys:I'm sorry my love. I lost track of time..

Neelo:Okay.

Rhys:You are not mad?

Neelo:It's not going to change the fact that you are late right?

Rhys held her waist and kissed her forehead. He untied her gown and she moved away from him.

Neelo:Wait, I don't have energy and I'm hungry Rhysand.

Rhys:Iyoh! Okay.

She opened the fridge and took out milk, honey, peanut butter and bread.

Rhys:What are you making?

Neelo:A sandwich.

Rhys watched her spread the butter on the bread and drizzle honey on top, pour milk in a glass and put back the stuff back in the fridge.

Rhys:Is it nice?

Neelo:It is.

Rhys:I brought food, it's in the car.

Neelo:What kind of food?

Rhys:Proper food Neelo...

He left her in the kitchen and she walked out with her food.

At Alex's house

Wawa talked on the phone with her family.

Wawa: You guys honestly didn't have to do this for me. Mom..

Ma Wawa: Just come home okay?

Wawa: Ee mma. Thank you so much. I'll ask Alex to drop me off.

The door immediately opened and Alex walked in with one hand in his pocket. Speak of the devil.

Wawa placed the phone on her chest.

Wawa: Will you be able to take me home tomorrow?

Alex: Okay, why?

Wawa placed the phone back on her ear.

Wawa: I'll be there tomorrow mama. Bye and I love you.

She placed the phone down.

Wawa: Mom says there is a surprise waiting for me at home, you are going to drive me there and we'll come back together after the weekend. I love you more.

At Ra N's farm

Neelo bit into the chicken Rhys came with as she filled him in on everything that has been happening in her life.

Rhys: You could've joined me at SA.

Neelo: You said it was a work thing so I didn't want to disturb and I had to do a few things this side.

Rhys: You don't want to live in the city anymore?

Neelo: The city is exhausting Rhys and.

Rhys: I just don't want a long distance relationship
Neelo. Listen to me.

He placed her legs on his lap and rubbed her thigh as he spoke.

Rhys:I just want to be with you around. Knowing I won't travel distances to see you.

Neelo:I am working on my father's farm. I know I have been here for over a year but I am getting the hang of this farm lifestyle. I don't have a job too, looking for one is going to exhaust me Rhysand. Understand that.

Rhys:Think about it.

She sighed.

Neelo:Okay but I am not promising anything tota babe.

He kissed her leg and looked up at her.

Rhysand:Thank you.

He kissed her leg moving up and she smiled as he slid his hands underneath her gown and pulled down

her panties. He didn't know why he didn't take the shopping bags from the car. He will do that later, she can model the clothes he bought for her in South Africa.

Rhys:I missed you.(parting her legs)

He got on top of her and he held her breasts. He had had time to become attuned with her body and he didn't know if it was him or just that he has been gone for too long, but they felt bigger than the last time he touched her breasts. Neelo looked at the confusion on his face.

Neelo:Is something wrong?

Rhys:No, not all..come here.

He kissed her lips softly and she kissed him back. In the midst of all the kissing, there was a door knock and Rhys broke the kiss.

Rhys:Who is it?

Voice:The herd boy morena.

Rhys got off her as she sat upright and pulled her gown close. She tied it and she picked her panties.

Rhys:Don't wear them, wait.

He walked to the door and opened it, he stepped outside to talk to the herd man for a few minutes. Neelo crossed her legs and waited. Minutes later Rhys and walked inside the house and locked the door. He unbuttoned his shirt and placed it on the couch. He undid his belt buckle and unzipped his pants.

Neelo looked at him as he got undressed. She looked at him with fascination and as he approached her she was expecting him to get to work but instead he picked her up. He walked to the bedroom with her in his arms and he threw her in the bed. Okay, he was going to work on her body alright, she could feel her clit throb from the mere anticipation.

He got on top of her and #EXPLICIT

TROUBLED

#33

At Ra N's Farm

Neelo snuggled into his arms as he ran his finger along her back. She wanted to ask him if he was really in love with her or was it the love making?

Rhys:Babe?

Neelo:Hmm..

Rhys:I love you.

She turned her head and smiled. So he really does.

Neelo:I love you too..

She yawned and smiled. He wanted to ask because well he took note of everything and he was sure her breast size changed.

Rhys:I bought some clothes from SA I wanted you to try on.

Neelo:Really?

Rhys:Yes mam. They are in the car and I think I should go get them.

He got out of bed and wore his boxers.

Rhys:I'll be back.

Neelo turned to her side as she bit her nail. She looked at her flat stomach and she held her breast. She was sure she moved a cup up. Now it was going to come down to explaining everything to her parents if her suspicions were correct. She can't tell Rhys as of yet till she was sure she was actually pregnant or it was just her body playing mind games with her. She waited for Rhys who walked in with more than two shopping bags.

Neelo:This is a lot.

Rhys:You can try the clothes on love.

She got out bed stark naked and he looked at her naked form. There was something different about her, he was sure of it. He held her waist as she bent down to look at what was inside the bags.

Rhys:Try this on first.

He opened the shopping bag and inside was a lingerie set.

Neelo:Why that first?

Rhys:Pretty please!

She sighed and took it from him.

Neelo:Are you sure you bought the right sizes?

Rhys:Your bra size is 36A right?

Neelo:And h-

Rhys:Babe you honestly think I didn't take a look at your bras.

She laughed as she wore the lace panties. They were perfect on her. She twisted her head to look at her butt. She turned so he could see.

Neelo:How does my butt look?

Rhys:Squeezable.

Neelo:Tswa ha.(touching her butt)

She checked the bra and it was a 36A cup. Let's see if it will be a perfect fit. She put it on and turned.

Neelo:Do the back, kopela.

Rhys did as she said and Neelo felt uncomfortable in it, it was too tight. Rhys turned her and looked at her cleavage, he kissed the top and she touched his head.

Neelo:It's so uncomfortable and tight.

Rhys:Really?

Neelo:Mhm..

He gave her a look and she just looked at him. He was sure that was her bra size and now it didn't fit and was too tight?

Neelo: Help me undo it.

She gave him her back and he did quick work of the bra. She could finally breathe and she placed it on the bed. She tried out the rest of the clothes and modeled for Rhys and who kept on touching her all over.

Rhys: I should choose your clothes more often.

Neelo: Thank you.

She hugged him, her arms around his torso.

Rhys: There is no need to thank me baby.

He picked her and took her to bed where he made love to her the second time that day.

The following morning

Neelo wore the dress bought for her. It was perfect and she just forced herself to wear a bra though it was uncomfortable as hell. She slipped her small feet into the sandals after she made the bed. His clothes were on the bed while he was in bathroom getting ready. She walked to the lounge where she started to clean up. She picked up the doggie bags along with his clothes.

She went to take his clothes to the bedroom and she found him getting dressed. She smiled and walked out. She was going to leave this place clean. Very clean.

Ten minutes later she was done and he was making his way to the sitting room.

Neelo:I am done cleaning and we can leave in a few minutes.

Rhys:Okay. Let me start the car, aren't you eating anything?

Neelo:I'm good.

Rhys:Sure?

Neelo:Ee rra.

He walked out and she sat down on the couch. She could feel the contents in her stomach stir and she wasn't going to dry heave. She walked to the kitchen for a glass of water, it was too early for this to start and she didn't eat anything for crying out loud. She waited for a few minutes till she felt settled. She made her way to the bedroom and got the bags with her new clothes and her small bag that had her phone and key.

Minutes later she locked the house and walked to the car. She got inside and Rhys and reversed the car.

Rhys:Buckle up sweet thing.

She did so and as always he placed one hand over

her thigh with the other on the steering wheel.

At the village

At Ruby's parents

Ruby had arrived and she looked at the messages. She bought the clothes and now they were left with the few things to get over and done with. She placed her phone down and checked her bag. Her pills were finished and she needed to get more. Will the village clinic help her though? She has been serving in those sleeping pills the past three months and she wasn't sure if they will help her. She had no idea how she forgot to pass by the chemist for more before she left the city. Obviously if she asked from her cousins they were going to ask questions and the funny thing is she was attending a distant cousin's baby shower. That one? She comes and goes when it suits her and she is never really into the family drama. Always kept her distance.

She will go check the clinic in an hour. It was still noon.

At Neelo's parents

Neelo stepped out of the car with the bags.

Neelo:I will send a message if I am free my love.

Rhys:Please?

Neelo:We'll talk later. Thank you and I love you.

Neelo thanked her lucky stars that the gate was open and she just walked inside the yard as Rhys and drove off. She was so not looking forward to the interrogation she was going to get. She just wanted to go to the hospital to get checked and see what the nurse will say before she jumps into conclusions.

Neelo:Mama, it's your daughter here. Open the door.

Ma N:O bewa ke eng?(why are you here?)

Neelo:My only mom, please open the door ka go kopa ka imelwa.

Ma Neelo went to open the door and she was surprised to see Neelo with shopping bags.

Neelo:Hi mom. Just arrived. Let me go put these in the bedroom okay.

She kissed her mother's cheek and walked to the bedroom. Her mother could still smell the same cologne on Neelo. Nene was so secretive Shem.

Neelo threw the bags on the bed and stretched her body. Now to deal with her mother's questions.

Neelo:Hey mama, what did you guys cook?

Ma N:Eggs.

Neelo shivered. She stopped eating those a week ago.

Neelo:Anyway I might be here for a week or for the weekend and why are you looking at me like that?

Ma N:Bathong Nene o sephiri (you are secretive)

Neelo:Mama!(pretending to be shocked)

Ma N:But you will tell us.

Neelo:tell you guys what?(looking at her mother)

Ma N:Gore mpa ke ya mang(about who got you pregnant)

Neelo:Mama I just arrived and you are(pretending to be shocked yet again)ah mama. Legale....

Ma N:Girlie you won't fool me..

Neelo:Mama bathong ijoo. Ga le batla go nkoba mo ntlong ya lona le bue (if you want to chase me out of your house you can say it)

Her mother laughed and Neelo laughed.

Neelo:Koore mama ke maketse. Nna Neelo I'm just from the farm and le bua ka mpa? Ijoo MmaJones.

Her mother laughed as Neelo clapped her hands.

Neelo:Where is papa?

Ma N:He doesn't want to let go of his old car.

Neelo:Iyoo! That skorokoro once died on us. Did he tell you?

Ma N:He did.

Neelo:He was lucky that R-

She stopped herself from speaking and smiled.

Ma N:That?

Neelo:A good stranger helped us or we could've been doomed.

Ma N:I see.

Neelo:Yeah. Anywho, I will be back.

Ma N:You just got here.

Neelo:I know. I won't be long mama.

She made her way to the bedroom. She shouted from the bedroom.

Neelo:Borrow me the car keys.

Ma N:You will find them on your way out.

Neelo:Thanks.

At the hospital

Neelo parked her car next to Ruby's car unaware. She got out of her car as Ruby got out of hers. The two women looked at each other as Ruby frowned.

Ruby:Uhu!

Neelo smiled. It's been years and this woman had been three years ahead of her in UB.

Neelo:Ke Ruby naare?

Ruby:In the flesh..

Neelo:Don't start.(pointing at her)

Ruby:City girl..

Neelo:Mxm! I long left the city.

Ruby:Your husband moved with you?

Neelo:It's a long story(looking at her empty ring finger)

Ruby:I thought this time you would've settled with your husband..kana you were so unlucky when it came to love.

Neelo:Don't start.

Ruby laughed as Neelo locked the car.

Ruby:Thhe ne ba go tshameka bashimoney!

Neelo:Yei yei! Ne ba ravasa pelo yame...

They walked together to the hospital entrance.

Neelo:The firstly time you met me, ne ke lla gore.

Ruby:I remember, le first year la Modimo and bafana

ba UB bone.

Neelo: Fear those law students. O bona Peter ene mme o tlo bonwa ke Modimo. Ka mma! Kana I was a village girl and Shem ke sa tlole gore a future advocate wants me..I changed my wardrobe and lifestyle fast fast!

Ruby: Just for you to attend the wrong lesson ya ma year 4 and burst into tears while in class after realizing you attended the wrong lesson and you missed your quiz at your actual lesson. If it wasn't me I swear you were going to faint

Neelo: Stress. After God fear men. And you were so kind to me, I was going through a lot.

They found the line and joined it as she sat down. Ruby could smell the distinctive cologne on her and brushed it off.

Neelo: I can't believe you remember all that.

Ruby: Wena city girl!

Neelo laughed.

TROUBLED

#34

At the Clinic

After 30 minutes of waiting with Ruby, Neelo entered the nurse's office.

Neelo greeted the nurse and sat down.

Nurse:How can I help you?

Neelo:I came here to do a pregnancy test..

Nurse:Okay, have you had any signs so far?

Neelo:I have tender breasts and I occasionally vomit in the morning sometimes at random times.

Nurse:Are you on any contraceptives?

Neelo:No mam.

Nurse:Any protection used?

Neelo shook her head and the nurse looked at her.

Nurse:Okay.

She opened her drawer and gave her a small cup.

Nurse:I'm going to need you to pee into this small cup then call me.

Neelo took the cup as the nurse showed her the small bathroom. Neelo prayed silently. She was going to have a long conversation with Rhysand after this if the results are positive.

She peed into the small cup then washed her hands. She called the nurse seconds later and she came with a pregnancy test.

Nurse:You can wait for me.

She nodded and went to sit down. She checked her phone and she sent a message to Rhysand.

Neelo:Are you home?

She placed her phone back on her lap and waited for the nurse who came with the pregnancy test.

Nurse:Then we wait mam. While waiting let me take registry of your name and temperature.

Neelo told the nurse her name and her temperature was taken. Her phone vibrated on her lap.

Rice :Ee mma. What's wrong?

Neelo:Nothing. I want to pass by your house.

Rice :You are spending the weekend?

Neelo:No

Rice : we'll talk when you are here then.

Neelo:You are not my favorite person right now.

Rice :What did I do?

Neelo:We'll talk rra.

Rice:Ee mma

She placed the phone down as she sighed. The

nurse checked the time on her watch.

Nurse:Let us see what the results say..

She flipped the pregnancy test stick and she noted down something on the card. Neelo's heart slowed down as she waited to hear what the nurse had to say.

Nurse:Ms Jones, the test is positive.

Neelo:If it's positive what does it mean?

She just needed the confirmation.

Nurse:You are pregnant. We don't know how far along so I will book you an appointment with the doctor...

The nurse looked at the calendar on the wall.

Nurse:Next week so be available at exactly 10am for the doctor to confirm with a scan and we can then register your pregnancy.

Neelo:Ee mma. Thank you.

The nurse handed her the card and Neelo stood up. She placed the card in her armpits as she texted Rhys.

Neelo:I'm on my way.

She sent the text and covered her frown as Ruby walked out of the other room where she had to see the nurse.

Neelo:It was so nice seeing you.

Ruby:We should catch up, I am here for the weekend and I never go anywhere.

Neelo:Take my number and you can call, I'll be here for a week at most,

Ruby:Back to the city.

Neelo:Not exactly.

Ruby:And we can catch up..

Neelo:Yes mam.

Neelo told her the number as her phone rang, she answered as she waved by and walked towards the exit.

Neelo:Hello.

Rhys:Wa re what's up?

Neelo:I'm on my way.

Rhys:You don't sound so happy.

Neelo:I don't know how to feel but ke etla.

Before he could say anything she hung up and walked to the parking lot. She unlocked the car and got inside. She placed her head on the steering wheel before she started the car.

Meanwhile Ruby made her way to the car as she saw Neelo's car reverse. She smiled. That little girl had been through a lot in terms of dating and maybe she wasn't wearing because she was divorced but she hoped, she finds happiness. Neelo was kind and she couldn't stop thanking her from that time she helped

her. She had sat her down and comforted her when she cried over that Peter character. Then they started to talk and she comforted Neelo again after a med student played with her heart. She had been so distraught over that one shem. In her own little world Neelo had thought Michael was the one but he crushed what was left of Neelo's heart. They lost communication when she graduated and Neelo was apparently engaged to be married.

She got inside her car, there will come a time when it doesn't hurt anymore and she will apologize sincerely to Rhysand for hurting him. He must hate the whole female specie right now.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo parked her car outside and opened the gate. She was holding the card in her hands as she walked to the house. She knocked and waited for him to open the door.

He was shirtless and exposing his ripped muscles.
Neelo walked past him and sat down.

Neelo:And wear a shirt, don't advertise yourself like that.

Rhysand frowned. What was up with her?

Neelo looked at him waiting for him to put on a shirt or something so that his perfect body doesn't distract her.

Neelo:Rra?

Rhys:I'm just with you in the house sweetheart, go rileng?(what's wrong)

Neelo:Wa gana?

He shook his head and walked to the bedroom where he picked his t-shirt. He wore it and walked to the lounge.

Rhys:Happy now?

Neelo:Thank you.

He sat next to her and she looked at him.

Neelo:We have to talk.

Rhys:I am listening.

She breathed in and out.

Neelo:Rhys I-(sucking in a deep breath)I'm pregnant.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#36

In the car

Ruby: Well it's my distant cousin's baby shower and her sister organized it along with her mother. We aren't really that close but I agreed to come. Anyway if you can manage to come.

Neelo: I don't know. That sounds like a family thing. I wouldn't want to intrude and they don't know me, I'm a stranger.

Ruby: I guess you are right.

Neelo: Next time. Thank you though for thinking of me. That's so kind of you.

Ruby: And after all these years you are still this humble sweet girl.

Neelo smiled as she turned.

Neelo:I guess that's just me. Can I call later? I'm driving.

Ruby:Of course.

Ruby hung up and Neelo drove for the next five minutes till she arrived at her parents house. She frowned. She left her hospital card at his place. She will go back for it. She parked the car nicely just like she found it and she was glad that the gate was not closed. The engine stopped and she got out of the car to go close the gate.

Minutes later she was inside the house and she found her parents all relaxed watching Scandal!

Neelo:Dumelang.(holding her phone and the car keys)

Ra N:Hello.

Neelo:Uhm let m-

She just walked to the bedroom and Neelo's father

looked at his wife who shrugged and continued watching tv.

Neelo got out of the clothes she was wearing, wore her robe and got her toiletry bag. A bath first and that dreaded talk with her parents. Yikes!

At Ruby's parents

Ruby folded the baby clothes into the gift bag and she sighed. She didn't know why she accepted this invitation honestly. Now she was here thinking about how her child with Rhysand would look. Rhysand would be anyone's dream baby daddy, he was well off minus his illegal dealings, loving and he knew how to give princess treatment. His next woman would be lucky, so damn lucky to be loved by him.

She finished folding the clothes and she smiled. Her cousin would appreciate these small gifts. Ruby

rubbed her flat tummy, she would never know how it felt to feel your tummy grow or to feel baby kicks, she took that precious experience away from Rhysand and she robbed it from herself. All she was left with was regrets and regrets. She will heal, one step at a time. No matter how long it was going to take, she was going to be fine. Healing is the messiest journey to ever exist, one day you are fine and the next you are not but she will trust the process.

At Neelo's parents

Neelo rehearsed what she was going to say as she silently sat next to her father. She was in her warmest pyjamas.

Neelo: Mom, dad...

They both looked at her.

Neelo: I have something to tell you and tlhebathong le ska omana. (please don't get angry at me)

Ma N:Why would we?

Neelo:I do not know. Here goes..

She placed her hands on lap and twiddled her thumbs. Her father reduced the volume of the tv waiting for Neelo to talk. A minute passed and Neelo was still silent.

Neelo:I-yoh. I'm pregnant.

Silence. More awkward silence.

Ra Neelo looked at his only child while Ma Neelo nodded. She knew it but Neelo had been denying it earlier.

Ra N:Pregnant?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Ra Neelo looked at his daughter again.

Ra N:Who should we address our letter to ngwanaka?

She bit her lower lip.

Neelo:The uhm-tha-the McKnights.

Her father's eyes widened and her mother's face was marred with confusion till it clicked to her who the McKnights were.

Ma N:Nene mang sentle sentle?

Neelo:Rhysand.

Her mother looked at her daughter in shock and her father nodded.

Ra N:Very well. Are you okay Nene?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Her father finally smiled and hugged his daughter.

Ra N:As long as you are happy with that boy, I'm happy.

Neelo closed her eyes hugging her father back.

Neelo:I am dad. Thank you.

She broke the hug and she looked at her parents.

Neelo:I just didn't want you guys to be surprised. I'll be in my room.

She stood up and excused herself. Ma Neelo was still blown away by who impregnated her daughter. She looked at her husband who had no problem handing over their precious daughter to that thug. Neelo had been through a lot and she didn't want her daughter to go through so much pain. She has heard a lot about him and the village was small people talked and his father, well even though people had forgot. She didn't. She didn't want her daughter to be hurt.

Ra N:I know you are worried. Neelo is an adult and we can't baby her forever. She can make her own decisions.

Ma N:She didn't eat. Let me take her something to eat.

She stood up and Ra Neelo increased the tv volume. Ma Neelo warmed Nene's food and after a few seconds put it on a tray walking to her daughter's bedroom. She knocked on the door.

Neelo:Come in.

She opened the door with one hand and walked in with the food. She looked up from her phone.

Neelo:Hey mama.

Ma N:Did you eat?

Neelo:Thank you..

She sat upright and got the tray. She placed it on her lap and looked at the food.

Ma N:How long have you known Rhysand?

Neelo:For three months.

Ma N:and you are sure you love him?

Neelo:Ee mma.

Neelo pushed the veggies away and started biting into the chicken. She covered her mouth as she chewed and swallowed.

Neelo:The chicken is good mom.

Ma N:Do you know anything about his family and that he was arrested less than a year ago?

Neelo:I know about the arrest. Akere he was not found guilty of anything mama, an innocent man. Is it the tattoos that make you think he is a bad person?

Neelo asked innocently. Well she won't lie to herself and say he didn't look like trouble but the little time she spent with him proved he was a good man. What went around was just rumors that she should not even entertain.

Ma N:The police don't just arrest innocent people Nene.

Neelo shrugged.

Ma N:are you sure you want a man whom you will always have to look over your shoulder? What if he is abusive like he's f-

She stopped herself and Neelo frowned. She shook her head.

Neelo:Rhys is not abusive mama, you aren't happy for me?

Ma N swallowed. Neelo was too sweet for this thug, he didn't deserve her daughter. Not at all.

Ma N:I am, once you are a mother you will realize that a mother always wants the best for her child at all times. If anything bothers you, don't hesitate to tell us.

Neelo nodded and ate her food silently.

Ma N:Goodnight.

She kissed Neelo's forehead and walked out.

The following day

Neelo spent half her morning browsing through Facebook looking for job posts. She wasn't sure if they will hire her with only her intern experiences, the ones she did while she was still completing her degree. She noted down the jobs that suited her qualifications and she would then see what to do, anyway in the country was okay.

She rubbed her chest. She couldn't avoid the urge to throw up anymore and she got out of bed to go puke in the bathroom. She rinsed her mouth and sighed. What was she going to eat this time?

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#37

At Neelo's parents

Neelo's sat cross legged on the bed as she snapped her fingers. Time to type out a CV and letters. She frowned as she started at the laptop screen. She absolutely forgot how to do the basics. Her phone disturbed her peace and she sighed picking it up.

Neelo:Hello..

Rhys:why are you so worked up?

Neelo:it's nothing, how are you?

Rhys:Sure you don't want to spend the day with me?

Neelo:I am still busy my love.

Rhys:And how is your busy working out for you?

Neelo:not so good. I feel dumb.

Rhys:Talk to me..

Neelo:I will google it and figure it out somehow.

Rhys:Let me not disturb you okay? I love you guys.

Neelo chuckled.

Neelo:Guys ke bo mang?(who are guys?) Rhys say after me, I love you Neelo(imitating his deep voice)

Rhys:I love you two(laughing)

Neelo:I am not accepting that. Bye.

Before he could say anything she hung up and Rhys and laughed at the other end of the line. He slipped his phone in the pocket and got inside the car. He was just passing by, Alex asked him to anyway.

Neelo bit her lip as she went to google and typed in "how to construct a CV".

At Wapelo's parents

Ruby parked her car and she smiled. The set up was so cute for the mother to be. It was all blue and white. She got out of the car with her gift and she made sure to lock it. She walked through the gate as she was welcomed by one of her other cousins.

Her: You made it.

Ruby: just to say hi and all.

The cousin took the gifts and Ruby walked inside the yard. She saw Wawa's mother and smiled. It's been quite a while since she has seen this woman.

Ma Wawa: Hello Ruby.

Ruby: Dumelang (smiling)

Ma Wawa: Look at you all grown, last I was updated you were supposed to get married.

Ruby smiled.

Ruby: It didn't work out.

Ma Wawa: Sorry my child. Someone will come along,

he lost a ruby.

Ruby laughed as she walked to the house with Wawa's mother.

Ruby:I last saw Wapelo years ago, she has been distant.

Ma Wawa:All of you kids have been distant, December is fast approaching we should make a family reunion, I am quite sure you don't even know some of your cousins.

Ruby:No doubt about that. What can I do to help?

Ma Wawa:Some are in the kitchen and at the back, there is a braai stand. Ruby's boyfriend was sweet enough to offer to braai the meat for us. After the cooking, we can start the baby shower.

Wawa walked out of the bedroom rubbing her bump, she saw her mother with someone she didn't recognize. She frowned when it finally clicked.

Wawa:Ruby!

Ruby:In the flesh..

Wawa:Wow, you're still beautiful and tall.

Ruby laughed. She had always loved her own tall height and the fact that Rhysand had not been intimidated by her height and he was still taller than her had made them a perfect match but now that's done and dusted.

Ruby:I'm still going to be tall.

Wawa:Well...(sitting down)

Ruby:How is the experience so far?

Wawa:Wonderful. I never expected this but the experience is a beautiful one and I can't wait to meet the little one. I know he will be his father's replica, speaking of his father..(standing up)

Ruby:And then?

Wawa:I am going to call him,he should be here.

Ruby:Alright.

At Ma Rhysand's house

The boys were with their mother and Rhysand badly wanted to tell them that he was expecting.

Ma Rhys: Tell Wapelo I said hi.

Alex: Yes mother. (smiling)

Ma Rhys: And Rhysand why are you happy?

Rhys: It's nothing..

Alex: (raising an eyebrow) Is it Neelo making you this happy?

Rhys: O tla swaba tlhe mona (laughing)

His mother looked at him with a small smile.

Ma Rhys: Is there a new woman in your life?

Rhys: Mom yoh!

Ma Rhys: It is okay to move on you know.

Alex: Apparently gatwe she is tiny.

Rhys: Wena mona wa swaba! (laughing) Mom we have to go and I'll pass by later to talk to you.

Ma Rhys: Okay. Bye.

The two brothers walked out of the house and Ma Rhys smiled alone.

.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#38

At Wapelo's parents

Alex parked his car as Rhys and parked behind him before they both got out of their cars.

Rhys: I'm only here because my girl doesn't want to see me.

Alex: And you are sad about it?

Rhys: Have you seen my baby girl?

Alex: You are still keeping her secret (laughing)

Rhys: I will introduce her one of these days.

Alex: Please do big brother.

The two walked into the yard while talking. There was music playing as they walked in. Alex looked

around and looked at his brother as the ladies stopped doing what they were doing to gape at the two gentlemen who just walked in.

Alex:They are all looking at you..

Rhys:Mxm! Where is the braai stand?

Alex:Apparently at the back..

Rhysand followed Alex to the back and they looked at the braai stand.

Rhysand smiled. He imagined seeing Neelo with her pregnant belly at the backyard of his house watching him braai for no reason at all. So far her cravings seem weird. Who eats butter and marshmallows? He shook his head with a little laugh and Alex noticed that. Was Rhysand in love? He didn't want to believe it because he thought he was using his supposed girlfriend as a rebound.

Meanwhile in the kitchen Ruby was by the window rinsing the glasses when she frowned seeing

Rhysand through the window with Alex. What were they doing here?

Wapelo walked into the kitchen and stared at the window.

Wawa:He finally came.

Ruby:Who?

Wawa:Alex, I'll introduce you to him and his brother.

Ruby:Alex?

Wawa rubbed her belly and looked at Ruby.

Wawa:Y-yes. You know him?

Ruby was about to speak but she shook her head. Some things were better left unsaid.

Ruby:Not at all.

Wawa:Alright. I'll be back. They should just braai and leave.

She walked out of the kitchen and Ruby stared out

the window as the men laughed and Rhysand hit the back of his brother's head. They were always so close. She let out a sigh as she resumed with her duty.

At the back of the house, Wawa walked towards the boys with a smile.

Wawa: Thank you for volunteering, none of the ladies were going to braai.

Rhys: He will be doing all the work and I will just supervise him.

Alex wrapped his hands around her and she smiled.

Wawa: If you guys need anything, everyone is here to assist and thank you so much. My mother will pass by and thank you.

She kissed Alex's cheek and she knocked on the kitchen door. Ruby was forced to open the door for her.

Wawa:Let me introduce you guys so it isn't awkward when they walk in and out of the kitchen for anything.

Ruby:There is no need.

Wawa:There is, assist them with anything they need. The meat is in the fridge and they can marinate it. They are here to help.

Wawa ended up winning and she stepped down and waited for Ruby to get out of the kitchen, Ruby finally did so and Rhysand was mildly surprised by Ruby's presence and Alex just looked at the ladies.

Wawa:Ruby meet Alex and Rhysand. Alex is my son's father and Rhysand is his older brother.

Ruby:Hi, nice to meet you(smiling)

Rhysand:Likewise.

Alex just nodded as Wawa went on.

Wawa:Anything you need she can assist, she is one of my many cousins and Ruby these are my guests.

Ruby nodded and Wawa smiled.

Wawa:Now that introductions are out of the way, I can go get ready.

She walked away to the house leaving Ruby with her guests. Rhysand slipped his hands in his pockets and Alex turned his back on Ruby and talked to Rhysand. Ruby bit her lip, there would be no civility here and it seemed as if she was still the bad guy.

Ruby:If you guys need anything, I'll be in the kitchen.

No response. She turned around embarrassed and walked to the kitchen. She had thought that one of them would say they knew her but they acted so indifferent as if she wasn't part of their lives for a year. She didn't even know Alex was dating her distant cousin. Tears filled her eyes and she used the apron to wipe her tears. She shouldn't even be crying.

Alex:If I had-

Rhys: Alex, I loved her at some point in my life but right now what we have isn't love or hate, it's just indifference. She is not a factor in my life that I have to consider.

Alex: And here I thought you were using poor tiny Neelo.

Rhys: Wa nyela mesta.

He laughed and Rhys shook his head.

Rhys: We should probably marinate the meat and all.

Alex: Kitchen. You go.

Rhys: Sure.

He walked to the kitchen and found Ruby busy chopping up onions.

Rhys: Where is the meat?

Ruby: Fridge an-

She kept quiet as his large frame filled the kitchen, his tattoos were out on display and instead of the chopping being the center of her attention, his

presence was and she still couldn't take her eyes off him. He placed the bowl with the meat and looked around.

Rhys: The seasoning?

She wiped her hands on her apron and her hands slightly shook as she opened the pantry to take out the seasoning he might need, she knew he wasn't a bad cook. Though they never had a braai, he could hold his own in the kitchen.

As she placed the seasoning in front of him, the song that used to be their favorite started playing and she swallowed.

I dug a single seed into the ground

I hope it grows, grows

In a year or two if you're around you'll see a rose,
rose

Pack me up and keep me hidden somewhere that

you can find me

On this train to Paris going nowhere

Draw the bridge behind me

Don't be gone too long (too long)

'Cause you won't be there to love me when you're gone

Don't be gone too long (too long)

Tell me who's gonna love me when you're gone

(Ooh, yeah, ooh)

When you're, when you're gone

(Ooh, yeah, ooh)

When you're gone

She looked at him as he leaned by the counter. He used to sing that song whenever he had to go and she would sing back, he was in love and she realized later after she lost him that she actually did love him more than life itself.

Ruby:That used to be our song.

Rhys:Yeah.

He took a deep breath and he started to season the meat as the song kept on playing, Ruby watched him. A second chance wouldn't hurt anyone and she still loved him. As Rhysand seasoned the meat, all the memories came back as the part where Chris Brown is singing "Bring it back to me, ring it back to me, is it really over?" hit. A part of him will always want to know what their future would have looked like but trust was gone and so was he.

Ruby:(sighing) Honey when I'm all alone, I see this for what it is. I was wrong and it (clearing her throat)took months to accept that it was my fault.

Rhys kept his thoughts to herself as Ruby washed her hands. Rhys was still putting seasoning into the meat and the marinates. She stood by the sink and he walked to the sink to wash his hands. His cologne got to her and she smiled wistfully. It has been 3 months too long without his cologne.

He leaned by the counter and sighed.

Ruby:I know I hurt you but there was happiness because of me, there was happiness in our history Rhysand and two unfortunate and irreversible incidents took it all away. I-I realized that I love you and I still do.

Rhys:I hope you find closure.

His words shattered her. She bit her lip as tears blurred her vision.

Ruby:All I want from you now is the green light of forgiveness. I am sorry for that night when I acted crazy and said you had a woman in the house. You haven't met the new me yet and I-I still love you but I will learn to live without you Rhysand, though it hits me sometimes that I can't have you and it was my fault.

Rhys:Ruby, you did you and I hope you find it in your heart to forgive yourself. Don't hold on to the dream of us getting back together, the damage has been done and I have accepted it for what it is. I'm way

past your transgressions against me, they have unequivocally changed my life and I have to look over my shoulder because the police are always waiting for me to break the law and put me back in prison but we move.

She looked down.

Rhys:It was nice seeing you.

That was all he said before he walked out with the bowl and Ruby could see that she lost him. She lost Rhysand and there was nothing she could do to get him back, even their favorite song didn't resuscitate his feelings for her. It hurt to finally see that he was over her. That he didn't care about her and he wasn't shouting or angry, he was the calm Rhysand she knew and he looked like he accepted his fate and what it entailed. She blinked a couple of times as she continued to cut the onions. Tears rolled down her eyes and she didn't bother wiping them away, she will use the excuse of cutting onions to just cry

her eyes out in the kitchen.

Alex looked at his brother.

Alex:I know I'm younger than you but you are over her?

Rhys:I am. Closed chapters are just that. Closed and never to be visited again. I can't go back into the fire that once burnt me, that would be stupid of me Alex.

Alex:Wow!

Rhys:It happens. Funny thing is yesterday I was asked if I still love Ruby and I hesitated. I saw the hurt in her eyes as she nodded it out after I answered seconds later. I wasn't sure if I still loved Ruby or not but I met Ruby today and I don't hate her nor love her. It didn't hurt anymore. (Smiling)

.

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#40

At Neelo's parents

Rhys:Dumelang.

Ma N:Hi.

He put his hands together and he wasn't sure what to say but these may be his potential in-laws.

Rhys:I am looking for Neelo.

Ma Neelo wanted to refuse but she was sure her daughter wouldn't appreciate that.

Ma N:Come in.

She moved from the door to allow him to step in. Rhysand walked in as Ma Neelo closed the door. He

saw Mr Jones sitting on the couch as he placed his newspaper down. He looked up and saw Rhysand. A smile formed on his lips and Rhysand let out a little smile. This was awkward as hell but Neelo said he should come right?

Rhys:Dumelang.

Ra N:Hello son, how have you been?

Rhys:I have been well sir, thank you.

Ma Neelo excused herself and made her way to the bedroom. She sat on the bed and took a deep breath. He was his father's exact replica through and through.

In the lounge Ra Neelo asked Rhysand about how everything was going after farm. Rhys updated him and he also acknowledged that Neelo was doing her absolute best to improve everything. In her bedroom, Neelo heard Rhysand's voice and she smiled. She hoped there were no awkward vibes in the lounge. She got off the bed in her tights and oversized tee. She slipped her feet into the sleepers and got her

tray as well.

She walked out making her way to the kitchen, she passed them by the lounge and smiled. This was going better than she expected. She washed her plate and put back everything where it belonged before she decided to interrupt. Before she could even utter a word, her father spoke.

Ra N:He is here to see you Nene.

Neelo:Alright dad.

Neelo looked at Rhysand and knew it would be disrespectful as hell for her to take him to her room.

Neelo:Let me go change my shoes, I'll be back. Just a minute.

Neelo walked to her room to change her shoes and she trapped her phone before she made her way to the lounge.

Neelo:We won't be long.

Her father nodded and Rhysand said bye as they walked out of the house. As soon as he closed the

door, he placed his hands around her waist.

Neelo:I've never done this before.

Rhys:Me neither, you look like your mom. I was wondering where you got such beauty.

She blushed and he kissed her lips lightly.

Rhys:How are you two?

Neelo:We are good.

Rhys:Sure?

Neelo:Hundred percent sure. You can't live without me can you?

Rhys:Don't lie to yourself sweetheart.

Neelo:You are the one who came here to see me. Who is lying to themselves now sweetheart?

He smiled and kissed her again. They walked to his car and in the bedroom Ma Neelo moved the curtain as she watched them all lovey dovey. She closed the curtain and sat down on the bed.

Meanwhile Neelo got comfortable in the car.

Rhys:Let me drive for a while so we can talk.

Neelo:Okay. Let me start first, I was busy with job applications.

Rhys:You are looking for a job?

Neelo:I have a baby on the w-

Rhys:We have a a baby Neelo. We..

Neelo:We have a baby on the way and as much as I have some money stashed in my account, it will eventually dry out and I need a stable job to take care of our child. I have a degree and I hate to admit that I'm picky and won't settle for a job not in line with my qualifications even though it's hard.

Rhys:You studied archive and records management right?

Neelo:Yes. I saw posts on Facebook and they were legit.

Rhys:Francistown?

Neelo:No. Ke bo Maun, Masunga and other places.

Rhys:Ga o ye koo (you're not going there)

Neelo:Excuse me?

Rhys:Neelo I told you I'm not doing a long distance relationship, imagine you being all alone in Maun pregnant. Your parents are not even there.

Neelo:I am not going to depend on a man to take care of my needs ever again. There are no posts in Francistown Rhys.

Rhys:We'll figure something out but you're not going there.

Neelo:We'll see(under her breath)

Rhys:What was that?

Neelo:Nothing.

She folded her arms and looked at him. As unplanned as this pregnancy was, she was going to look for a job and see if they would take a pregnant worker who is going to disappear months later to

give birth. She will see but she was not going to depend on her parents or a man, Aone's parents said a mouthful about her depending on their son but at that time she really did deem it unnecessary to work when Aone took care of the expenses, all she had to do was keep shut about his secret.

Rhysand placed his hands on the steering wheel and looked at her. He wasn't even considering her miles away with his child, as much as he didn't want a long distance relationship it would be much better if she was here because his mother and her parents were here, so she would be okay. If she was far from him what if she is attacked? He knew that obviously someone is keeping tabs on his life and he wasn't going to risk his girlfriend's life and her son's life.

Rhys:Still on the pregnancy...

She looked at him. She didn't want to be dictated in all honesty.

Rhys:How would you feel about moving in with me.

Neelo:No!

Rhys:Wa-

Neelo:Rhysand it's a no. I am not moving in with you and no, I'm not discussing it.

Rhysand was about to reply when her phone rang and she smiled in surprise. He saw the caller ID as she answered.

Neelo:Hello..what a nice surprise!

.....

Neelo:I'm at home. Am I busy? I think I'll be done in an hour. You didn't have to travel all the way to see me.(laughing)

.....

Neelo:Okay. You'll call in an hour. Bye.

She hung up and placed the phone on her lap.

Rhysand was just looking at her.

Rhys:I know what I'm doing.

Neelo:I also know what I'm doing. You cannot bully me into agreeing with everything you're saying. You don't want to compromise, as soon as I move in with you, you will not want me to work and all that. I don't want to move in with you, spend the weekend? Sure I will do that but I will not be performing wifely duties when I'm still a g-girlfriend(hesitating)

Rhysand noticed the hesitation and Neelo unfolded her arms. She wasn't about to set herself up for disappointment, the man might not even be over his ex-fiancée so she was going to be independent of him and her parents.

Rhys:Neelo think about it.

Neelo:I am not going to lie, I am not going to think about it. I won't move in with you Rhysand. No. Nope.

Rhys:I guess I have no other choice then.

Neelo:What do you mean?

He smiled and kissed her forehead while she was blank like an A4 paper.

Rhys:Let's drop the topic. I don't want to fight with you.

Neelo:I hope I made my points clear.

Rhys:Crystal my love.

Neelo:Good.

He kissed her lips while squeezing her breasts.

Neelo:E seng thata.(not too much)

Rhys:Sensitive?

Neelo:Yes.

Rhys:I like their new shape.(squeezing them some more)

Neelo:Rhys!(wincing)

He chuckled and went easy on the squeezing. He rubbed her chin and looked at her with a little smile.

At Wapelo's parents

Ruby couldn't wait for the baby shower to end at this point. She was happy for her cousin but she wanted to just let it go. She killed her own baby and she could be holding her own baby at this exact moment, so it's her fault. She lost a good man in the line of work and she realized it after she handed him over on a silver platter. She went psycho on him after he broke things off, he was well within his rights to do so. In the process, she just made his life harder since his life will be monitored from a distance.

She knew the police didn't give up just like that, obviously there was someone undercover working in his case. She knew he was bad news, he had red flags all over but the bad boys are the ones who love the most and he did give her queen treatment. She will leave it all behind, there will be happiness for her in the near future. She sighed as she clapped her

hands while popping a mint into her mouth. She forced a bright smile as the baby shower continued.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#41

At Neelo's parents

An hour later Neelo got out of the car and waved Rhysand off. She checked her phone and called Katlego back. He answered immediately and she smiled.

Neelo: Hey old friend, how have you been?

Katlego: I have been coping.

Neelo's smile turned into a sad one. He was still mourning Aone and she understood his pain. To her Aone was a friend but to Katlego he was more than that, she didn't know if he would be ever be able to move on. She walked to the gate and opened it.

Katlego: Can we meet?

Neelo:Of course. We can catch up over what has been happening.

Katlego:You'll tell me where, I'm in the shops though there are not many here.

Neelo:The village still needs to be developed tota. Okay, give me a few minutes and I'll be there. I'll take a taxi. I'm sure bo mama are tired of me borrowing their car.

He chuckled.

Katlego:Kid just get here.

Neelo:Ee.(laughing)

She walked to the house talking to the phone and waved at her parents as she passed to her bedroom. She placed her phone against her ear and shoulder as she picked her handbag and opened it. She checked if she had coins for a taxi to and from town. The money was enough. She picked the handbag and she walked out of the bedroom still on the

phone. She waved at her parents and she made a mental note to start looking for a plot. She should start with a small two rooms and rent it out for it to make extra income for a better house.

She closed the gate when Katlego hung up. She opened her bag and removed the umbrella that was inside. She walked to the stop as she envisioned her life in the next ten years. This baby might have been a blessing in disguise, she was going to be in her slumber while she didn't have anything to her name. She stopped by the stop and waited for taxis to pass from anywhere so she could stop one.

At the shops

Ruby was relieved that the baby shower was over and done with. She parked her car when she spotted Neelo.

She screamed out of her car.

Ruby:Neelo!(shouting)

Neelo stopped in her tracks and turned to see who was shouting her name so loud in public. The person screamed again and she looked around. Ruby finally got out of the car and waved. Neelo spotted her and smiled. Ruby smiled. She was so short, she thought after years Neelo would've have gained weight and added at least an inch to her short height.

Ruby:And we meet again.

Neelo:Yes mam. How are you? You look exhausted.

Ruby:I am. I was helping out at the baby shower.

Neelo:How did it go, I'm meeting someone.

They started walking and Ruby told her about the baby shower excluding details that had Rhysand and Alex in the picture.

Neelo:It sounds nice and the mother to be seems like a nice person.

Ruby:Aren't you the sweetest?

Neelo smiled as she looked around trying to spot Katlego's car.

Neelo:But as long as you enjoyed. Such moments are precious and you never know if that's the last time you see someone.

Ruby:True. Life is too short.

Neelo:Very very short Ruby.(signing)

Ruby:What are you looking for?

Neelo:A friend's car.

Ruby:A friend?

Neelo:Yep. He is a good friend of mine.

Ruby:It's a he?

Neelo:Yes.

Ruby:I'll believe that for now.

Neelo laughed and shook her head. Never, no.

Ruby:But let me leave you to it. I have to buy something by the shops.

Neelo:Alright. Bye.

They shared a brief hug and Neelo looked around while Ruby walked away. Neelo spotted the car finally and she walked to the car. She opened the door and got inside.

Neelo:Hey.

Katlego:Hi and you are glowing.

Neelo:It's the farms, how are you?(softly)

Katlego:Healing doesn't have a time frame does it?

Neelo:It doesn't. Healing is a process, some days you think you are over what happened and the next you have a hollow space in your heart that only that person can fill. It's still okay, some days you want to die too so you can fill that void so it's understandable.

Katlego:I went to his grave yesterday.

Neelo looked down. When was the last time she went to Tutume to see his grave and just visit Aone?

Katlego:I tried to be strong and I couldn't.

Neelo:You don't have to be strong. Being weak sometimes is strong.

Katlego broke down crying and Neelo rubbed his back. She couldn't compare herself to him, if she lost her life partner, that would break her to a point of no return.

At Ma Rhysand's house

Rhysand parked his car and he knocked on the door. His mother opened and moved from the door,

Rhys:And before you feed me, I'm okay.

Ma Rhys:Okay.

Rhysand took a seat and looked around. He had been so proud of himself after he completed his mother's house. The old woman sat down and Rhys

clasped his hands.

Rhys:I just wanted to tell you that uhm....

He didn't know how this conversation was supposed to go.

Rhys:You should expect visitors any time soon.

Ma Rhys:Visitors?

Rhys rubbed the back of his neck.

Rhys:My woman is expecting.

Ma Rhysand frowned and rubbed her ear. Rhysand had a woman? She is expecting? She was totally lost.

Ma Rhys:Wa reng?

Rhys:Ke imisitse (I knocked up someone)

His mother maintained a serious face before she smiled.

Ma Rhys:Another grandchild?(ululating)

Rhysand chuckled as his mother ululated.

Ma Rhys:My ancestors are with me, they saw that I was lonely.

Rhys:Yoh!

Ma Rhys:who is she? Can I see her?

Rhys laughed.

Rhys:Soon mother.

.

.

.

*

*

*

A FEW DAYS LATER

TROUBLED

#42

At Ma Rhysand's house

Neelo pulled down her dress as Rhysand held her waist. They had their doctor's appointment in an hour and Rhysand didn't even warn her. He just drove them here.

Neelo:I could have been better prepared sir.

Rhys:I love you too.

Neelo:Same.

Rhys:Say it back.

Neelo:No..

He laughed and kissed her neck softly.

Rhys:She will absolutely adore you.

Neelo:I don't know Rhysand.

Rhys:Trust me.

Neelo:A warning would have been nice though. I hate being unprepared for stuff.

Rhys:Don't think too much about it.

They walked to the door and he knocked on the door as her heart beat out of her chest. She played with the necklace on her neck as she looked down. It felt like hours later when the door opened and she was quickly out of her anxious state as she looked up at the woman who opened the door.

Rhys smiled as he talked to his mother and led Neelo inside the house. Ma Rhys could tell that the girl was nervous, probably her son forced her to come here.

Neelo:D-Dumelang(softly)

Ma Rhys:Hello my child.

She looked at her small figure and how Rhysand was possessively holding her.

Rhys:Hello mother, meet Neelo and babe?

Neelo looked up at him before she looked at his mother.

Neelo:Rra?

Ma Rhys watched as she looked at them as the two locked eyes. She thought Rhysand loved Ruby but she has never seen this before.

Rhys:Are you okay?

Neelo:I'm okay.

Rhys:Sure?

Neelo:N-no. I'm nervous.

Rhys:Don't worry about it okay?

He rubbed her chin and kissed her nose. She let out a small smile and that's when Rhysand's mother cleared her throat.

Neelo:Uhm. Dumelang.

Ma Rhys:Rhysand come with a glass of water. Let's sit down.

Rhysand let go of her waist as she sat down opposite his mother and he looked at her before he headed to the kitchen.

Ma Rhys:Nice to meet you Neelo.

Neelo:Th-the plea-sure is all mine.

Ma Rhys smiled. She liked her already.

Ma Rhys:How did you guys meet?

Neelo fiddled with her thumbs, would it be appropriate to let his mother know that they barely knew each other before they had wild unprotected sex? Rhysand walked back in with a glass of water and sat next to Neelo and handed her the glass.

Rhys:I don't think that's an appropriate question mother.

His mother shrugged.

Ma Rhys:I just wanted to know how you guys met, is

it wrong to know.

Neelo:Not at all.

Ma Rhys:See Rhys?

Rhys rubbed Neelo's thigh and his mother silently observed how the young girl calmed down. She was young, maybe she was still in school.

Ma Rhys:Are you still in school my girl?

Neelo:No mam.

Rhys:She has a degree...

Ma Rhys:And she can speak for herself, you are not her lawyer. Anyway Neelo what are you doing currently?

Neelo:I have been taking care of my father's farm the past year.

Ma Rhys:I have never a met a girl who is interested in farming, most of them are about hair and nails.

Neelo:I wanted to develop it and see if I can make a viable business out of his farm.

Ma Rhys:That's impressive.

The nervousness slowly left her body as she squeezed Rhysand's hand and answered his mother's questions.

Rhys:She reads books.

Ma Rhys:And you are not her advocate Rhysand. You read books my darling?

Neelo:Ee mma. Most of them fiction, I don't remember the last time I read any motivational books.

Ma Rhys:Impressive, you took literature in school?

Neelo:In senior high and I chose it as an elective at varsity. Books are a gateway to a new world, a form of escapism if I put it that way.

Ma Rhys:It's been a while since I've read a book, I used to read books back in the day.

Neelo:That's cool.

Ma Rhys:If you have time, we can read books over a cup of tea on a Saturday.

Neelo:Thank you for the offer. I appreciate it.

Ma Rhys:And you are a sweetheart.

She smiled and Rhysand's mother smiled as she looked at Neelo.

Neelo:Thank you.

Rhysand looked at his watch and then at his mother.

Rhys:I think we should get going, we might be late.

Ma Rhys:Thank you for bringing her along.

Rhysand looked at Neelo who was oblivious and was facing his mother with a pretty smile. She thanked his mother for her hospitality and Rhysand led her out. As soon as they stepped outside, he kissed her forehead.

Rhys:I don't think I deserve to get this lucky.

Neelo:Rra?

He shook his head and just walked with her to the car. She got in first and he walked to his side.

At Francistown

At Ruby's house

Ruby went through her emails and she nearly jumped off the bed as she half screamed. She got one of the posts she had applied for. This was just a stepping stone. She would have a stable income and she would then save the money for something else.

Tears filled her small Chinese eyes and she used her finger to pat under her eyes. She was getting her life back in order. Very soon, seeing Rhysand won't affect her and she will fully move on. Being single hasn't killed anyone.

She sat upright and got her diary as she went down her list of goals. Apparently writing everything down, working hard for it and manifesting it made it all come to pass.

She read it out loud and smiled. One step closer, she looked at her laptop and read the email thoroughly. She had to show up for the interview on Friday so she had to prepare for that. She screamed into her diary. Baby steps.

At the hospital

Rhysand held her hand as the doctor applied the cold gel on her flat tummy. He had all week to actually believe he was expecting a baby with this sweetheart here. The fact that she was adjusting well to the fact that she was pregnant while he could slay awake at night and ask himself if he was going to be a dad. What type of father was he going to be? Was he going to be like his father? He grew up not wanting to be like that animal, not in a million years. He swore that he would do better.

Doctor: You can look at the screen.

They both looked at the screen and the doctor placed the wand on Neelo's stomach. The two frowned slightly before they heard the thump and Neelo's heart beat went up slightly as she blinked a couple of times looking up. Her small hand covered her mouth as she listened to the thumping that belonged to the small being growing in her tummy. Rhysand just held her other hand tightly, it was more real. Hearing the heartbeat of the small human being she was going to bring to this world in a few months. He didn't want to get emotional so he licked his lips and looked at the screen.

The doctor was silent, letting the new parents to be to bring their hands around this new development in their lives. Minutes passed as they listened to the heartbeat and Neelo wiped her tears. He was really growing inside there.

Doctor: You can hear the heartbeat and that shows that the baby is okay, by the look of things you are 3 months and a few days pregnant.

Neelo nodded.

Doctor: You have to come for a checkup every month and we can talk about your diet and food.

Rhys squeezed her hand and she looked at him with a teary smile. He mouthed an “I love you” and “thank you”. She looked at their intertwined hands and Rhys and changed his mind. What he would have to tell her in regards to his way of life would have to wait, he didn’t want to stress her.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#44

At Rhysand's house

The silence between the couple spoke volumes. Neelo touched her necklace since she didn't know what to say to Rhysand. She had pretty good reasons for not moving in with him but she wasn't even sure if he will see reason. Couldn't it be enough that she didn't want to move in and that would be it. She stopped touching her necklace and looked at him as he switched off the tv and picked his phone up. She sighed and cleared her throat.

Neelo:Rhysand?

He was now not answering her. She let her necklace slide through her fingers before she spoke anyway.

Neelo:It's not that I'm not willing to compromise Rhysand. A lot is happening at once, I found out I'm pregnant and I decided to finally do something for myself. Even if it is a 9-5 job, I have been single for the longest time. I know you know I was married and I never delved into the details of the marriage. It was a marriage of convenience.

That caught his attention and he placed his phone down. Neelo noticed and continued.

Neelo:Just a front as per say and that was how far the marriage went. Aone and I were just good friends but that is not the main issue. Rhysand I have been hurt in the past, not just a little. Like really hurt badly by men whom I thought would be my forever and they turned out to be temporary in my life. Moving in is a big step for two people who say they love each other but they don't know each other fully other than in the bedroom. We made a baby, I acknowledge that and it's a blessing on it's own but moving in with you it's too soon. Tota it also won't look right in my parents eyes, I fall pregnant and I

move in with a guy when I don't even have a stable job or anything to call mine. Not even a car. Moving in with a man who hasn't acknowledged traditionally that he is responsible for the pregnancy.

She breathed in as he listened. He hated to admit that she made sense.

Neelo:Co-habitation is not right in this stage and a part of me is still unsure of us.

Rhysand paused and he finally looked at her.

Neelo:I am being fully honest. I am still unsure of us, you had an ex-fiancée and I once asked if you loved her and you hesitated. I don't blame you for that, it takes time to fall out of love with someone and it won't be wrong if you still love her. Also on top of that, just let me be independent. If I do get a job outside of Bobonong, do not make it all about you not wanting a long distance relationship. I also don't want one but I want to do things on my own. We will see how it goes if it happens I get called for an interview or anything along those lines.

Rhys:Neelo, I am sure about us.

Neelo:Don't say it just to make me feel better. I am a grown woman as you always say and I am sorry if my view point on things makes it seem as if I don't want to compromise. I will also look for job offers in Francistown to see if I will find something. But moving in is a no no. I don't know much about except the little crumbs you threw at me about your life and the rumors you told me not to mind because wow! There are a whole lot of rumors but I choose not to confront you about them because in my mind I believe you will tell me whenever you're ready.

Rhysand stood up and helped her up on her feet. Was he being too much when he said he wanted her close? Besides knowing where she was and protecting her, he didn't want to feel lonely at night knowing there was a tiny human being who could keep him company with her rants about her latest book or how we despised a certain character. He embraced her and she wasn't angry at him. She said her piece and he would have to understand or at

least try to see it from her point of view.

Rhys:I just want you close so I can know you're safe, it's easier to keep you safe when you're nearby. It sounds selfish but that is why I want you near. It's my duty to be the protector in the family and I can fully promise that you'll be safe in these arms of mine.

He kissed her head and he moved sideways while still holding her.

Rhys:On telling a lot about my past...It is something I have contemplated but then we found out we are expecting and I don't want to stress you. I have done a lot of bad things sweetheart, I am a sinner and I know I don't deserve someone as sweet as you. If it was up to me, you wouldn't have to hear what people say about me but it's inevitable.

Neelo:Then tell me..

Rhys:I don't want to stress you but one thing I want you to know is to not doubt my love for you Neelo. I have an ex-fiancée who turned out to break my trust

when I gave my all. I never expected to see myself fall for you but I'm in. Hook, line and sinker. What I can talk about now is my family.

Neelo:I'm an only child.

Rhys:That's why your father loves you so much.

She smiled against him while breathing in his cologne.

Rhys:I have a brother and you met my mother. We are her only children.

Neelo:That's cool.

Rhys:At 17, I did something so that the man that calls himself my father can leave.

He rubbed her back. He never talked about that man but he swore he would never be him, not in a million years. He assumed that Neelo had been too young when the news spread like quick fire about his father's infidelity and abusive ways. He bit his lip. He rarely talked about this part of his life.

Neelo could feel the sudden increase in his heart rate and she looked up at him. She stood on her tip toes and kissed his lips.

Neelo:It's okay, you don't have to tell me if you are not ready or if it still hurts so much that you have to think about which parts to leave out and which parts to tell me because I can see the cogwheels are turning in your brain.

Rhys wanted to speak but he couldn't and just looked into her eyes, maybe if she wasn't in Francistown it would work for him because people won't know he is seeing someone and no one would come after his sweet thing. He didn't know what to do at this point.

Rhys:I love you.

Neelo:I love you too.

He kissed her lips softly and gently. He wanted to push down her dress but her words about them just knowing each other in the bedroom rang in his head. He knew she wasn't going to refuse to give him sex

but what she said rang in his head. Instead he pecked her lips and smiled.

Rhys:Let me help you with your hair and I can take you to the salon tomorrow.

Neelo:You don't have to.

Rhys:I want to. What do I need?

Neelo:Scissors and toothpicks.

Rhys:On it sweetheart.

He let her go and he walked out of the room. She rubbed her arms and sat down on the couch. He came back a minute later with scissors and toothpicks.he sat on the couch and she sat on the carpet in between his legs.

Neelo:Babe you d-

Rhys:Where do I cut?

Neelo:Just below those beads. Do not cut my hair
Rhysand McKnight.

Rhys:If it happens by mistake?

Neelo:Rhysand McKnight do not cut my hair!

Rhys:I hear you, don't get worked up about it.

He cut below the beads and after the cutting he took out one tooth pick and started to undo her hair. While doing the boring task of undoing her hair, he told her about his university days and he smiled when she interjected or was just interested in knowing more about him. She never asked questions because she had faith he would tell her one day.

Neelo:So your only friend is your brother?

Rhys:It takes a lot for me to trust people and what happened months ago was proof of why I don't trust people with my business.

Neelo:Ah! I see now, that's why you always let me blab on about me and you never said anything. You should have given yourself time to heal.

Rhys:That's why I was at the farm, I was healing.

Neelo:And I showed along. I'm sorry.

Rhys:Don't be sorry, you are a blessing. That night, I kept telling myself that it would be a hit and run and nothing more.

Neelo:I-I....

Her heart broke when he said that. Of course she had been expecting him to break it down the following morning that it was nothing but scorching sex and chemistry that they had to explore, nothing more.

Rhys:Love did hurt me but you coming along was nothing short of a miracle. Neelo I am serious when I say I love you. You don't have to be insecure and think about my ex. What happened, happened and I accepted it. I love you now and with you realized that loving can heal, loving can mend your soul. It got easier and easier to heal with you around.

He kissed her forehead and continued to undo her hair. Silence filled the room and she looked at her nails. Rhysand smiled and did her hair. Maybe he will

take her to do her nails and hair at the same time. He has never seen her with her nails done before, they would suit those small hands and imagine her nails scratching his back as she cries in ecstasy.

Rhys:Who do you think he is going to look like?

Neelo:We don't know if we are having a girl or a boy.

Rhys:It slipped my mind. Next scan we are asking the doctor.

Neelo:Don't be disappointed if it's not a boy. Just saying.

Rhys:It's a boy. I know it.

Neelo:We'll see.

Rhys:Babe?

Neelo:Rra?

Rhys:I will do better okay? I promise I will do better my love.

Neelo:Okay.

In two hours he was done and he ran his hands in her knotted hair as she moved away from him.

Neelo: Thank you so much but it hurts.

Rhys: Should I comb it?

Neelo: Ng ng. Let me do it myself. I have never seen an afro comb here.

Rhys: I don't have one.

Neelo sighed and placed her head on his thigh.

Neelo: I am doomed.

Rhys: Is that the comb you use for your hair?

Neelo: Yes, natural hair hurts. Do you have a wide toothed comb?

Rhys: No.

Neelo: I guess I will do my hair at home.

Rhys: Come, let me feed you guys.

He got her up on her feet and walked to the kitchen holding her waist from behind.

At Francistown

Ruby got inside her car as she crossed her fingers hoping she was going to get hired. She didn't do so bad at the interview. She answered the questions as professionally she could so she was hoping for the best.

.

.

*

*

*

A MONTH LATER

TROUBLED

#45

At Bobonong

With her small bump Neelo parked Rhysand's big car in the parking spot. She hoped and prayed she didn't dent it. He left the car so she can use it while he was in the UK for whatever reason. He didn't delve much into the details about his week long trip there. She stopped the car and got out. She took her bag and looked at her nails. It was weird to have nails done after more than a year without those acrylics and he took her to Francistown just to get her hair and nails done. Later that night, he wanted those nails to scratch his back as he gave her intense waves of pleasure. She locked the car and walked to the shop to buy the grocery at home and maybe refill his grocery. So she had to grocery shop for two households.

She got the trolley and started the grocery shopping. Meanwhile at the parking spot near the shop, Ruby parked her car. She was here for the weekend to see her parents. Her father's health was slowly deteriorating and her mother was sick with worry. She wanted to see if she cannot move her dad to town to get help from a private hospital or a better diagnosis. For now she was here to buy food for her parents. Her life was peaceful as ever with her at her new job and being happy in her workplace.

She got out of the car and she recognized the car she was parked next to. She swallowed, he was here in the mall somewhere? She breathed in and out. She was over him and she shouldn't even be nervous around Rhysand. She walked to the shop and pushed a trolley into the shop. She took out her phone and looked at the list she had made in her notes app.

Neelo smiled as she passed the baby formulas. They haven't started preparing for the baby's arrival. She still had her savings, she will use that in the meantime while looking for a job. All of the places she applied at haven't called her for an interview, even the last week's job advertisement at Francistown. She sighed. They probably wanted people with five years experience and have worked before.

She walked down the aisle heading to the other aisle. She stopped by the shelves to pick what she needed. Ruby walked down the aisle, she should call Neelo so that they could spend time together and talk. Ruby never had siblings and she knew Neelo didn't have siblings too. She had been busy with her life that she forgot that she can talk to Neelo. Sometimes it's just nice to have a friend to talk to. She lifted her eyes and saw Neelo picking stuff from the shelves, she had on a tight knee length dress and she pushed her trolley closer.

Neelo mentally ticked off her grocery lists. There

was still more to buy from this shop. She pushed her trolley and smiled seeing Ruby.

The two crossed paths and stopped. Ruby stopped to take a closer look at Neelo. Was that a bump? Neelo followed Ruby's eyes as they landed on her small bump.

Ruby: Is it too early to say congratulations?

Neelo: It's not. Thank you. How have you been?

Ruby: I have been doing so well, just came here to see my parents for the weekend.

Neelo: That's good.

Ruby: How is it so far? Pregnancy I mean?

Neelo: Weird and strange. It's weird knowing another human being is dependent on you for growth but it's turning out to be wonderful so far.

Ruby: And who is the lucky man?

Neelo laughed.

Neelo: Some guy.

Ruby:Hoped that some guy didn't run when he found out.

Neelo:He is the sweetest, he was so happy when I told him and he thinks we are having a boy. You know men and thinking their firstborns will be boys(rolling her eyes while laughing)

Ruby:Men have pride and egos.

Neelo:I know but I am hoping it's a little girl.

Ruby:You look and sound so happy. Is it safe to assume that this guy won't hurt you?

Neelo:It's safe to assume such. O bona ha? Ke tsene ka pelo le mowa (you see this one? I invested my heart and soul into it)

Ruby:Know what? We have a lot of catching up to do, I'll set a date tomorrow so we can eat and talk.

Neelo:That would be wonderful, I am always cooped up in the house.

Ruby:Let me guess? Reading?

Neelo:I live in my head most of the time so yeah.

Ruby:Look at us wasting time talking instead of shopping.

Neelo:And I have just started.

Ruby:Same.

The two continued shopping side by side as they talked about general stuff. Ruby looked around and she smiled, so Rhys was probably not in the shop. While they were shopping Neelo's phone started ringing. Neelo opened her bag and took her phone out.

Neelo>Hello.

Rhys:O raya nna o re hello? O tennwe ke eng?(you are saying hello to me? What made you mad?)

Neelo:Akere you are not back.

Rhys:Actually, I'm home.

Neelo:Home as in?

Rhys:Home and I can't see my car.

Neelo:I'll return it.

Rhys:Are you home?

Neelo:Nnyaa rra, grocery shopping with a friend.

Rhys frowned.

Rhys:The last time I checked you didn't have friends
marshmallow.

Neelo:I'll tell you about it when I get there. Bye and I
missed you.

Rhys:I love you sweetheart. My boy has been
behaving in there?

Neelo:Ee rra. Bye.

She hung up and put her phone back in her bag.

Neelo:Sorry about that Ruby.

Ruby:You are so happy tlhemma (smiling) the smile
you had while talking to the phone.

Neelo:I didn't know love could be so beautiful. Have
you ever been in love?

Ruby:I have and funny thing is I realized when it was

too late. I hope he is happy wherever he is.

Neelo:Not a lot of exes can say that. You see me? I really hope Peter and Michael are miserable wherever they are.

Ruby laughed.

Ruby:Boloi Neelo.

Neelo:Those two deserve to really suffer tlhemma. Mxm!(laughing) you were talking about plots?

Ruby:Ah yes, there are a few plots for sale that I know of in Francistown and surrounding areas.

Neelo:Do you have the sellers contacts?

Ruby:I'll send via WhatsApp.

Neelo:Thank you.

An hour later the ladies were by the till and Ruby paid first. Neelo remembered something.

Neelo:You can pay. I forgot to buy something. We will talk okay?

She left the line and she pushed her trolley towards the aisles. Ruby paid and Neelo wasn't back when she was done. She pushed her trolley out of the shop.

At Neelo's parents

There was a door knock as the parents sipped on tea on a hot summer afternoon. Ma Neelo went to open the door as usual and was surprised to see people she didn't know.

Man;Dumelang, is this the Jones residence?

Ma N:Ee rra.

Man:Can we come in? We have some business to discuss.

Ma Neelo hesitated as she opened the door wider. The two men walked inside and Ra Neelo placed his

teacup down. The men sat down and Ma N sat down.

Man 2: Dumelang, we are here in regards to what our son did.

Ra N:Dumelang. We are listening.

The two gentlemen stated their reasons for being here and twenty minutes later after a proper date was set for the negotiations to take place. Ma Neelo had to hold her peace or else she would be exposing herself. She checked the time and wondered when Nene will be back from buying food.

At the shops

Neelo finally pushed the trolley out of the shop and one of the shop security guards offered to help her.

Neelo:Thank you so much.

Him:You shouldn't be pushing a trolley that is almost your size.

She laughed and didn't take offense to that sly comment about her height. He pushed it to the car and he helped her put the plastics at the passenger seat and some of the stuff at the back. Neelo opened her bag to get a note to tip him.

Neelo: Thank you so much.

Him: Welcome mam. Have a good day.

Neelo: You too.

He waited for her to get inside the car that was when he walked away. Neelo connected her phone to the car's audio system and played her soft music as she started to reverse slowly out of the parking spot. She didn't want to dent his car.

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand stepped out of the shower when he heard

the gate open. He wrapped a towel around his waist and walked out of the room. He pulled the curtain open and saw his car drive inside the yard. She brought it back. He walked back to the bedroom to get dressed. Neelo parked the car and got out of the car. She looked around and walked to the house. She knocked first before opening the door.

Neelo:Baby?

There was silence. She walked to the bedroom and opened the door. Mans was in his boxers and she smiled. She walked towards him and wrapped her hands around his torso from behind.

Rhys:Hey sweetheart...

He turned and picked her up. Neelo kissed his face all over and he laughed.

Rhys:I missed you too sweet thing.

Neelo kissed his lips and smiled. She kissed him again turning it into a French kiss as she wrapped her hands around his neck. Rhysand kissed her back

and broke it looking at her. She slid off him and looked up at him. She unzipped her dress and pulled it down. She stepped out of her dress as Rhysand looked at her. Okay Mrs Rhysand, she was here for one thing. Neelo removed her bra and stepped out of her panties. Rhysand smiled looking at her small bump that was starting to protrude.

Neelo:You can lie on the bed.

Rhys:Mma?

Neelo:Babe the bed..

He smiled as a he got on the bed and laid flat on his back as he placed his hands behind his head. Neelo in her nakedness got on the bed and sat on top of him. Rhysand thought he would feel her small hands push down her boxers but she snuggled against him.

Neelo:Did I tell you clothes make me feel hot, diaparo di a hisa. Hold me. Wake me up before six mme. Thank you.

So she was naked against him just to sleep. Not for dick. Wow! Okay. He lightly rubbed her back and placed his hand on her tummy.

Rhys:Comfortable?

Neelo:Mmhmm. My skin can breath now. Wake me up before six, grocery ya batho e mo koloing.

She closed her eyes.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#47

At Rhysand's house

He opened the door for his pregnant girlfriend. Neelo went straight to the bedroom and placed her overnight bag down. She started undressing as he finally walked in. His hands were in his pockets and he watched her from a safe distance. Here she was again, for the second time that day. Naked in his house. He wasn't going to hope for much so he walked out of the bedroom. Neelo wore his t-shirt with nothing underneath and walked to the sitting room. He wasn't in the sitting room, she walked barefoot to the kitchen.

Rhys:What do you want to eat? I am sure I can whip something up for us.

Neelo:I'll eat later.

Rhys:Babe, I don't remember seeing you eat the past four hours.

Neelo:I'll eat Rhysand. Come.

She extended her hand and he walked towards her. Their hands intertwined and she smiled looking up at him.

Neelo:I wasn't going to wait until you're done, I'm right here and I think my outfit speaks volumes.

Rhys:What outfit?

Neelo:Exactly. You can follow my lead big boy.

She led him to the bedroom and she closed the door after he got inside. She bent down and removed his shoes. Looking at his shoe size she prayed she was carrying a little girl. She removed his socks as well and Rhysand silently looked at her as she did that. She stood up and she removed his belt before she unzipped his jeans. She instructed him to step out of his pants and she pulled up his shirt, he helped her

with that. She smiled and placed her small hands on his packs. Her fingers started to trace his tattoos. She never asked about the meaning behind the tattoos. She frowned when she saw the faint scar that the ink had covered. She never noticed such small details.

Neelo:And why do you have a scar?(she walked behind him)

Rhys felt her soft hands touch him all over.

Neelo looked carefully and she could feel a bumpy line on his back. Was she just too ignorant to have noticed all of this?

Neelo:You have another one, it's covered by the tattoos but-(trailing off)

Rhys:Do you want to sit down so I can tell you about it?

Neelo:Okay....

They both sat on the bed and she could see the haunted look in his eyes. He closed his eyes and

opened them once again. In his eyes, she saw unused tears. Tears she was sure he won't shed just to protect his ego and pride. She also saw hurt and regrets, she didn't know in regards to what but she was going to find out.

He held her soft hand and he averted his eyes to her hands instead. Too afraid that she was going to see what's really on the inside, all his insecurities and all the dirty laundry. Neelo waited for him to start speaking, she wasn't going to rush him. She wanted him to let go and just be free around her. At this point he knew her important milestones and almost everything about her.

Rhys:I had an abusive father.

Neelo nodded. Her mother had been right though it was never her mother's business to speak like that about people.

Rhys:It wasn't just the abuse of two slaps and verbal abuse. That man broke my mother but she loved him

so much regardless of his character. He would beat her almost every week for no goddamn reason and every time I woke up trying to stop him when it went to too far, I would be beaten. After a beating, I was unable to go to school for a solid two days or a week if the injuries were too severe. Nobody bothered to help whenever he would beat my mother.

He took a deep breath as his mind took a trip down to memory lane, he remembered how helpless his mother was and how she would scream for him to stay out of it so that he would not be beaten by a man he called his father. Tears burned his eyes and he blinked still looking at Neelo's small hands. Neelo was silent. She was probably thinking he didn't have the best of childhoods, hers was perfect and she was the apple of her parents eyes. She won't relate and the funny thing is he has never told any woman about this. He didn't know why he was telling her. It was the past and it was supposed to remain there. Neelo squeezed his hand and he lifted his eyes.

Rhys:Uh-The abuse went on even when Alex was

born. Alex my brother. My mother never bothered to report him and she would say how can she report him when he was the sole provider in the house.

Neelo's heart bled for young Rhysand and his mother. No one has to endure such abuse.

Rhys:To top it all off he had mistresses. He cheated in my mother left, right and center. Everyone would talk about whenever I passed in the village or was on my way to school. The funny thing is that he told me I would never amount to anything and I will be useless just like my mother. That's what he said every time after a brutal beating.

Neelo didn't know what to say. Rhysand had long broke the eye contact and he was looking at their intertwined hands.

Rhys:There was this one time I was 16 and he beat my mother so bad that she miscarried. He was drunk that time when he came back home. Probably from the other woman. From the room I shared with my brother all we could hear were her screams and I had to protect Alex from all that. I covered his ears

as I listened to my mother's screams. Her screams later quieted down and I walked out of the room tip toeing to their room. There she was, in a pool of blood and the fucking bastard didn't care Neelo.

Neelo held back tears as his cracked and his grip on her hands tightened.

Rhys:He left her for dead. He beat up a pregnant woman and killed my little sister(blinking back the tears that threatened to roll down)He left the house and left her like that Neelo. He killed her and with that(pausing)

Neelo rubbed his hand as tears rolled down her own eyes.

Rhys:Let's just say my mother has been through a lot because of that bastard.

Neels:Where is he now?

Rhys:I almost killed him when I was 17. I was so close to ending his miserable life, if it wasn't for my

mother stopping me, he would be dead. It's not like I can't still kill him anytime, I just don't have the time to waste on a pathetic, sadistic human being.

Neelo let go of his hands and rubbed his back.

Rhys:From there, things were tough at home and I had to do what I had to do for things to be okay. How I managed that with school? I have no idea but I do have a degree...

Neelo smiled. He was trying to lighten the mood.

Rhys:I am not one of the best of men out there, I'm sorry if I am not the perfect package you are looking for and I-

Neelo:I'll take you.

Rhys blinked looking at her.

Neelo:I'll take you as you are.

Rhys:I am a murderer Neelo, I do a lot more evil than what meets the eye. I have done unforgivable things

and I am not expecting an angel like you to fly down hell with me.

Neelo held his hand as her heart raced. She was going into this one head first.

Neelo: You came just as you are to me, don't apologize for what you can't change and as tainted as you, I'll take your bad days with your good. I'll walk through the storm with you. Is it safe to say I don't see the man you are describing because to me you aren't that.

Rhys: Neelo you don't know what you are-

Neelo: I know what I am saying okay? Did you get tattoos to hide the scars?

He nodded and she kissed his arm first.

Neelo: I love you okay, I will love you even when you hate yourself for what you do. I will love you unconditionally.

Rhysand looked at her, she didn't understand what

he did. What he does.

Neelo:Rhysand?

Rhys:Mma?

Neelo:Thank you for opening up to me.

Rhys:You don't have to be scared of me, I am not my father. I swear in my life. I will never hurt you or our child. Not intentionally anyway.

Neelo:I know. I trust you not to.

Rhys:But Neelo remember that time in the car after our first night?

Neelo nodded.

Rhys:I was serious. You're mine and I hate sharing. That's one line you shouldn't cross.

Neelo:Ee rra.

He looked at her and used his thumb to wipe her tears.

Rhys:I love you sweetheart.

She smiled and kissed him. She slowly pushed him down and placed her hands on his chest as she got on top of him. She deepened the kiss while Rhys wrapped his hands around her waist. She pushed his boxers down and looked at him. She slowly unbuttoned the shirt she was wearing and he let out a soft smile.

Neelo: Let me, tonight. Just for tonight.

He licked his lips as she discarded of the shirt and her full breasts grazed against his chest as she French kissed him. She could feel his erection against her stomach and she smiled in the kiss. She broke it and looked at him with a small smile. He was imperfect but she decided to choose this imperfect man, she was going to love him with all his imperfections. She started to gyrate against him and she #EXPLICIT.

.

.

.

TROUBLED

#48

The following morning

At Francistown

The prosecutor finally picked the phone in an attempt to try and call Ruby but he stopped. He can do this on a Monday. He was just too anxious to crack the case. McKnight had a lot of skeletons and so far, he was sure there was no woman in his life. He had nothing to lose other than his assets being frozen if he could find the right evidence to bring him down.

All he knew was that McKnight wasn't working alone. No man who could amass such an amount of money with a useless degree and the court case dies like

that. He banged his table. He needed a drink because he had a lot of work to do. He leaned back. He should pass by the high court to see the minutes of the McKnight case. The funny thing is that there were no witnesses or anyone to testify against McKnight and it irked him so much, were people that afraid of him?

At Ruby's parents

Ruby stood by her father's room as he coughed. Her mother was tending to him and they were at their wits end.

Ruby: Mom can we take him to Francistown? I'll pay.

Ma Ruby: I don't want to burden you. I am sure we will be okay.

Ruby: Tomorrow we are going to Francistown. I can't stand here to see my father die when I know I could've done something.

Ma Ruby: Okay.

Ruby:We will see what to do there.

She rubbed her arms and walked away as her phone beeped with a WhatsApp message from Neelo.

Neelo:Thank you for the numbers. I'll contact them on Monday.

Ruby:Welcome. Can we meet around 2pm?

Neelo:Yes mam. I'll be ready. Have a blessed day love.

Neelo went offline and Ruby placed her phone down.

At Rhysand's place

Neelo placed her phone down as Rhysand slept peacefully. She didn't want to wake him up but they had a doctor's appointment in two hours. She

couldn't imagine the younger version of him going through what he went through. She was sure he didn't want her pity but God she wanted to burst into tears at the images she had when he was telling her about his childhood. She rubbed her eyes and got out of bed. She picked his shirt and wore it on her way to the kitchen to make something to eat.

Minutes later Rhysand touched the other side and it was empty. He sighed, he couldn't believe he poured his heart out to her like that and she just said she'll take him as he was. Just like that. He closed his eyes, he will have to do his absolute best to protect his woman and son because he would be shattered if anything was to happen to two of them because it would all be his fault. His fault that they are targets. His phone vibrated by the table and he looked at the table as the name of one of the ministers popped up on his phone screen. He cleared his throat and answered the call. He listened for a good five minutes before he sat upright and he said his part. He hung up seconds later and placed his phone

down. He picked his phone again and called Alex.

Rhys:Hey bro, I might be back in town around Monday or Tuesday. I'm still with the little Miss.

Alex:Okay.

Rhys:Pass by the farm. There is a job we have to do and apparently the police are still sniffing.

Alex:That Ruby snitch opened up a can of worms.

Rhys:I know., trust me I regret ever bringing her into my life.

Alex:I will pass by.

Rhys:The stuff is that side, unopened and sealed. And underneath the bed, you'll find the small small bag.

Alex:Got it.

Rhys:Good. I will sort out the rest on when I come back.

He hung up and placed his phone down. He rubbed his eyes before he licked his phone to call his lawyer.

Rhys:Hello. I hope this is the right time, I would like to change a few things.

Him:Is Monday okay?

Rhys:In the afternoon around two would do. Thank you.

He hung up and finally placed his phone down. He rubbed his temples breathing in and out. He got out of bed and put on his boxers before he stepped out of the room. He could hear the sizzling coming from the kitchen and a smile formed on his lips. He stealthily walked to the kitchen, she was too preoccupied with flipping whatever that was in the pan that she didn't notice him till he wrapped his arms around her bulging waist.

Rhys:Hello sweetheart.

His breathed into her ear as his husky voice sent tiny sparks all over her body.

Neelo:Morning. I just started.

Rhys:What are we having for breakfast?

Neelo:Bacon and stuff..

Rhys:I can't stop thinking about what you did last night..

She chuckled as she slapped his hands away.

Neelo:Don't distract me tlherra, I'm cooking.

Rhys:I loved that part where you-

She threw a kitchen cloth at him and he laughed.

Rhys:Can you do it again tonight?

Neelo:Rhys I am cooking.

Rhys:And you think I'm going to let you go after you riding me like a porn star? Ng ng.

Neelo blushed as she removed the pan from the heat.

Rhys:What can I do to help?

Neelo:You are going to distract me Mr McKnight.

Rhys:I won't my love.

She told him what she wanted and they spent the next thirty minutes in the kitchen making their meal. Once they were done, he placed her on the kitchen counter as he fed her the food they made. He kissed her cheek randomly as she smiled trying to hide her blush.

Rhys:Sweetheart?

She looked in his eyes waiting for him to talk.

Rhys:As much as you said you accept me for who and what I am, you do not know what I do. There is a file I want to print for you so you can browse through it and there is something I want us to do okay?

She was lost. He saw the confusion in her eyes and he kissed her nose.

Rhys:Do you trust me?

She nodded hesitantly. She was not sure where he was going with this.

Rhys:Around this week if you have time, come to Francistown okay? Pass by my office and we'll take

it from there.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#49

At the hospital

Neelo smiled as she held the scan in her hand. Her baby was coming along just fine and Rhysand was so excited about being a dad. While they were waiting for the doctor, her mind wandered to what he said that morning. Why did he want her in town? She shook her head and smiled at him as he leaned down to peck her lips.

Rhys:I told you didn't I?

She rolled her eyes.

Neelo:It doesn't matter..

Rhys:I knew that you were carrying a little boy in there.(smirking)

Neelo:Whatever Rhysand. You were right and I was

wrong but I should know these thing, he is literally growing inside of me.

Rhys:I just felt it in my blood.

Neelo:And aren't you so smug Mr McKnight?

He chuckled and kissed her hand while she tried to push him away. The door opened and the doctor walked back to talk to the couple. After their very short talk, it was time for them to go.

As they walked outside, he snaked his arm around her waist as she used her hand to cover her face from the sun.

Neelo:I have to meet a friend around two in town.

Rhys:Should I drop you off?

Neelo:That would be marvelous love.

Rhys:But as far as I know you don't have a friend.

Neelo:I know her from way back in school. She is older than me by three years or so.

Rhys:Okay.

Neelo:We met a few months ago at the hospital, she is so kind and nice.

Rhys:That's nice.

Neelo:it really is. I'm sure you would approve if you met her.

Rhys:Are you sure?

Neelo:Really sure. You'll meet her since you are going to drop me off.

Rhys opened the car door for her and she got inside while he walked to his side.

Neelo:Let me call and ask where we are meeting..

Neelo dialed Ruby's number and she answered after a few seconds.

Ruby:Hello?

Neelo:Hi, where are we meeting?

Ruby told her as Neelo nodded. The place was okay

and it was an open space. They can get food and sit down to talk.

Neelo:Bye, will see you there.

She hung up and looked at her baby daddy.

Neelo:I should probably call my parents.

Rhys:And how did you leave? You have never spent the night whilst they knew you were around...

Neelo:I avoided questions(grinning)

Rhys:For dick?

Neelo laughed and pushed him as he started the car.

Neelo:You would be okay if I just decided that he is okay?

Rhys:No mam. I am very very grateful that you put a dick appointment first.

Neelo:Ga ke batle Rhys.

Rhys:Just saying love.

He reversed out of the parking area and drove off while Neelo fixed her seatbelt.

At Francistown

Katlego placed the pictures down as he finally decided it was time to come out of his self imposed mourning. He opened the curtains followed by the windows as the sun's rays blinded him in the process. He let out a small smile, it's been a while since he enjoyed anything. Aone's death left a dent in his heart and a hole he wasn't sure he was supposed to fill but he was going to have to find a way to be happy.

Aone would have loved it for him to move on. At some point they had looked up at the possibilities of adopting children to raise as their own. He walked into the room and looked around. His house had two more bedrooms that weren't used and that was where their kids would have been staying.

Unfortunately fate had other plans and no one can outrun fate. All those dreams crumbled into dust and he didn't know why he just remembered that small fact now.

He should get ready and see if he can get a dog or a puppy. Dogs were great companions and he could use one in the lonely hours to keep his mind busy.

- .
- .
- .

The road is about to get bumpy. If it gets too much take a break and come back when you are ready

TROUBLED

#50

At Bobonong

At the meeting spot

Ruby checked the watch and it was a few minutes to two. She didn't know why she was so early but maybe it has been a while she hung out with a friend. She spotted Neelo from a distance. Why did Neelo have to be this cute ray of sunshine? She smiled and placed her hands on her thighs as Neelo quickly approached her. Neelo smiled as she held her bag.

Neelo:Hi.(grinning)

Ruby:Hey,

They hugged and Ruby could smell the distinct cologne that was still etched in her sense all over Neelo.

Ruby:What cologne is that?

Neelo smelled her arms and laughed. Rhysand held her for too long now she smells like him.

Neelo:It's not mine, I forgot the name of the cologne but yah.

Ruby:Let's get something to eat and we catch up.

Neelo:Sounds like a plan and I am starving.

Ruby:We shouldn't even be starving you. You are carrying precious cargo.

Neelo smiled as they walked to the shops for food.

They came back 30 minutes later and sat down.

Ruby smiled wistfully, she hoped she will be at her happiest one day too.

Neelo stopped biting into the chicken thigh and covered her mouth with her other hand and smiled.

Neelo:What?

Ruby:You're happiness is contagious.

Neelo:Does it really show that I am happy?

Ruby:Yes it does mam.

Neelo laughed.

Neelo:We'll talk about happiness once I find a job.

Ruby:You still haven't found one?

Neelo:I have been applying and I haven't been called for an interview, I am starting to show so I doubt they would hire a pregnant woman who will be absent a few months later down the line.

Ruby:I really hope you do get a job.

Neelo:Sooner rather than later.

Ruby:You never talked about your marriage.

Neelo sighed as she placed the chicken thigh down.

Neelo:He is late, that's the main reason why I came here.

Ruby:I am so sorry. Are you okay?

Neelo:It happened almost a year ago and I accepted

it. Crying won't bring him back, I just hope he is resting peacefully where he is and I hope he is happier than he was here.

Ruby:You're strong you know that. And you managed to move on now you're expecting.

Neelo:This guy here came unexpectedly so did love. I stopped questioning and I decided to love wholeheartedly.

Ruby:That's another way to put it.

Neelo:I guess so. I don't know if we are going to last but even if we do not last, at least I know that I tried my best.

Ruby:I hear you. I am taking a break from that scene.

Neelo:Ah. You mentioned an ex.

Ruby chuckled sadly.

Ruby:I still love him but love is lost Neelo especially when the other partner decided to break the trust you two had or start the relationship under false pretenses.

Neelo:He broke your heart?

Ruby:The other way round actually..

Neelo:I'm sure you didn't mean to.

Ruby sighed. She knew what the hell she was doing when she turned Rhysand in and there is no use to pity herself anymore. She was way past that stage. She ruined him but she hoped she didn't ruin him for the next woman.

Ruby:I did it intentionally and I ended up regretting it. We almost got married.

Neelo:really?

Ruby:Actually yeah. Stuff happened and six months later the relationship was over. All I can say is honesty is the best policy in a relationship and breaking another's trust is one thing you should never try to do.

Neelo:Noted sis.

Ruby laughed and that lightened the mood as Neelo continued eating. They started talking about house plans and that motivated Neelo to keep on job

hunting. She needed a place to call her own and be proud of the work of her own sweat and blood.

Ruby:What did you study?

Neelo:Records and Archives...

Ruby:I'll see if there are any job openings at work my love.

Neelo:That would be great thank you. How are your parents doing?

Ruby:Not so good. I want to back to town with them so I can take my father to the hospital for a proper examination.

Neelo:Please do, I will keep them in my prayers too.

Ruby:Thank you. Have you thought about a baby shower?

Neelo:Not really. I am not close to a lot of people and as a child I was a recluse, so I am not close to my cousins or relatives.

Ruby:You have me as a friend.

Neelo laughed. This talk was heartwarming.

Neelo:You were like an older sister in varsity and thank you. Who knew we would meet years later.

Ruby:It can only be fate sis.

Neelo:The universe works in mysterious ways.

Ruby:That it does.

After three hours had elapsed and the sun was setting, leaving orange hues in its exit Neelo's phone rang. She opened her bag and answered immediately.

Neelo:Hello.

Rhys:It's getting late. Where are you so I can steal you away?

Neelo laughed and looked at Ruby who was now on her phone texting.

Neelo:Okay. From where we parked earlier, just walk straight down and you'll spot us.

Rhys:Okay my love, I'm on my way...

She placed her phone down and Ruby smiled.

Neelo:I think in a few minutes I'll be leaving.
Someone is getting pretty impatient.

Ruby:I totally understand.

The ladies stood up and Neelo lightly patted her dress and Ruby couldn't help but think about pregnancy and the experience she robbed herself of. She shook her head as they started walking while talking. Meanwhile Rhysand could spot Neelo from the way she was dressed and frowned as he saw her with someone familiar. Too familiar. He kept on walking as it got clearer and clearer. Neelo saw Rhys and she smiled. Ruby paused as Rhysand stood in front of them. Her heart dropped.

Neelo:Hey baby.

In her mind she kept asking herself if Neelo called him baby. She was not okay but she had to play it cool. Rhysand didn't like scenes. Rhysand gave

Neelo a smile that she never even got.

Neelo:Meet my friend Ruby and Ruby meet my baby daddy Rhysand.

She just nodded as Neelo said bye. Why was it when she met Rhysand he looked better than the last time?

Ruby:Nice to meet you.

He nodded as the two walked away with his hands around her waist. He moved on quicker than she expected and he was expecting but it hasn't even been a year since they broke up. Not even six months and he was expecting? Did Neelo know how dangerous that man was and the love she talked about wasn't just fairytale books she read?

.

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#51

Inside the car

Rhys looked at Neelo and he shook his head. Neelo had noticed the silence he had fallen into after they walked away from Ruby. Was something wrong?

Neelo: Is there something wrong?

Rhys kept quiet.

Neelo: Rhys and?

Rhys: She's my ex-fiancée.

Neelo fell into absolute silence as the cog wheels started turning in her head. She gasped as she put 1 and 1 together then she blinked a few times.

Neelo: Wait what?

Rhys: Ruby is the ex I was telling you about.

Neelo:So th-wow! Uhm(shaking her head sideways)

Rhysand started the car and Neelo leaned back as he started to reverse the car. Rhys looked at her and he paused to buckle her up.

Rhys:We'll talk about it at home or I should drop you off at your parents house?

Neelo:I'll go back tomorrow..

He nodded and started to drive as Neelo started to think about it all. So the man Ruby was talking about had been Rhys. She is the baby mama to the same man Ruby almost married? She paused as the car moved along the tarred road. So Ruby was the one shouting profanities at her that night when she was upset and told Rhys to sort it all out. She looked at Rhys and she thought of him with Ruby and she rubbed her temple.

The drive home was silent as both of them were lost

in their own thoughts.

When they arrived home Neelo was the first person to get out of the car with her stuff and Rhys shook his head. He didn't know why she was so pressed. It's not as if he wanted Ruby back. Not by a long shot, he just hoped it was just Neelo's hormones making her moody all of a sudden.

Rhys followed minutes later and folded his hands by the door as he watched her sit down and place her head on her hands.

Rhys:Speak your mind sweetheart, I'm listening..

Neelo:So she was the one who insulted me that time.

Rhys:Yes mam.

Neelo:Wow!

Rhys:I didn't know she was your friend.

Neelo:This is getting complicated day by day..

Rhys:How?

Neelo:Here I thought I finally found a friend and a sister now she turns out to be my current's ex. Like we both tasted the same dick.

Rhys let out a dry laugh. She didn't have to be so blunt.

Neelo:Sorry about that but(shaking her head)

Rhys:As I said before, don't doubt my love for you. Never do that okay my love. I just told you so you can decide. I don't want to control your life..

Neelo:I never said that.

Rhys raised an eyebrow and she looked down embarrassed.

Rhys:Exactly...make your own decisions my love. I managed to make food. Are you hungry?

Neelo:No. I need to bath.

Rhys:Should I join you?

Neelo:Not this time love.

She stood up and walked to the bedroom as he

watched her. He hoped she will pull through this week. His phone rang and he answered.

Rhys:Hello?

Uncle:Ke nna motlogolo(it's me my nephew)

Rhys smiled.

Rhys:Hello.

Uncle:We talked to her family and we managed to set a date for everything. Does she know?

Rhys:No.

Uncle:Are you sure about this?

Rhys:On this one trust me. I do not know why I trust her but trust me.

Uncle:We are always behind you motlogolo. You should talk to your brother.

Rhysand chuckled as he rubbed his neck. Alex worked according to his own timing.

Rhys:If he will listen.

Uncle:I just wanted to let you know about what happened so we can keep you updated. O sure sure?

Rhys:Ee rra...

Uncle:But that other one tota she did the unthinkable.

Rhys:You have no idea what this specie is capable of malome...

Uncle:If it was me, I would have ended up in hospital.

Rhysand laughed. His anger that day was unmatched but he thanked his ancestors that he didn't let the anger consume him to the point of him raising his hand at her. He was not his father. He was not going to be that man, not in a million years. He hoped. He talked with his uncle for a while before he hung up and placed the phone down. He heard the water running and wondered what was going on in her pretty little mind.

At Ruby's parents

Ruby sat on her bed as she fully digested the blow she had been dealt with. It started to make sense, that day when she was dreaming like a mad woman that Rhysand had a woman in his house he did have a woman in the house. He was protecting Neelo from her. He never did this for her, never protected her from anyone. She didn't know how she lost her marbles that day.

She closed her eyes, Neelo was so happy with the guy she broke. The guy she let slip. She had regrets and more regrets. Did he love her that much to move in a span of a week to another woman, he even impregnated her. Was he replacing their baby that she intentionally killed. The fact that she killed his child left a bitter taste in her mouth. She couldn't imagine how he can be so happy when he said he loved her so damn much.

She picked her phone and opened her laptop. She still had pictures of the ring he had given her. That expensive engagement ring he surprised her with. Tears blurred her eyesight, she was really trying to move on from this man. She really was but everywhere she went she was reminded of him and what they could still share if she didn't mess it up.

She went to Facebook and she started to type a long ass paragraph as she uploaded the picture of her ring finger with the ring and another of her back at her house a week ago. She posted the paragraph and placed her phone down. She just had to get it off her chest and she felt lighter.

At Rhysand's place

Neelo was in Rhysand's shirt as she picked her phone and walked to the lounge. He was on his laptop but he closed it the minute she sat next to him. She placed her feet on top of him and he lightly

tickled her.

Neelo:Stop!(giggling)

He stopped and kissed her forehead. She unlocked her phone and went to WhatsApp where she clicked on her conversation with Ruby. She was conflicted but then being friends with her current's ex, knowing that she will have to censor what she says so Ruby doesn't miss Rhys. She knew Ruby missed Rhys just by the way she spoke about it, her smile faltered and she bit her lower lip as her nail hit the screen.

Rhysand just watched her and Neelo looked at the screen. She saw typing..

She waited for a few minutes and decided to log onto Facebook. She frowned as she read the caption on the post one of her Facebook friends shared.

“Choose your peace Sending love and light”
was the caption. Neelo decided to read the original post that Ruby had apparently posted online.

“I found a guy who told me I was a star, he was perfect to me in every possible way and he even paid my magadi. I got a ring and a loving man who regardless of his tainted past he was the best lover and friend a girl can get. I can say I was the one who ruined everything. And you know what happened after ruining everything? I regretted everything I did because he couldn't forgive me for what I did, I won't mention what I did because I don't want to be judged for my mistakes. Mistakes I made and regret to this day. That ring picture is the ring he got me, he didn't demand it back and every time I look at it, I remember the love we shared. I begged him to forgive me so we can fix things but you know the funny thing about men? They know their self worth and he decided that he could forgive me but would still let me go. Guys I begged, insulted and said a lot of things that were so unnecessary when I was in the wrong. I think my diary is tired of me writing about how much I miss this man and it hasn't been the best of months in terms of relationships. And fate decided to play a funny trick on me, turns out the sweet girl I considered as my sister is dating my

ex. A part of me is bitter about that(I won't lie and say I don't love the guy, I still love him)but I decided to be the bigger person and smile. She is even pregnant with his baby and that hurts me so much. On my own I decided that I should distance myself from her, she is not in the wrong. I don't trust myself around her because she is so happy with my ex and she didn't know he was my ex. A part of me hates that she found happiness with the guy I still love, she has been so unlucky with love and she is so happy. I hate the fact that my ex is so happy with her and he moved on quicker and is already expecting a child while I am trying to forgive myself for what I did. Ladies and gents, cherish the love you get from your partner and keep in mind that some of the things you do to your partner might be unforgivable. I hope I heal. The second picture is from a week ago

”

Neelo read the comments under the post.

Comment 1: heal and move sis, these days we don't cry for men.

Comment 2:Not a lot of women can openly say this but break the friendship for your piece of mind.

Reply to comment 2:true that. Women like playing victim.

Commenter 3 had posted a picture of Rhysand in the comments and asked if that was the guy..

Neelo read more comments and she placed her phone down. She didn't know how to feel about this rant on social media. Sooner or later people might see her with Rhysand and know that she is the pregnant lady and she hated social media attention. She honestly had no side to tell. She went back to WhatsApp to read Ruby's text.

Ruby:I guess you already know.

Neelo:That my baby daddy is your ex-fiancée?

On the other side Ruby swallowed. Baby daddy.

Ruby:Yes.

Neelo:I saw the Facebook post.

Ruby:I didn't mention names.

Neelo:it has a lot of likes and shares and sooner or later people will pinpoint me as the woman.

Ruby:I didn't think it will go that far. My apologies for that. I am a very jealous person and I still love Rhysand.

Neelo placed her phone down to take a deep breath.

Neelo:Maybe we could've been friends if we met earlier before I met your ex and maybe then we could pretend there is no gravity in the words we write.

Ruby:I expected this and was planning the same thing. It was good that we got to know each other and I am sorry that I still love your baby daddy.

Neelo: Ee mma. Nna I was just saying your post put me in the spotlight, you heal eventually sis. I hate being the center of attention that's why even you didn't know who he was till he picked me up.

Ruby:I'll delete the post.

Neelo:It's okay, you were expressing your feeling. I just hope that one day we can both laugh about it when it's not in our faces but all the best sis in your future endeavors and thank you for everything.

Ruby:Same to you.

Neelo:Hope you find the healing you need. Love and light

That was the last thing she sent before she deleted Ruby's number and deleted their conversation.

At Ruby's house

Ruby placed her phone down and she ran her hands through her hair. She swallowed tearfully as she picked her phone up and went to Facebook Messenger as she typed one last message to Rhysand. She would be done. Totally.

'Hi

I remember how you used to call me precious every time you looked at me. I hate that I still love you but I stopped hoping that you would get back with me. I hope Neelo makes you happy and congratulations on the baby you're expecting with her. I am jealous that she is carrying a child that I couldn't carry for my own selfish reasons. You have me peace and I wasted it but thank you for the happiest year of my life. I don't think I can forgive myself, I am sorry for the way I hurt you. I will never bother you again after this.

Your ex-precious

Ruby'

She sent the message and placed the phone down. She was going to finally unfriend him. She couldn't bring herself to block him. She connected her headsets to her phone as she played music. Neelo wasn't the usual type he went for and wasn't it funny

how he dated her a week after their breakup. It was like she had already been there in the background. She blasted Alessia Cara's Out Of Love.

There was no manual to this healing thing.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#52

At Rhysand's house

Neelo cuddled into his chest as he pressed his phone. Rhysand frowned when he saw Ruby's post on Facebook. This was all so unnecessary. He looked at the little miss cuddled against him.

Rhys:Are you okay?

Neelo:I am. Thank you for the food.

He rubbed her back and went on to his messenger and saw Ruby's message. He clicked on the message and read it. He just replied with "ok" and he placed the phone down to give Neelo all his attention. Neelo looked up at him with her eyes, why was she being so cute?

Rhys:What do you want?

She straddled him and he smiled. She laughed kissing his cheek.

Rhys:Okay mam. I'm all yours now...

He French kissed him as he wrapped his arms around her waist. He pushed the shirt up and she was naked underneath it. She started to grind on him releasing a sigh.

Rhys:I'm going to say hormones.

Neelo:Okay.

She looked down and undid pushed down his boxers as his erection sprung out, veined and proud. His hands were still on waist and she just guided slowly guided herself onto him. She moaned softly as she settled and he was just looking at her. He didn't know pregnancy could do this, he was going to enjoy her pregnancy that's for sure. Neelo arched her back whilst on top of him and started with small waist

movements. Rhys tightened his grip on her waist and he smiled as he started to fuck her from the bottom, he wasn't going to lose control like last night when she was in control. He flipped them and in minutes he was on top, he placed her legs on his shoulders for deeper penetration and took it from there.

An hour later Neelo looked at her baby daddy with a big smile. She was going to miss this when he goes to Francistown. She still didn't have a job so she should continue job hunting this side.

Rhys:I like pregnant you more, should I make you pregnant more often?

Neelo:Now that's absurd baby. Really absurd.

Rhys:I never know what to expect from you.

Neelo:I don't believe you.

They laughed and she snuggled into him more. Unbeknownst of everything that was to come later in

future.

At a house somewhere in Bobonong

The teenage girl closed the bedroom door and covered her little sister's ears as the fighting ensued. Her tears had dried against her cheek and it was the same story day in and day out. She bit her lower lip. They were fighting about her again and she hated that. She couldn't wait to go to college so she could leave this place.

The house quieted down and she uncovered her sister's ears. She waited for her sister to finally fall asleep and she got out of the room. As she walked to the small sitting room she found her mother crying. She had red rimmed eyes. Her mother shot her with a look that had her stumbling backwards. The young girl bit down her words as tears welled in her eyes. They just didn't understand did they? It wasn't her fault.

She walked back to the bedroom and closed the door. She covered herself up with the blanket and cried silently under covers. The door opened and she stilled.

Her:I know you are not sleeping. Wake up Sesame!

She pulled back the blankets and got out of the warmth of the blankets. Her mother wiped her tears as she held her arm leading her to the small sitting room. Her father had never really fathered her and her sister, just always there to demand and shout at them. She knew her father wished she was a boy and not a girl and definitely not the disappointment they thought she was. The man who called himself her father was sitting on the opposite couch as her mother pushed her to the chair to sit down.

Sesame sat down and a slap landed on her cheek from his big hand.

Him:What did you say you are?

Her lips quivered as the tears rolled down her eyes. She pulled her sleeves and wiped the tears fearfully.

Him:Mma? Kana ga o mma o rra?(angrily)

Sesame wiped more of her tears p, she was close to breaking down in front of him and she didn't want to.

Him:You failed to give me a son now the she you gave me is not normal and likes other girls.

Disgraceful. I shouldn't have picked you among the other women.

The lady looked at Sesame who had her head down with tears streaming down her cheeks. No sound escaped from her lips and the man angrily looked at his so called daughter and the woman he settled for after he decided on her when his estranged wife chose to side with a child. A child he bore and a child who thought had grown some balls. He didn't want to lose it on any one of them so he stormed out and

Sesame finally let out a sob. Her cheek was burning and she looked at her mother who wasn't defending her. Was that how a mother was supposed to behave? She was already tired, that she was brought in a world where family was merely blood and nothing more.

Her: You angered your father. Tomorrow is Sunday. I'm taking you to church so they can deliver you from that demon.

Sesame's tears dried at that sentence, she wasn't a monstrosity and they were making it look like she was one.

Her: You are embarrassing me and you are a woman. You are supposed to finish school and find a good man to marry. I have never heard of anything as outrageous as this. Mxm! Sutlha matlakala ao!

Sesame wiped her tears as her throat dried. Her mother wasn't serious was she? Why couldn't they just accept her for who and what she was. Aren't

parents supposed to be there for their children? These two proved otherwise and she hated that they were going to influence her little sister into their beliefs.

She got up and walked away. She hated this so much. She hated it here.

At Ruby's parents

Ruby read Rhysand's reply and sighed. She was done with this Rhys chapter. It was time for healing, growth and getting her life on track. Tomorrow she was going back to town her parents so her dad can be checked and that will all.

She wasn't meant to have friends maybe. She should leave it at that, her cousin was dating Rhysand's brother and the person she was developing a close friendship with was dating her ex. No, she wasn't

meant to have friends.

At Alex's house

Wawa rubbed her tummy as she drank her tea. Alex was out and she didn't know why he was out at this time of day. They share everything and Alex had kept on saying he hasn't met his brother's girlfriend. The name had sounded familiar but she had forgotten where she heard it from. She shrugged and picked up the remote to change channels. After a movie she was going to sleep, Alex will find her in bed.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#53

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo looked at her husband who was reading a book. She closed her book and looked at her husband.

Ma N: You really want my daughter to marry into that family?

Ra N: If there is something bothering you just say it woman..

Ma N: I'm just saying that it's too early for Neelo to get married again.

Ra N: Neelo is the one who has the final say on that matter. If we do not let her marry him, she might marry behind our backs. Do you want that?

She kept quiet and he closed his book. Ma Neelo opened her mouth and closed it again.

Ma N:we know thag boy's father. What if he turns out to be like his father back in the day?

Ra N: what happened to letting people show their true character on their own withoit judging them based on their parent's mistakes?

She kept quiet.

Ra N:Let Neelo be, she is a grown woman and she is going to be a mother soon. She knows we love her abd if anything is wrong she can come to us and we will take her ib with no hassle.

He switched off the side lamp and faced the other way and Ma Neelo had her eyes open in darkness. Maybe she should be glad that McKnight is not part of the scene anymore because she didn't know how she was going to feel if he was. She looked at her husband and although he was a good man, back in

the day before Rhysand's father married he was a catch and she had been in her life at some point then stuff happened. She shook her head and laid down. She closed her eyes and decided to sleep.

The following morning

At Rhysand's house

Beelo woke up first and she watched him breath. She touched his five o'clock shadow with a little smile. She wished it could be like this forever but that was not the case. She had to go home and he had to go back to town.

She kissed his cheek and got out of bed. She headed to the bathroom so she could fill the bathtub with bathing water.

Rhysand woke up minutes later upon hearing water splash in the bathroom. She could've woken him up but she didn't. He got out of bed and made his way to the bathroom, he found her relaxed in the bathtub. He took a piss and the sound of the toilet flushing disturbed her. She opened her eyes and smiled.

Neelo: Morning.

Rhys: Hey sweetheart. Let me leave you to it.

He walked out and she closed her eyes again and sunk into the water.

At Sesame's parents

Sesame cried as her mother forced her into a long white dress.

Ma Sesame: A ko o apare re tsamaye (get dressed so we go)

Sesame: ee mma..

She wiped her tears and she was glad her little sister was not in the room to witness such. Her mother got her Bible and she pulled the sleeves of the white vest she wore under the dress.

Ma Sesame: don't embarrass me please. We need to take that spirit out of you.

Sesame silently followed. Her father was nowhere to be found and she closed her eyes. At this point she didn't know if she was going to live long enough.

Ma Sesame found Sesame's young sister sitting down waiting for them. The three of them got out of the house as she locked the house. The church was a walking distance from where they stayed. Sesame only went to the church once and stopped going there because of the judgemental stares she got from people. She had always felt that they knew and judged her for it.

They started walking to Church and with each step, Sesame's heart got more heavier. Her mother was going to expose her like that? She really hated it here.

At Neelo's parents

Rhysand kissed her cheek as he parked his car outside the yard. So their weekend was over now he had to step back into reality. Deal with the pressing issues and eliminate every loose end.

Rhys:Promise to come to Francistown this week..

Neelo:I will try.

Rhys:Don't just try. This is really important my love.

His eyes were begging her to agree and she ended up agreeing. He kissed her lips.

Rhys:Take care okay? I will call later and I'm leaving tomorrow morning. I will still call. If you need

anything I am a call away sweetheart.

Neelo:ee rra.

He kissed her again and she flashed a smile. She opened the door and got out with her overnight bag along with her handbag. She didn't know what her parents were going to say but she hoped they were chilled about it all.

Rhys:I love you.

Neelo:I love you more.

She waved as he drove off and she opened the gate. Her father's car was here so both parents were home now. She walked to the door and knocked a couple of times before her mother opened the door. Her mother shook her head and the disappointment in her eyes spoke volumes.

She moved from door as Neelo looked down.

Ma N:I know you are pregnant with his child but that was no way to behave. You don't disrespect your parents like that. Where are the morals we raised you with?

Neelo kept quiet.

Ma N:I am extremely disappointed in you ngwanaka. Nene you don't disrespect your parents for a man that might leave you someday. We are the ones who are going to console you after you find out he used you. You are still living in our house and our rules apply here.

Neelo:Ee mma.

Ma N:wa nkutlwa?(do you understand me?)

Neelo:Ee mma.

Ma N:Do not let something like this happen again, I'm starting to think that that boy is a bad influence over your life.

There was silence and Neelo quietly excused herself. She closed her bedroom door and sat on the bed.

She let out a tired sigh and rubbed her growing tummy.

Neelo:I love you and your father. I promised to love him and I really do even if our love is just a few months old.

At Francistown

The prosecutor needed a really good reason to have the case reopened and trialed again. All he knew was that Ruby could be a step in the right direction, he would use his charm if he had to but he was going to nail this case and finally put an end to Rhysand McKnight.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#55

The following morning

Neelo waited for Rhysand to come get her. It was a better alternative than to go to the bus station and board a bus. How was it going to feel like to be back at the city after almost a whole year? She would just pass by the house she used to share with Aone and give Katlego a heads up about her arrival.

She looked at her nails and sighed. She will talk to her dad about her mom. She did not know what was wrong or what was up with her mother but maybe she is going through something. She checked the watch and it was almost 8. He said he will pick her before that, her mother walked out of the bedroom and headed to the kitchen. She didn't know how to approach her daughter after what happened

yesterday.

Ma N:Good morning. Are you hungry?

Neelo:I'm fine thank you and hi.

There was awkward silence between the two and Neelo heard the car hooter.

Neelo:That is my cue to leave. Will be back in a week or so. Say bye to dad for me and I will call him after I arrived.

She held her bag and she pushed her small suitcase out of the house. Her mother watched her daughter go, leaving her in the tension that surrounded the house.

Neelo got to the car and smiled as Rhysand opened the door to get out. He got her bag and put it in the backseat. He pulled her flush against him and breathed in her soft vanilla scent.

Rhys:Morning..

Neelo:Hey..(kissing his cheek)

He gave her a smile and she smiled back.

Rhys:Did you eat?

Neelo:I am not hungry. I will eat later.

Rhys:You're crashing at my place?

Neelo:Where else would I go?

He smiled and let her go. They both got inside the car and he drove off. Ma Neelo closed the curtain after the drove off and she sighed. There was nothing she could do. Neelo was madly and deeply in love with Rhysand. She had to get her head around that or else Neelo was going to start asking very unnecessary questions.

At the hospital

Ruby was waiting outside with her mother as the doctor ran tests on her father. The beautiful lady stepped out in her coat and stethoscope around her neck. She was wearing pink scrubs underneath the coat along with matching crocs. She was shorter than her. Almost Neelo's size but a few centimetres

short.

Ruby:Doctor(looking at the tag)Dr Colton..

Marang:We just ran tests and we are positive we will have the results on Wednesday if not tomorrow afternoon. How long has he been weak and what did the nurse from where you are from say?

Ma Ruby:It's been a month and I have been tending to him at home. He has always been weak but it was worsening so Ruby decided to bring him to town.

Marang let out a smile.

Marang:I can assure you that he is in good hands.

Ruby:He will be fine?

Marang:After we get the results we will take it from there. So far I don't want to speculate on anything till I get results straight from the lab. Also I would like to keep him overnight. To observe...

Ruby:Of course. Whatever that works doc.

Marang:You can go see him and I'll be back with the paperwork.

The two ladies nodded and Marang walked away as she slipped her phone out of her coat pocket. Ruby and her mother walked into the hospital room her father was and she let out a sad smile. He was already asleep. Maybe if she came earlier but she hoped it was nothing major. Her mother sat by his bedside and looked at Ruby.

Ma Ruby:I hope we are not delaying you...

Ruby:I will wait for the paperwork then head back to work.

Ma Ruby:Thank you.

Ruby nodded and watched from a distance.

At Rhysand's house

Hours later, Rhysand parked his car inside the yard and Neelo looked around. This house was impressive, really impressive.

Rhys:You like it?

Neelo:It's big. I like it. Who tends to it?

Rhys:I hire someone once a month to clean it thoroughly.

Neelo:It's beautiful. How many rooms do you have?

Rhys:Five bedrooms. One is the master bedroom and the rest are just normal rooms.

He took out her bag from the car and he placed his free hand on the small of her back as he led her to the door. He let her go and checked his pockets for the key. He unlocked the door and both of them walked inside the house as he pulled her bag.

Rhys:I'm going to put your bag in the bedroom. The kitchen has food baby girl or we can order takeout. Even eat out.

He headed to the bedroom and she looked around. Was she sure that when he was here alone, he lived alone? Or when he went to his trips he was alone?

She knew Rhysand loved sex and any chance he got, she was at the receiving end of it. He came back minutes later and she looked at him. She finally put her handbag down and looked around.

Rhy: You haven't been to the kitchen have you?

She shook her head and he took her hand in his leading her to the kitchen.

Rhys: You didn't eat and I don't know how long it's going to take to make you food. You need to eat sweetheart.

Neelo: I'm fine.

Rhys: I wasn't asking you. Let's go and get you something to eat and I will give you a tour of the whole house once we come back. I'll show you my offices as well my love so you can have a look around.

She just agreed to whatever he was saying.

At Rhysand's Office

The very few dignified staff that worked for Rhysand were shocked when he came with Neelo. The receptionist looked at the lady who was holding onto his bicep. Mr McKnight was at the office twice or thrice a week and even though he was supposed to get married almost a year ago, he had never brought his fiancée here.

Rhysand unlocked his office and allowed Neelo to sit down. He wasn't going to tell her now, she just needed to see the office.

Neelo: You own this?

Rhys: Ee mma. I just wanted you to see and have a look around? Are you full?

Neelo: I am love. There is still a lot I am yet to find out about you.

Rhysand chuckled and kissed her innocent head.

Rhys: When are you doing your hair again?

Neelo: I don't know.

He rubbed her forehead and laughed. After a new hairdo, her forehead was always shining.

Neelo:I won't appreciate jokes about my forehead
thank you very much.

Rhys:It's cute but funny at the same time.

Neelo:That's not a compliment.

Rhys:It is. It makes you all so pretty.

She blushed as he sat on his office chair. Alex said he sent the documents to his email and his laptop was in the car. He didn't know whether to send her to the car or to go himself.

Rhys:are you prepared for the interview?

Neelo:In all honesty no..

She took out her phone.

Neelo:Ask me questions so I can practice. It's tomorrow morning. Will they hire me even if I'm pregnant?

Rhys:That particular question is one you should take up with your employer. Each organisation has their own policies put in place, not wanting to be negative babe you are going to a government organisation as such and the chances of them hiring you are slim.

Neelo forced a smile.

Rhys:I am just saying but you know what? Come here.

She walked to him and sat on his lap.

Rhys:Give it your best shot okay? We'll take it from there.

She smiled and he placed his head on her breasts.

Rhys:Wish I can suck these but I'll have to be a big boy and wait for the little champ to get here.

Neelo touched the back of his head.

Neelo:Patience is a virtue.

Rhys:You don't say. I have a small favour to ask, can you go get my laptop from the car?

Neelo:Okay.

She got off him as he handed her the keys and she walked out closing the door on her way out.

Rhysand's phone rang as if the caller sensed that he was alone. He answered.

Rhys:Minister...

.....

Rhys:No need to want to be hasty and greedy. The stuff will be there before the end of the working day. No delays. I always deliver and I want the money in full. Sent to the offshore account that the police never discovered.

The minister talked and Rhys chuckled.

Rhys:I have nine lives and trust me I would rather die than be a bloody sell out. Have a good day, no threats needed because it never ends well.(smiling)

There was an audible silence before the caller hung up and Rhys and placed his phone down.

Later that day

At Gym

Ruby looked around. She didn't know what she was

doing here but she needed to find something to do and that better thing to do was going to also make a big impact on her health. After this gym hour she was going to check on her father along with her mother.

She placed her gym bag down and looked at the weights. She didn't know what to start with or she should start with the treadmill? She walked to the treadmill and placed the water bottle next to it. She looked at the buttons and she wasn't sure what to press. She has never done gym before and this was very new to her. She looked around and everyone seemed busy. She couldn't spot the gym instructors too. She stepped on the treadmill and she pressed the on button. She didn't know what to press after that. She bit down her lip and pressed the closest button and it started to move but the speed. She fell down and let out a small squeal.

The embarrassment. She felt a presence and she wanted the earth to swallow her alive in thus very moment. The guy let out a hearty laugh and the treadmill stopped moving while Ruby kept herself

down.

Him:Hi Miss. I switched off the dreadful machine.
Are you fine?

His chocolate smooth voice got to her and she held onto the floor as she lifted her head. His eyes shone with mirth and she blushed embarrassed.

Ruby:I-ah..

Him:It's okay.

He offered his hand for her to hold on and she took it. Her hand fit perfectly in his palm and she quickly let go as she rubbed her hands against her black tights.

Ruby:I don't know what happened..

Him:I guess. Are you okay?

Ruby:Uhm yes.

She took a good look at his well built body. He looked so friendly.

Him:I hope you won't take it as an insult if I show you how it works..

Ruby:Are you the gym instructor?

Him:No, just a regular member who happened to help a damsel in distress.

Ruby:I am hardly a damsel.

Him:You can step on it, I swear that it's off.

Ruby:where are my manners? I'm Ruby.

He smiled as he took her hand and kissed it. Uh so he was a gentleman.

Him:I'm Peter and it's a pleasure to meet you Ruby.

She found herself blushing as she pulled her hand away. The way he pronounced her name as if it was somewhat exotic.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#56

At the gym

Ruby was literally drooling as Peter explained how the treadmill and what each button does.

Peter:Mam are you listening?

She snapped out of it and bit down her tongue.

Ruby:Uhm yeah...

He chuckled and shook his head. She was not listening at all.

Peter:I will leave you to it. I won't be far if you need my help Ruby.

Then he said her name again and she smiled.

Ruby:Of course.

He walked away and she looked at the buttons. What did he say? She shook her head and got off from the treadmill. She drank her water and looked around. She saw him settle down and start to lift weights. She saw weights and also dumbbells. She should pick the dumbbells instead. She wouldn't want to break any bones and hot Peter wasn't a doctor in any way. She giggled alone and she picked up the dumbbells and started to lift them up and down. She faced the other direction and Peter was looking at her. She blushed and looked the other way. Peter smiled alone and continued lifting his weights. When he was done ten minutes later, Ruby was still lifting those weightless dumbbells. He chuckled and used his towel to wipe the sweat that had formed on his forehead. He walked to where she was as she finally put them down.

Peter:You should try weights..

Ruby:a bo go robega mang?(whose bones are going to get broken)

Peter:They won't break..

Ruby lifted a perfect brow and he let out a smile that exposed his left dimple. He had a dimple? That was so w-wow!

Ruby:If i break a single bone I swe-

Peter:That won't happen, not under my watch.

They walked to tge weights and he started with the smallest.

Peter:Each side has 5kg Ru..

Ruby:Ru?

Peter:it suits you..

Ruby:Nicknames now?

Peter:Who knows? This might be the last time I see you.

She chuckled as she laid down and lifted her hands as he gently let her hold the bar with his existence.

Peter:Start lifting slowly and then down slowly. She did as he said and he watched her as she did that.

Peter watched her chest rise and fall. Those crests

didn't make it any better. He took the weights from her and she sat upright.

Peter:you should do this more and if you feel like you are okay, we increase the weights.

Ruby:that might work..

She got up and got her bag. She removed the towel inside and wiped her face. She should take a bath at home. Not that she did anything major here today but it was a good day. Peter looked at his watch. He had to go too.

He excused himself as Ruby nodded. He came back two minutes later with his gym bag in hand.

Peter:It's your first time working out in the gym?

Ruby:I am npt a gym person and I thought that I should try something new.

Peter:You should come hete more often..

She smiled.

Ruby:As if that's going to convince me.

Peter:I'll be your personal trainer.

She let out a laugh as they exited the gym door.

Ruby:Okay Peter.

Peter:And training starts tomorrow Ru..

Ruby:Yes sir(grinning)

They walked to the parking lot and they walked in the same direction.

Peter:Would I be too ambitious if I ask for your number?

Ruby:How sure are you that I will give you the right number?

Peter:A guy can only hope Ru.

Ruby thought about it and she let out a smile. She spotted her car.

Ruby:Wait here..

She walked to her car and unlocked it, placing her bag inside before she took out a pen. She walked to

where Peter was.

Ruby:These are the first two digits..

She wrote the numbers on his palm and let out a smile.

Ruby:Each day I'll add a number.

Peter let out a sexy smile that exposed his canines. He loved a good chase. This was going to be fun.

Peter:I'll be patient Ms Hard To Get. Gym tomorrow 5pm sharp Ru.

He walked away and Ruby walked to her car. She got inside and started the car before reversing out of the parking spot. She buckled up and drove off.

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand had his arms around her bulging waist as he showed her every part of his house.

Neelo:Okah. I think I got it.

Rhys:Sure?

Neelo:Yep. I need to take a bath and sleep early.

Rhys:You aren't an early sleeper babe..

Neelo:I have an interview in the morning an-

Rhys:And you are letting nerves take control. I'll drop you off in the morning okay? I don't know if I will pick you up after the interview baby girl. There are some things I need to do. Will you come home straight after?

Neelo:Ee rra. I do know Francistown Rhys..

Rhys:Still..

Neelo:I will come home and rest.

He turned her and held her cheeks in his big hands.

Rhys:Let me help you relax, stress is not good for the baby.

Neelo:Okay.

He kissed her slowly before he picked her up and

placed her on the bed. He parted her thighs to make
slow love to her.

.

*

TROUBLED

#58

At The Magistrates High Court

Neelo blinked and squinted her eyes. She took a deep breath as he looked at her, she was fuller and she still had the same height minus the heels.

Him:Hello. I figured you might need a ride.

Neelo:It's okay. I'll catch a taxi.

He waited for her to say his name but she did not. She checked her phone and looked around.

Him:Don't tell me you're still bitter after all these years. It happened and we are now grown adults
Neelo.

Neelo:Bold of you to assume I'm bitter Peter. That's bold advocate.

Peter:Neelo get in the car. You hate heels and you won't walk to the taxi rank in those.

Neelo:I would have to decline that offer once again. It was pleasant seeing you again though.

She smiled. That smile that had him staring at his steering wheel. She was always so sweet and if it was Neelo from years ago, she would have got inside the car and thanked him for such kindness. She looked softer and her eyes were just as he remembered back in the day.

Peter:It's not like I want you back or anything like that.

Neelo frowned. What was he talking about?

Neelo:We share the same sentiments I guess. I'll wait for a taxi.

She covered her face from the sun. She was hot and these clothes were so hot. She unbuttoned the blazer so she could breathe a little while waiting for a

taxi to pass by. She was so tempted to call Rhysand so he picks her up.

Peter looked at her up and down and frowned seeing her bump in the dress. She was pregnant and was here grilling herself in the sun.

Peter:I'm waiting.

Neelo:Motho wa Modimo you can go..

Peter:I am just trying to help.

Neelo bit down her tongue and breathed as she saw a taxi. She waved at it and it parked behind the Mercedes.

She walked to the taxi and talked to the driver for a good minute before she got inside. Peter watched the taxi join the road and he sighed. Even after all these years they couldn't have a single civil conversation. Yes he admits it that he was stupid and took her for a ride. He chuckled. Who was he kidding? He was her virgin breaker and she is probably hurt about it, he was never prepared for a moment like that. Knowing that as young as she had been she had given her all in the relationship and

being the fool he was he played her like a fiddle. He didn't blame her. For a second it all came back, how she would push her reading glasses back as they studied together at the school library and would start whining about how school wasn't shit in her cutest baby voice.

He joined the road driving off.

In the taxi Neelo sighed as she rubbed her temple. She didn't expect to see him after all these years. A part of her still can't forgive him for what he did to her but she had better now. A man who was going to be her son's father and he didn't fail to show her how much he loved her. Maybe their brokenness brought them together. Their souls called out to each other and connected physically before they could identify the feeling as love. She smiled and rubbed her tummy as the taxi stopped by the robots.

At Alex's house

Alex tried his brother's number but it wasn't going through. He sighed as he placed his phone down. Maybe he is busy and besides Rhysand said he will be the one to call him.

Wapelo sat down next to him and he let out a smile. She was working from home because she was always tired.

Wawa:What's up?

Alex:It's nothing. You okay?

Wawa:I'm always fine Alexie..

He laughed. He hated that nickname. It was so weird.

Wawa:I know you hate it but it's cute.

He rubbed her roud belly and kissed it. He wasn't going to rush anything so he will wait a few years to see if he was going to marry the mother of his child.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo paid the driver as she stepped out of the car. Finally. She couldn't wait to slip off the shoes and get rid of the dress as well. She opened her bag and used the keys Rhys gave her to open the gate. She stepped inside the yard and the gate closed. She removed her shoes and walked barefoot along the pavement. This was really a nice house, she really liked his house.

She unlocked the door and stepped right inside the house. She stretched her body before closing the door and locking it.

Later that day

Neelo was fast asleep as her phone rang. The phone stopped ringing and it beeped to report a message.

At the gym

Ruby checked her watch. She was right on time or so she thought because Peter was already lifting weights and they seemed so heavy. She walked to him and he placed them down.

Peter:Hey Ru..

Ruby:Hii...You look uh-kind of stressed.

Peter:Just had a blast from the past earlier.

Ruby:Care to share?

He chuckled as he got up and stood next to her.

Ruby was tall but he was still the taller one. He smiled and she smiled back.

Peter:Let's start with the treadmill and I'll tell you all about it.

They walked to the treadmill and she stepped in it.
Peter pressed the buttons as it started to move.

Peter:How can you tell a person is bitter?

Ruby:I wouldn't know. I am bitter about some stuff
but I'm working on it...

Peter:Anyway the topic is going to bore you to death.

Ruby:Try me..

Peter:Let's say I was a player back in tge day.

Ruby laughed.

Ruby:Wena Mr Player.

Peter:And I played this innocent sweet girl. Fresh
meat..

Ruby:Banna la lapisa tlhe...

Peter:Yeah neh! She put up with my shit for months
and I broke her shem..

Ruby:I hope you stopped. Poor thing..

Ruby looked at the buttons and increased the speed.

Peter:She was the type to invest her all and she thought I was some book prince who swept her off her feet.

Ruby:Do you regret it?

Peter:I left that lifestyle but I saw her today and with no bad blood or anything, she had changed.

Ruby:People are bound to change overtime Peter. That's what we call growth.

Peter:The sweetness in her voice was gone.

Ruby chuckled. Okay they both had pasts. Hers was recent while his was years ago. Same difference.

Ruby:I've had my fair share of heartbreak.

Peter:Who can hurt a pretty lady like you? If he hurt you then he is a fool.

Ruby:That makes me feel a lot better. Hope you forgive past you for hurting those girls and move on from that.

Peter:I did just that seeing her kind of took her back.

Ruby stepped off the treadmill.

Ruby:If she were to want you back would you take her back?

Peter:No. Never.

His heart raced knowing he was lying. Seeing Neelo stirred up feelings he thought he would never feel ever again. He would take her back in a heartbeat and do better. For now he had to get this task out of the way. He smiled as Ruby picked up the dumbbells. Neelo was one of those once in a lifetime women whom you would change for. Younger him didn't see that but older him has. He watched Ruby as he monitored her.

An hour later Ruby walked to the parking lot with Peter and as she walked towards her car he pulled her back, his strong hand holding her wrist and she looked up at him with parted pink lips.

Peter:Ru aren't we forgetting something?

Her brain turned to mush as she gave him a

confused look. Peter chuckled and in her confused state, he dipped his head and kissed her lips. Ruby lost all her marbles, her heart racing and her mouth having a mind of it's own. It's been a while since she has been kissed like this.

Peter let go of her hand and held her cheeks. The two kissing blatantly in the parking lot.

He broke it and Ruby was already out of breath. He rubbed his chin looking into her eyes. He could see confusion followed by realization.

Peter: your number my lady..

Ruby: Uhm I-

She was so dazed that she gave him all of her digits. Peter memorized that and kissed her cheek softly.

Peter: I'll call..

Ruby didn't notice that he gave a predator kind of smile as he walked away. She touched her forehead and shook her head. He kissed her? Wow!

At Rhysand's house

Neelo finally woke up and she stretched her body and got out of bed. She got his robe and looked at the arms. It was long and big but smelled of him nevertheless. She let out a lazy yawn as she picked her phone from the top of the night stand. She unlocked it and she saw his missed call. She read the message he sent and she placed it back down. She shouldn't wait up for him. Got it.

At Peter's home

He went through Neelo's pictures on Facebook. She didn't upload much. Not really a social media person. She lived in her own world and that time he wanted her to grow up because she wasn't a little girl

anymore.

He went to his contacts and he had saved Ruby's number. He cleared his throat and called her.

TROUBLED

#59

At Ruby's house

She was lying on her back as she talked to Peter. She didn't know a simple kiss can make her give out her number like that.

Peter:Must be the magic!

Ruby:This is no Disney princess movie Peter Pan.

Peter:If I'm Peter Pan you must be Wendy.

Ruby:Real cheesy. Other than being a gym fanatic who are you Mr Peter?

Peter:I don't want to sound cocky pretty lady.

Ruby:That's for me to decide.

Peter:I'm a lawyer the initials being P.K Mogorosi pretty thing.

Ruby paused. She heard the name Peter from somewhere but couldn't remember where. She shook her head.

Ruby:Advocate Mogorosi hi..

Peter:Hello pretty lady.

Ruby wanted to scream into the pillow. Why did he have to make his voice sound so sexy especially at this time?

Peter chuckled as she answered back. They talked about almost everything that was under the sun and he was impressed. She was really smart. He really hoped she was going to accept his friend request on Facebook.

Ruby:let me not keep you up advocate...

Peter:It's okay. I was working and I needed a break.

Ruby:the break is over. You can get back to work.
Byee!

Peter:Bye Ru. Sleep tight and dream of me.

Ruby:You wish.

He let out a light laugh and Ruby smiled at the end of the line.

Ruby:Night.

Peter:Good night. I'm hanging up autwe?

Ruby:Alright.

He hung up seconds later and she placed her phone on her chest. Meanwhile Peter leaned back as he went back to Neelo's Facebook profile. He sent a request but he wasn't expecting her to really accept it. Was he grasping on straws? He would have to see.

He looked at the files on his desk. The police didn't have new information to reopen the McKnight but he was surely going to come up with something.

McKnight can't escape on a clean slate. He will have to see the detective tomorrow morning and see if he won't be able to push them to reopen the case. But what new evidence was there? He will see but if

McKnight is no longer with Ruby who is he with? Obviously from Ruby's post it's someone Ruby knows and he will see if he will be able to get the woman to talk. Obviously women get frightened easily and due to their nerves they give a lot away. He has seen that happen more than once in the courtroom and with the right techniques both women will be dishing out Rhysand's secrets.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo stood in front of the mirror naked as she rubbed her tummy. She didn't know where Rhysand was but maybe he was used to staying out. Just that she didn't live with him so she had no idea how he rolls.

Neelo:Hello baby, it's me mommy..(grinning)

She rubbed her small bump with a little smile. So she had five months left give or take a few days till she meets her baby. First born for that matter.

She turned to see if she was developing stretch marks or not. There was nothing.

Neelo: Oh well. We should probably sleep, I don't know when your dad will return.

She walked to the bed and got undercovers. All the lights were off except the bedroom light. She covered her face with the comforter and closed her eyes.

Somewhere out there.

Rhysand thoroughly inspected the diamonds to make sure he wasn't ripped off. He put them in the small black velvet bag. Another batch done and he checked the time on his phone. It was getting late but he wasn't going to sleep till he was done.

He leaned back as he placed his hands on his face. He was going to be here for some time. He hoped

baby girl was all warm. He figured she was fast asleep and he had to finish up with these diamonds and then spend the day with her tomorrow. He sat upright and continued with what he was doing.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#60

At Sesame's parents

Sesame laid awake as she thought about her life. Even before she came out of the closet to tell her mother, she was already hopeless about her home situation. A sometimes present father and a woman who sides with the man called her father who doesn't even love her over her own kids. She had always been close to ending it all but what always kept her from ending it was the fact that her little sister wouldn't have no one. She was tired and maybe things would be better if she wasn't in the equation but her sister would survive right?

She got out of bed and switched on the lights. She bent down and took out her school notebook and

pen. She sat down on the cold floor as she started to pen down her last thoughts. She wrote two separate letters. One for her little sister and one for the people she called parents. Her mother claimed to be Christian but good people don't treat other people especially their own flesh and blood this way. A lone tear dropped on the page and she sniffed. She hoped that girl who liked her in class would survive. Her own family didn't care.

She tore the pages and she folded the two letters nicely. The one her parents were to find was placed by her side of the bed and her sister's letter was gently placed under the pillow. She closed her eyes and opened them again. She walked out of the room and walked to the kitchen where she filled a cup with water in the darkness. The high moon illuminated her shadow and tears filled her slanty eyes.

She found the rat poison and the blue death powder. She poured them in the glass and placed the items

back where she found them. She walked to the bedroom and closed the door. Her mother was probably going to wake in the morning to wake her and her sister up for school. She would be long gone she guessed. She was drinking poisons and in that sense they were dangerous for human consumption.

Little ol' Sesame drank the bitter tasting water mixed with the chemical substances before she switched off the lights. She walked to the bed and got undercover. She looked at her sister one last time before she prayed in her heart of hearts. She closed her eyes and waited for sleep to take over, she was probably going to die in her sleep and she was okay with death. It didn't hurt anymore.

She had been trying to make them treat her like a decent human being. To make them love her but her parents were humans and broken. Broken people shouldn't have children because they traumatise them and project their fucked up mentality on the children. She felt her stomach run and she decided she should sleep. It would be less painful that way.

Early that morning

As usual Ma Sesame got out of bed. She didn't hear the water running nor the kettle being switched on. Sesame knew what she had to do and she was being stubborn now. She opened the girls bedroom and she almost tripped on the glass that was on the floor. She switched on the lights and picked the glass. Sesame was testing her patience. This was the glasses used by guests and they were not supposed to come near the glasses.

She walked to the bed with the motive to shake Sesame awake but she paused as a cold shiver went down her spine. Sesame's mouth was foaming. She shook Sesame.

Ma Sesame:Sesame! Sesame! Tsoga!

Panic settled in the pits of her stomach as she shook an unresponsive Sesame. She bit her lip as

she shook her but there was no response. Fear joined panick as she lightly slapped Sesame's cheek so that she wakes.

Her heart thumped furiously in her chest as she hit Sesame over and over again but she didn't wake. Tears finally found their way to her eyes as she begged her first born child to wake up. No response and she didn't want to believe it tha-that she ended her own life. That Sesame was no more. She pulled back the blankets and the folded paper caught her eye. She used her hand to wipe her tears and picked it up with shaky hands. She took some time to unfold the paper and it looked like a letter.

'Dear mom and dad

Hi I'm Sesame Mokoro. I don't know why father didn't give us his last name but it's fine. I have a sister that I love dearly and parents who failed to love me. I came out as lesbian a few weeks ago and their mistreatment became worse. Already I hated

my life but that made me feel worse. My own mother made me feel like I was an outcast and a monstrosity to the society. This is my final goodbye. Don't cry too much because you never loved me. I have never known how it feels to be loved by a parent. Even on my worst days, did I deserve mom all the hell you guys gave me? Cause I loved you, I swear I loved you till my dying day. Don't be the hero flying around saving face that you don't know why your daughter killed herself. I don't want to be a ghost that isn't peaceful, I won't haunt you but what a ghostly scene would that be to finally make you guys feel what I've felt while I was alive.

Goodbye and thank you for making me wish I never existed. Father I love you even though you are an emotionally damaged man who thinks hitting us makes everyone listen. You can curse my name and wish I stayed but this will kill you just the same. Have very miserable lives.

Your daughter

Sesame'

Ma Sesame covered her mouth speechless. A hollow ache formed in her chest.

Ma Sesame:No!No!(screaming)

Her loud scream tore through the early morning silence waking up her younger daughter. She fell to her knees as the emotions flooded her heart. Sh-She was so sorry. She didn't know that's how Sesame felt all these years.

The younger sister looked at a very cold and unmoving Sesame who still had foam in her mouth and she shook her big sister not quite sure she was following.

Ma Sesame wailed on the floor. Realizing that Sesame was gone and she had only herself to blame for that. Nobody but herself to blame for her

daughter ending her own life. Her chest constricted and breathing became one of the hardest tasks she has ever had to do. She patted her chest and coughed trying to breath. She looked up and rubbed her neck, it was getting extremely hard for fresh air to enter her lungs. The younger sister looked at Sesame once again trying to shake her to wake up. She got out of the bed and walked to her mama's side.

Her:Mama!

Ma Sesame:I ca-can't br-breathe!

She said out of breath and closed her eyes with her hands on her chest.

.

.

*

*

*

#61

At Sesame's parents

The youngest looked at her mother and sister.

Her:Same? Tsoga!

She screamed in her small voice but the two were unresponsive. She shook her mother who wasn't waking up at all. The little girl screamed with tears rolling down her eyes. Both of them weren't waking up. She huddled herself in a corner and cried with her head between her legs. She cried till there were no more tears and her small head felt so heavy. She closed her eyes as there were no more tears left to cry.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo turned on her side feeling the warm body holding her in all her nakedness. She opened one eye first before she opened the other. There he was, fast asleep but holding her. She watched him breathe in his sleep, his chest rising and falling. Her heart fluttered. She got lucky here. She got really lucky to find a man who loved her for her and didn't take her for a fool. She lightly kissed his chest and placed her head there. She closed her eyes once again even though it was morning. She will wake up a few hours later.

Rhysand murmured something in his sleep as he pulled the small body to his large frame. Neelo smiled secretly.

A few hours later she woke up first and escaped his hold over her. She walked to the bathroom to pee, her bladder was burning so early in the morning. She flushed and washed her hands before walking out of the bathroom. Rhysand was still fast asleep and she

had no idea what time he arrived home. She wasn't going to ask him though, he might think she is being too nosey and it was none of her business. She got under covers and he opened one eye with a smile gracing his lips.

Rhys: morning mmaagwe nnana.

She pecked his lips.

Neelo: Morning. Slept well?

Rhys: I did my love. How are you two this morning?

Neelo: Woke up to a great start actually.

Rhys: I see.. How did the interview go?

Neelo: I was a nervous wreck. I probably failed.

Rhys: Why are we being negative?

Neelo: I have no working experience and just a lot of factors. I think I flopped it even if they don't call me it's still okay. I'll see what to do.

She placed her head on his chest. She was lying. She wasn't left with much from the money Aone left her. It was depleting and now with a baby on the way she had to buy baby essentials. She closed her eyes and hoped she will be called for other interviews.

Neelo:Rhysand?

Rhys:Mma?

Neelo:When you come here you're always alone akere?

Rhys:Yes. Where is this conversation going?

Neelo:And you're usually alone when you are abroad akere?

Rhys:Is that your subtle way of asking if I'm cheating?

Neelo:I didn't say that. I just wanted to know.

Rhys:Well you would know if you did come along like I always ask you to..

Neelo:Uhu!

She moved her head and pulled the blankets up to cover her naked frame.

Neelo:I was just asking innocent questions Rhys. No need to lose your marbles over it.

Rhys:Well I hate the assumption behind the so called questions.

Neelo:Iyoo!

At Sesame's parents

Around 9am Ra Sesame unlocked the door. The door was usually opened and she would be cleaning right now. He walked inside the house and it was oddly quiet. Too quiet. He made his way to the bedroom first and checked the coast. There was nothing.

He made his way to the other bedroom and the door

was slightly ajar. He pushed the door open and his heart skipped a beat seeing Sesame's mother on the floor with her hand over her chest. He didn't even notice the small one who was in the corner most probably fast asleep.

He saw the paper that was besides her and he read it. His sharp eyes moved to the bed and there was Sesame's lifeless body. Eyes closed with foam running down her mouth. He gritted his teeth as he shook the woman but she wouldn't wake. He wasn't stupid.

Him:Wake up!!

She wasn't waking up and he decided to check her pulse. There was none. No pulse to speak of. He closed his eyes for a few seconds before opening them and finally scanning the room. The youngest was in the corner with her head low and he didn't know what he was supposed to do. He re-read Sesame's suicide letter over and over again as it sunk in that she killed herself because she hated it

here. She saw it fit to take her own life with God knows what. He didn't know how fast an ambulance was going to arrive. Along with the police though he wished the police was not involved. He didn't want to be accused for killing them when he did not. He crumpled the suicide note and put it in his back pocket. He walked to the corner and shook the younger one awake. She screamed as she opened her eyes and saw his.

Him:Wake up! Tla reye!

Her:Mama! Same!

Him:Areye monna!

Tears welled in her eyes again as she got up and looked at her mother and Sesame on the bed. She followed her father as he closed the door. They walked to the small sitting room and she sat down. Her stomach growled and she looked at her father who was pressing his phone. He stood up deciding to call the police and ambulance to deal with this. What was he going to do with a standard 1 six year old? Those two were really selfish.

The people picked up and he explained before he hung up and sat down.

Him:And then?

She faced the other way before her head dropped down low with tears welling in her eyes.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo sighed as she looked at Rhysand getting dressed.

Neelo:I shouldn't have assumed such of you. My insecu-

Rhys:And I have assured you more than once that I mean what I say Neelo.

Neelo:Ee rra. I'm sorry.

Rhys:As soon as it sinks in that I love you and you only Neelo then there is nothing to be sorry about right now.

Rhys and sat on the bed and wore his shoes. She watched him and she didn't know whether to ask him where he was going or let him be.

Neelo: You're going to the office?

Rhys: Ee mma. I have to wrap up a few things.

Neelo: I shouldn't wait up?

Rhys: I'll be here before the sun sets. I love you.

He kissed her cheeks before he French kissed her for a few seconds and broke it. He rubbed her lower lip and she smiled sweetly at him.

Rhys: I love you and I have to go.

Neelo: Is it okay if I go out?

Rhys: Of course. You want to do some shopping ?

He asked as he picked his wallet and took out one of his bank cards.

Rhysand placed the card in the palm of her hand.

Rhys:You can buy whatever you want. I'll leave the car.

Neelo:B-but you have to go to work.

Rhys:I don't want you to use a taxi if you are shopping.

Neelo:We aren't even sure if I'm going on a shopping spree.

Rhys:We will see baby. I'll be back soon. You'll drive yourself.

He nibbled on her ear and she smiled. Rhysand gave her the pin as well before he kissed her and left.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#62

At the police station

Peter brought his hands together as he listened to Detective Moilwe.

Moilwe:Mogorosi at this point we are grasping at straws. He slipped through our fingers.

Peter:I followed the case closely and even though at his trial it was not revealed, the undercover officer?

Moilwe:That one just gave us his bank balances. After a year on the assignment we had bank balances and an illegal firearm that hasn't even been used.

Peter:Don't you think she withheld information?

Moilwe:Highly doubt. She took a lie detector test and that was all she had been able to gather. I don't think

McKnight is that stupid to blurt out his activities to a woman, no matter how alluring that woman is.

Peter:Pity..I don't think your undercover cop was honest. Especially if she fell in love with the subject.

Moilwe:That doesn't matter advocate. She resigned and we can't force her. To catch McKnight we need fresh evidence. For now the case is cold till we get a lead in something or anything.

Peter leaned back. He was going to see if really Ruby knew nothing but even if it's not that. She is a woman scorned now that Rhysand has moved on. This has been an interesting visit, it was surprising that Rhysand didn't fight even though the state had no right to put him in jail for such mere assumptions. Was he afraid that they would want to look into it more and he avoided that by being compliant? If so he was one smart motherfucker.

At Sesame's parents

The sirens rang alarming the neighbours. Some got out of their houses to see what the fuss is all about. Why was there a police van and an ambulance. The only ambulance that was in the village for that matter?

Curiosity got the best of them as they noticed it was in Ma Sesame's yard. Did she finally report that man she lived with? That man had a bad history with the village people and his ways were no secret. Pity he was a fine man with an ugly heart. All his looks gone to waste even in his age, he aged like fine wine. No wonder his sons were such catches in the village. They got it from their father....

Sesame's father opened the door and he greeted the police officers and the paramedics.

Ra Sesame: This way..

He led them to the bedroom he had closed an hour ago. They had passed the little girl who was alarmed seeing men in uniform. He opened the door and they stepped inside.

Officer:What happened?

Ra Sesame:I came back an hour ago and found this. The little girl in the sitting room was asleep in the corner.

The paramedics walked to the bodies and one checked the lady while the other checked the teenager. It was obvious the teenager had committed suicide and the lady might've died from the shock. Of course they were assuming but it was very possible and they needed to confirm such.

The police officer walked to the bed and took out the handcuffs. He handcuffed Sesame's hands and looked at the paramedics who knew what they had to do.

Officer:Sir you will have to follow me to the police station for questions.

Ra Sesame:Of course. Can I follow after an hour or

so? So I can drop the little girl somewhere?

Officer:Very well...

He stepped out and he left them in the room. He was assuming they were going to do investigations and all that. The little girl looked up at him and he didn't know where he was going to leave her. He had one place in mind but it has been over a decade...

He looked at the girl who was his daughter and he asked her to stand up and follow him to the car. He opened the door and she got inside. He walked to his side and got inside.

At Ruby's work place

Ruby sat in that small cubicle as she typed what she had been given. Working at T&M Publications was thee best and she was glad she applied for a job here. Mrs Taylor was a wonderful boss and a damn

good journalist if she was being honest. She stopped typing as she let her eyes wonder around the room. A man in uniform passed by holding flowers and she smiled alone. They were used to seeing Mrs Taylor's husband pop in to surprise his wife and sometimes their teenage daughter would pass by. She hoped she would grow to experience such love. One day.

She let out a sigh as her phone beeped and a smile was on her face as she read the message. Lunch would absolutely do with this handsome fine young man.

She responded before placing her phone down. She should probably get back to work. Enough day dreaming, this was the type of work that paid her bills and was keeping her dad in the hospital. Speaking of her dad, her mother had mentioned something about going to check up on him. She said she would do it in the evening after her workouts at

the gym.

At the mall

Neelo looked at the baby clothes and figured that she won't be spending Rhysand's money on herself but on their bundle of joy.

Neelo: Baby boy if your father complains about the bank balance then it's all on you. Take the blame..(through gritted teeth)

She picked the basket and she started to pick the cutest baby clothes she could lay her eyes on at Ackermans. She didn't know anything about being a mother but she was going to learn. When the basket was half full she joined the line to pay for the clothes. Next stop would be Game. Why she pass there first was the question she asked herself.

Two minutes later she walked out of the shop and

headed to the parking lot with the plastics and she put them in the backseat. She walked to the driver's side and got inside the car. She looked at her phone waiting for Rhysand to say she overspent his money and all that before she tells him it was for the baby. There was no message reporting so she started the car and reversed.

Meanwhile in the jeweller's shop, Rhysand saw the bank notification and chuckled. He never really took her out for shopping or anything like that and besides who is going to spend on his woman if he doesn't.

The jeweller came back with a different set and Rhysand looked at it. He wanted something that screamed Neelo in every way possible.

Rhys:Let me see..

Being somewhat ab expert at spotting diamonds he

looked at the set presented to him. He still couldn't find anything. He sighed and gave the lady an exasperated look. Should he check other stores or custom order one?

Her:Still nothing sir?

Rhys:Nothing..

Her:Can I see the lady?

Rhys:Sure...

He took out his phone and showed her the lockscreen.

Her:I see. These ones are special because the lady who sold a few of them said they have been in her family for years and they are quite pricey.

Rhys:Can I have a look?

Her:Of course. I think one that would suit her could be among the jewellery. Did I also add the fact that they are rare and have special meanings?

Rhys:I didn't quite hear that part.

The lady smiled and walked to the back as Rhysand waited for her. He didn't know this could be so stressful.

At Bobonong

At Ma Rhysand's house

She smiled as she drank her steaming hot tea in peace. Who wouldn't be happy when you have two grand babies on the way and the wonderful women her sons ended up with? She was one happy old lady and knowing her oldest loved till his lungs gave out, everything would go smoothly. She was hoping that tomorrow's negotiations with Neelo's parents would be a walk in the park. Rhysand has never been this fast to marry and with his last failed relationship he had waited for ten months before he saw the need to want to make Ruby his wife. That didn't turn out well but maybe it was a blessing in disguise.

Outside the yard, the truck stopped and the driver looked at the house. It was different from the last time he had seen it. Much more bigger and improved but still the same plot. He stepped out of the car in his boots and faded jeans as he opened the passenger door. He didn't think she would say no would she?

He opened the gate and walked to the door. He looked behind him and was satisfied before he knocked on the door. He waited anxiously for the door to be opened.

A minute later the door opened and the person who opened the door stood their in unexpected shock.

.

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#63

At Ma Rhysand's house

A minute passed and she looked at the person who was standing there by the door. She was about to speak when a little girl caught her attention and that moment her heart sank. Knowing he was the reason she didn't get to hold her baby girl in her arms years ago. Words failed her. She knew they were never formally divorced, just estranged.

She finally cleared her throat and looked at him. He didn't have power over her even if it's been years, she was stronger than succumbing to his abuse even though he gave her handsome sons.

Ma Rhys:How can I help you..

McKnight:Hello..

Ma Rhys:How can I help you?

He sighed.

McKnight:Hello. It's been years since I have seen you.

She was about to close the door in his face but he pushed it back.

McKnight:I just want to talk.

Ma Rhys:There is nothing to talk about. Go back to where you are from. If you try anything I am screaming.

He sucked in a deep breath and looked at his estranged wife and the mother of his two sons. She looked good too.

McKnight:I know I am not your favourite person even after all these years but I need your help.

She shook her head. He was nothing but a liar, cheat and abusive man who could lose his temper any minute from now and start throwing things around.

Ma Rhys:Please leave my house.

McKnight:Alis-

Ma Rhys:Please leave!! Now!!

The little girl who was behind him looked at the angry woman. She looked at her father who was looking at the angry woman.

McKnight:I wanted Lebopo to stay for a few hours, there are a few things I have to take care of at the police station.

Ma Rhys:I don't care. Leave!

He sighed and turned around. That was Lebopo's cue to face forward and start walking. Ma Rhys watched them walk and she looked at the little girl. That was her sons little sister and even thou all of there hate McKnight the little girl was innocent.

Ma Rhys:Stop!

He stopped in his tracks to face her.

Ma Rhys:I'll stay with her. Only for a few hours.

He called Lebopo who walked back to the door. He didn't know how to be affectionate and all that.

McKnight:Thank y-

Ma Rhys:I'm doing this for her.

She looked at the little girl. She was so cute.

McKnight:Lebopo this kind lady will take care of you. I'll be back later.

He said to Lebopo who nodded her little head. She didn't understand why her mother wasn't here and why Same wasn't here. Why didn't they both wake up and what those people were doing in their house.

McKnight:Thank you so much.

He said to Ma Rhys and he walked away. Ma Rhys looked at the little girl. She had confusion etched on her little face.

Ma Rhys:Hello Lebopo..come in..

She opened the door wider for her and she walked in. She looked at Lebopo over again and indeed he was McKnight's daughter. He had his ears. She couldn't help wonder how the daughter he killed who was still in her womb would've looked like. She shook her head. Lebopo was still in her pyjamas and she kept asking herself what happened.

Ma Rhys:Do you want to eat?

She asked sweetly and Lebopo curiously looked at the woman she was told to stay with.

Ma Rhys:Hi I'm Ally..

Lebopo hesitated but she figured that the lady didn't know her name.

Lebopo:I'm Lebopo.

Ma Rhys:Nice to meet you Lebopo. What should I make you Lebopo?

The lady asked with a big smile and Lebopo loosened up.

Ma Rhys: Follow me so you can show me then.

At the mall

Neelo looked at trolley and she wasn't sure if she should return some of the items there but there were a lot of cute stuff that she bought for their baby. Mentally she spent a lot of money already and was scared she was going to leave a dent in his bank account. She didn't want him to think of her as those girls who spend money unnecessarily. She didn't want to return anything especially the cute pram that caught her attention. She was pushing it too alongside the trolley. It was the only one and by the aisles she had to stop herself for picking the baby car seat too. That would be too much.

She finally paid and her jaw dropped as she looked at the balance.

Neelo:Uh-uhm le sure mam?

Cashier:that is the balance mam..

Neelo looked at her purchases and she didn't want to return anything though. Rhysand was going to flip. She took out his card and handed it to the cashier. Neelo entered the pin and looked back at the lady. The lady handed her the card and started to print out the receipt.

Neelo still couldn't believe that she spent this much on baby stuff at Game. She crossed her finger hoping her baby daddy was not going to flip.

At the jewellery shop Rhysand picked the perfect one. Finally!!

He was already tired and was on the verge of giving up. His phone beeped and he slid it out to check out the message. He blinked a couple of times. Baby girl

was on one serious shopping spree. He put the phone back and he looked at the jeweller.

Rhys:I'll take it.

Her:Let me wrap it up for you.

Rhys:Thank you and can you also add that set we saw earlier. The pure diamon one that had a heart necklace, a locket, matching earrings and the bracelet.

Her:Yes sir. I will also draw up the bill in a few minutes.

Rhys:Of course.

She disappeared to the back and he dialed Neelo's number. She answered after what seemed like eternity.

Neelo:Hi. Uhm I am really sorry about the money I spent. I swear I am not a gold digger and I am not with yo-

Rhys:Sweetheart whoa! Breathe in and out.

There was silence for a few seconds before she started talking.

Neelo:I didn't mean to overspend, it just happened and I can return other it-

Rhys:Marshmallow it's okay. Breath. You deserve to spend a little.

Neelo brows furrowed in confusion. A little? She spent a lot and he just said a little.

Rhys:Are you still in town?

Neelo:Ee rra.

Rhys:Can we meet by Nandos yo ha Galo?

Neelo:Sure. I'm on my way.

Rhys:I love you sweetheart.

Neelo:I love you more. Bye.

She hung up and breathed in and out while Rhys and was handed the gift bag that had all purchased items. The jeweller handed him the receipt as well. He took out his card and she walked behind the

computer.

Minutes later Rhys walked out of the store a happy man. He opened the gift bag and took out the ring. That was going to be in his pocket for now and she shouldn't find out in the meantime.

At Galo Mall

Neelo parked Rhysand's car and she took a deep breath. She didn't want to leave the car. What if they steal the pram at the back. All that money spent would have been for nothing.

She stepped out of the car and she dialled his number. He picked up on the first ring.

Neelo:I'm at the parking lot babe. I'll wait for you.

She hung up and looked at the pram at the back. It was so cute.

Meanwhile Ruby parked her car and stepped out minutes later. She walked in between the cars and saw Neelo who was by Rhysand's car. She averted her eyes so she can pretend she didn't see her. She was choosing her peace. When she had passed Neelo she breathed a sign of relief and started walking towards the fast food store for lunch with Advocate Peter.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#64

At the mall

Rhysand made his way to the parking lot and spotted her by the car. Her yellow thighs out to play in the dress she left the house in. He rang her up and watched her answer as she covered her face from the scorching summer sun of the semi arid country.

Rhys:Hello baby..

Neelo:Hello..I am waiting. Are you near?

Rhys:Face the other direction.

She turned and smiled holding the phone close to her ear.

Neelo:I can see you. What is in that bag?

Rhys:O rata dilo Neelo.

She giggled and hung up as her baby daddy stopped in front of her. Rhys used his free hand to pull her to him.

Rhys:Hey sweetheart.

Neelo:Hello..

Rhys:Why are you outside the car? Later on you'll be saying you are hot...

Neelo:I thought of meeting you ha Nandos but what if they steal the pram.

Rhysand gave her a confused look. Wait what?

Neelo removed his hand as she looked at the back.

Neelo:I bought a pram. It was the only one my love. Isn't it cute? Bona Rhys..

She prompted him and he looked at the back. It was all covered in plastic.

Neelo:Bathong Nate will have a cute pram..

Rhys:Nate ke mang?

She shrugged.

Neelo:Our baby. Focus Rhysand. Focus!

Rhys:I didn't know we named him already...

Neelo:Well we did right? It's a cute name if I say so myself. Come see what I bought for him.

Rhysand caught a glimpse of the huge smile on her face. The enthusiasm she had as she showed him what she bought. She didn't spend a single thebe on herself but rather on "Nate". They will discuss the name later after she is down from her high.

Neelo:Baby o reeditse?(baby are you listening)
[lightly slapping his cheek]

Rhys:Ee mma...

Neelo:We need a baby cot and all that. We will keep the stuff safe.

He smiled. She was genuinely happy and excited. All of the baby stuff buying hadn't hit him but Neelo being her had thought of it and decided to buy.

Rhys:Let's go get food.

Neelo:What if they steal the pram Rhys? You go. I'll stay in the car.

Rhys:I'm not going alone little miss. They won't steal it.

Neelo:How sure are you?

Rhys:hundred percent sure.

Neelo:If they ste-

Rhys:They won't. You need to eat baby. Did you eat?

Neelo>Last ate when I left the house.

Rhys:Let me put this in the car and we go get something to eat.

She looked at the gift bag he put at the back. On top

of the things she bought.

At Nandos

Ruby swirled the ice cubes in her designer drink as she laughed at a joke Peter said.

Peter:You have a beautiful smile.

Ruby:And you are too kind.

He brought the fork to his lips gazing at her. Ruby blushed under his intense gaze. She averted her eyes sipping on her drink.

Peter:You never told me what you do...

Ruby:Oh I'm an editor at a publishing company.

Peter:That sounds interesting.

Ruby:Is it? All I do is sit by the desk and read and read and read till I can't read no more.

He let out a soft chuckle.

Peter:It is interesting. You read different things day

in and day out. You get to see different takes to this life thing.

Ruby:Same as being a lawyer. You deal with different people and cases everyday.

Peter:Yo-

Words died on his lips as his eyes focused on the figure that was unmistakably Neelo. She held the arm on a tattooed individual. He raised his eyes and he recognised the face. He blinked a couple of times and Ruby realised that she didn't have his attention. She turned in her seat and she followed his gaze. She nodded her head in disappointment with a bland smile on her lips. The universe never listened did it?

She ignored Neelo for peace sake and now Neelo was here with Rhysand. Holding onto him as if he was the best thing after sliced bread. Peter cleared his throat and Ruby faced him. The food suddenly looked unappetizing.

Ruby:You know them?

Peter:I was following that guy's case in court..

Ruby nodded. Only natural for him to know Rhysand. He was after all a criminal who was walking around as if he didn't do crime for a living. She rubbed her neck. Neelo chose that guy? The guy who could be locked away anytime? What a shame.

Peter:What is it Ru?

Ruby:I-(sucking in a deep breath)Can we leave?

Peter:Sure..

Since he had already paid, they stood up and he walked behind Ruby with his hand on her back. He glanced back to see Neelo comfortably laughing with Rhysand as they were on line waiting to order. He kept his cool and plastered a smile on his face as they walked out.

Ruby didn't know for how long she was going to feel like this. Knowing that he is so happy because he is expecting or is he with her for the sake of the baby?

Peter:What happened down there?

Ruby:It was suffocating. I needed to breath.

Peter:Are you sure that's all?

He asked as he lifted her chin and looked into her eyes which looked golden when the sun hit them. She parted her lips softly and her tongue darted out to moisten her lips.

Ruby:Yeah(softly)

Peter:Sure Ru?

She nodded as his hands cupped her heart shaped face. He smiled revealing his canines and that cute dimple.

Peter:Okay.

He let go of her and held her hand as they walked to the parking lot.

At Ma Rhysand's house

Lebopo sat down as she watched cartoons on the big screen tv. Ma Rhys watched Lebopo. She was such an easy child and she didn't even throw a tantrum or anything of that sort.

A door knock was the source of interruption and she went to open it. There he was. Again. She had forgot that she was looking after his child.

Ma Rhys:You can come in.

She said and opened the door wider for him to walk inside.

.

.

TROUBLED

#64

At the mall

Rhysand made his way to the parking lot and spotted her by the car. Her yellow thighs out to play in the dress she left the house in. He rang her up and watched her answer as she covered her face from the scorching summer sun of the semi arid country.

Rhys:Hello baby..

Neelo:Hello..I am waiting. Are you near?

Rhys:Face the other direction.

She turned and smiled holding the phone close to her ear.

Neelo:I can see you. What is in that bag?

Rhys:O rata dilo Neelo.

She giggled and hung up as her baby daddy stopped in front of her. Rhys used his free hand to pull her to him.

Rhys:Hey sweetheart.

Neelo:Hello..

Rhys:Why are you outside the car? Later on you'll be saying you are hot...

Neelo:I thought of meeting you ha Nandos but what if they steal the pram.

Rhysand gave her a confused look. Wait what?

Neelo removed his hand as she looked at the back.

Neelo:I bought a pram. It was the only one my love. Isn't it cute? Bona Rhys..

She prompted him and he looked at the back. It was all covered in plastic.

Neelo:Bathong Nate will have a cute pram..

Rhys:Nate ke mang?

She shrugged.

Neelo:Our baby. Focus Rhysand. Focus!

Rhys:I didn't know we named him already...

Neelo:Well we did right? It's a cute name if I say so myself. Come see what I bought for him.

Rhysand caught a glimpse of the huge smile on her face. The enthusiasm she had as she showed him what she bought. She didn't spend a single thebe on herself but rather on "Nate". They will discuss the name later after she is down from her high.

Neelo:Baby o reeditse?(baby are you listening)
[lightly slapping his cheek]

Rhys:Ee mma...

Neelo:We need a baby cot and all that. We will keep the stuff safe.

He smiled. She was genuinely happy and excited. All of the baby stuff buying hadn't hit him but Neelo being her had thought of it and decided to buy.

Rhys:Let's go get food.

Neelo:What if they steal the pram Rhys? You go. I'll stay in the car.

Rhys:I'm not going alone little miss. They won't steal it.

Neelo:How sure are you?

Rhys:hundred percent sure.

Neelo:If they ste-

Rhys:They won't. You need to eat baby. Did you eat?

Neelo>Last ate when I left the house.

Rhys:Let me put this in the car and we go get something to eat.

She looked at the gift bag he put at the back. On top

of the things she bought.

At Nandos

Ruby swirled the ice cubes in her designer drink as she laughed at a joke Peter said.

Peter:You have a beautiful smile.

Ruby:And you are too kind.

He brought the fork to his lips gazing at her. Ruby blushed under his intense gaze. She averted her eyes sipping on her drink.

Peter:You never told me what you do...

Ruby:Oh I'm an editor at a publishing company.

Peter:That sounds interesting.

Ruby:Is it? All I do is sit by the desk and read and read and read till I can't read no more.

He let out a soft chuckle.

Peter:It is interesting. You read different things day

in and day out. You get to see different takes to this life thing.

Ruby:Same as being a lawyer. You deal with different people and cases everyday.

Peter:Yo-

Words died on his lips as his eyes focused on the figure that was unmistakably Neelo. She held the arm on a tattooed individual. He raised his eyes and he recognised the face. He blinked a couple of times and Ruby realised that she didn't have his attention. She turned in her seat and she followed his gaze. She nodded her head in disappointment with a bland smile on her lips. The universe never listened did it?

She ignored Neelo for peace sake and now Neelo was here with Rhysand. Holding onto him as if he was the best thing after sliced bread. Peter cleared his throat and Ruby faced him. The food suddenly looked unappetizing.

Ruby:You know them?

Peter:I was following that guy's case in court..

Ruby nodded. Only natural for him to know Rhysand. He was after all a criminal who was walking around as if he didn't do crime for a living. She rubbed her neck. Neelo chose that guy? The guy who could be locked away anytime? What a shame.

Peter:What is it Ru?

Ruby:I-(sucking in a deep breath)Can we leave?

Peter:Sure..

Since he had already paid, they stood up and he walked behind Ruby with his hand on her back. He glanced back to see Neelo comfortably laughing with Rhysand as they were on line waiting to order. He kept his cool and plastered a smile on his face as they walked out.

Ruby didn't know for how long she was going to feel like this. Knowing that he is so happy because he is expecting or is he with her for the sake of the baby?

Peter:What happened down there?

Ruby:It was suffocating. I needed to breath.

Peter:Are you sure that's all?

He asked as he lifted her chin and looked into her eyes which looked golden when the sun hit them. She parted her lips softly and her tongue darted out to moisten her lips.

Ruby:Yeah(softly)

Peter:Sure Ru?

She nodded as his hands cupped her heart shaped face. He smiled revealing his canines and that cute dimple.

Peter:Okay.

He let go of her and held her hand as they walked to the parking lot.

At Ma Rhysand's house

Lebopo sat down as she watched cartoons on the big screen tv. Ma Rhys watched Lebopo. She was such an easy child and she didn't even throw a tantrum or anything of that sort.

A door knock was the source of interruption and she went to open it. There he was. Again. She had forgot that she was looking after his child.

Ma Rhys:You can come in.

She said and opened the door wider for him to walk inside.

TROUBLED

#65

At Ma Rhysand's house

McKnight walked inside and Lebopo was comfortable as she watched cartoons. She looked at her father who just walked in. She wondered why he was not with her mother and Same.

McKnight: Thank you...

Ma Rhys walked to the kitchen and he followed her. The house was different and much bigger than the last time he was here. He remembered that his own son tried to kill him. If it wasn't for his wife he would've died.

Ma Rhys: What's going on?

McKnight: It's a long story. Let me take Lebopo and

we go..How is Rhysand and Alex?

She chuckled.

Ma Rhys:They still hate you. At some point I thought you would be a man and reach out to apologise as the years went by. Guess being an abuser is the only thing you knew how to be good at.

He looked down.

Ma Rhys:They are grown men who have families..

McKnight looked at his wife. They never really divorced and his sons had families. His pride didn't let him own up to his mistakes all these years.

Ma Rhys:You can go. I don't even want to know what happened. It's most probably your fault and I am sure you never changed. Not at all. Take your daughter and go.

He wanted to speak but he saw it fit to keep his mouth shut. He nodded and walked out of the kitchen.

McKnight:Lebopo let's go.

Lebopo:Okay.

She got off the couch and looked for Ally. Ma Rhys walked out of the kitchen and waved at little Lebopo.

Ma Rhys:Bye bye sweetie...

Lebopo:Bye bye(smiling)

They walked out and she sucked in a deep breath. Her sons were going to flip if they knew that their father had been here. She looked around and headed to the kitchen.

McKnight looked at Lebopo who sat on the seat. He buckled up the six year old and he sighed. Basically he was all she had even though she had brothers but

they hated him. He looked back at his actions and shook his head. He shouldn't even think about it.

McKnight:What do you want to eat?

Lebopo:Where is mama and Same?

She asked and he started the car. How was he going to answer the six year old?

McKnight:I'll tell you at home.

He glanced at the house one more time before he drove away.

At Nandos

Neelo and Rhysand sat down waiting for their order. Neelo stared at him as he pressed his phone. He lifted his eyes to find her staring. Unashamed.

Rhys:What is it?

Neelo:You're beautiful.

He furrowed his eyebrows and she sighed wistfully.

Neelo:Legale continue texting on your phone..

Rhys:O-kay...

He sent his brother messages and he placed the phone down. Neelo looked at her nails then back at him. She placed her chin on her hands and kept looking at him as if he was some piece of art on display.

Rhys:You are getting weird..

Neelo:I'm highly suspicious that everyone who sees you wants you...

Rhys:But they can't have me..

Neelo:Mhmm...tota at this point mo go wena ga ke batle..

Rhysand raised his eyebrow. She was so serious and he didn't know if he should blame the hormones. He

did his research on pregnancy and most times women's brains tend to be affected by the rampaging hormones in their body.

Rhys:Ga o batle eng?

Neelo:Nothing. How far are they with order? Sa le re eme..

Rhys:It's only been minutes marshmallow..

Neelo:Ke hungry nna...

He chuckled and pinched her cheeks. She was gaining weight. Healthy weight..

Neelo:I'm going to die...

Rhys:you are being overly dramatic.

Neelo:Nate is hungry le nna ka swa...

He laughed and removed her hand as she smiled. She didn't know she could be this happy. This was happiness personified. One man made her feel butterflies, made her forget her past heartbreaks and she was floating whenever she was around him. If

that wasn't love she didn't know. Nothing was forced between them and everything was smooth sailing. She grinned as he pinched her cheeks again.

At T&M Publications

Ruby was absent minded as she stared at her computer screen. She didn't even see her boss who was in front of her as she snapped her fingers.

Sapphire:Hello!! Earth back to you mam!!

Ruby jumped a bit as she snapped out of it.

Ruby:Sorry Mrs Taylor I-uh...

Sapphire:Are you alright? Is everything okay? I have been calling your name for over a minute.

Ruby:I'm ok-okay..(sighing)

Sapphire:You look like you have a lot on your mind..

Ruby:I'll be fine Mrs Taylor..

Sapphire chuckled.

Sapphire: You can't pretend you're okay when you're not. You can't work when you're like that. We can talk in my office..

Ruby: Ee mma...

Sapphire walked to the elevator and Ruby pushed her seat back. She looked at the blank computer screen. Did seeing them together really set her off like this?

Ruby followed suit and in seconds she was in the elevator with her boss. The elevator stopped and they both walked to her office.

As soon as Sapphire opened the door, the view caught her attention as well as the flowers she saw her husband bring this morning.

Sapphire: Close the door and sit down.

Ruby did as she was told as Sapphire sat on top of her desk.

Sapphire:O sure o sharpo?

Ruby bit down her tongue.

Ruby:Do you believe in love?

Sapphire smiled. She did alright. With her whole entire being. Love was beautiful and it was even more beautiful if you shared it with a person who feels the same.

Sapphire:I should be asking the questions(chuckling)but I do..

Ruby:I know at some point I messed up, I blew it all..

Sapphire:Okay. I am listening.

Ruby:I love him. I still do, I just messed up and he couldn't forgive me. He loves hard and he put his all in our relationship...Four months after breaking up he shows up with a new pregnant girlfriend. The girl is innocent, but she is four months pregnant and we broke up four months ago(holding back tears)I didn't realise I loved him that much after doing what I was supposed to do..It was too late but I wanted to try..

Sapphire:Ruby do you believe in the theory of true

love but too late? You realised at the end that you loved him while he loved you all this while.

Ruby:And I was out on a date earlier. I saw him with his new girlfriend and it stung that he was with her, I know it's my fault that he left me b-but why did I have to break what I love so much? I am so stupid, so so stupid!!

Sapphire:You are not. Listen to me, we all make mistakes in this life. You need to let go of the anger and self blame. And I saw your post on Facebook. Being bitter about it won't make it all better. Ruby forgive yourself for what you did and you know what you should do? Don't let them see how deeply affected you are. You said you were on a date with someone?

Ruby let out a little smile.

Ruby:He looks like any girl's wildest dream. We met at gym which I started recently.

Sapphire:Look at that smile. Ruby the thing with us women is we have the ability to move. Does your ex

care about you right now?

Ruby: Funny thing, he once told me to forgive myself for hurting him and move on.

Sapphire: He was right Ruby. Move sis. Delete his social media and focus on one hell of a glow up. Go out, party...meet new people. Indulge in yourself, read books, find a new hobby love and you will see that you were just stuck in one place. I know someone who found it hard to move on from the love of his life when everybody moved on. He punished everyone for that and he realised too late. Don't be like that okay?

Ruby wiped her tears.

Ruby: Okay. This was helpful.

Sapphire: Ausi we move autwe. Your ex probably doesn't hate you, he moved on and there is no time frame for moving on. Me? To move on? It happened in a week and crazy thing is I met the love of my life days after some white boy played me (rolling her eyes) So don't say stuff that he moved on too quickly.

Take as much as you need but in the meantime live your best life. Seek therapy if necessary autwe?

Ruby:Ee mma...

She let out a shaky laugh. Who would've thought she would be talking to her boss like this..

Sapphire:So sis? Pick the crown you dropped and move on with dignity and grace

Ruby:Yes mam(laughing)

At Peter's office

He tried to wrap his head around the fact that Neelo was with Rhysand. Rhysand fucking McKnight!! The man on his most wanted list.

Neelo was too innocent and gullible. She probably didn't know what the man was capable of. If she knew, she would run for the hills and never look back. He also noticed that Ruby was so uncomfortable

after seeing Neelo and Rhysand together. He wanted to puke.

That criminal would do years in jail if he had his way and Neelo would be rid of him. A part of him hoped she would lose his baby when that happens so nothing ties her to him. He needed to get to work fast. Do what he can to get information along with Detective Moilwe. He was more determined than ever to put Rhys behind bars.

.

.

.

*

*

*

A FEW DAYS LATER

TROUBLED

#66

At Rhysand's house

Neelo placed her feet down as she talked to her father who seemed rather happy. She didn't know what was the reason for his jovial mood today.

Neelo:Papa why are you happy?

Ra N:Can't a man just be happy?

Neelo:You can but you are too happy.

Ra N:Should I be miserable Nene?

Neelo:I didn't say that. I might come back next week.
How is mama?

Ra N:Your mother is being(sigh)your mother.

Neelo knew what that meant and she went on to ask her father if he checked the farm.

Ra N:I will check it out..

Neelo:Papa!

Ra N:Nene I will check.

Neelo:You have been saying that this past week.

Ra N:an-

Neelo:Papa hold for a bit. There is another call coming through.

She answered the other call.

Neelo:Neelo Jones hello...

Caller:Hello Ms Jones. This is the HR department from the Magistrates High Court.

Neelo:Ee mma..

Caller:We are pleased to inform you that you have been hired for the job offer of the court's archivist.

Neelo took a moment to break down the caller's words. She got the job?

Caller:Hello? Ms Jones are you still there?

Neelo:Uhm-yes.

Caller:You will need to report for work first thing Monday morning.

Neelo:Yes ma'am.

Caller:Congratulations and have a great weekend.

Neelo:Thank you. Have a great day.

After she said that the call disconnected. She placed her phone against the swell of her breasts. She got the job? She really got the job? If it wasn't God she didn't know.

Minutes passed and she remembered she had asked her father to hold. She quickly put him on loudspeaker.

Neelo:Papa..I am here..

Ra N:I was already giving up.

Neelo:And apparently I have drama..Papa guess what?

Ra N:I don't do guessing Neelo. Ke mogolo(I am an elder)

Neelo rolled her eyes.

Neelo:I got the job dad. I got the job!!!

Ra N:I knew that would happen.

Neelo:I wasn't sure about that.

Ra Neelo checked the time and talked to his daughter for a few minutes before he said his goodbyes to her.

Neelo smiled alone and looked up to check the time. Rhysand was at work and she had nothing to do. She got her job and she paused. She should go back home to get her clothes and some of her stuff.

This week has been okay. Living with Rhys wasn't half as bad as she expected it to. She finally met his brother and his brother's girlfriend. Turned out she had met Wapelo before. That time she gave her a lift. She talked too much but overall was a good person. They had said they might meet for lunch this weekend but two pregnant women who were always tired and now they made plans. She doubted it was ever going to happen. Maybe after they both give birth but now phone calls and texts were okay.

At Neelo's parents

Ra Neelo along with Neelo's uncles were expectantly waiting for Rhysand's uncles to show up for the set date.

Uncle:Our child is really educated kana she went to Mmadikolo.

Ra N:We will be sure to tell them that.

Uncle 2:Ebile she is carrying their granchild. They

have to pay up. The damages and magadi all at once.

Ra N:Don't set a high price...

Uncle:Nene is the whole package. We will set the amount fit.

They all chuckled as Ma N came with scones and tea while the other older ladies were preparing more in the kitchen. It was going to be one long day. One she was not happy with to begin with.

To let them know that the McKnight entourage had arrived, the noise alerted them. The uncles cracked their knuckles. Time for the business of the day to start. They were determined to make sure they represented their little niece really well.

At T&M Publications

Ruby sent a text to Peter letting him know that she

won't be available for tonight's movie date. It was cute and all. He was being so romantic like the perfect man from the movies but Friday nights were her own. To reflect on everything that has been happening this week and plan for the next. Saturday would be a great day to go out, walk in the park. Icecream in hand and just talking about life in general.

She placed her phone down and got back to editing the latest articles she received this morning. After her talk with Mrs Taylor, she accepted everything that happened and that she couldn't change the past. At the present moment she had the ability to change her future and be cautious of her reactions to certain situations. It was really necessary.

Ruby:Inner peace is all we are looking for baby. Nothing but inner peace.(murmuring under her breath)

At Rhysand's office

Rhysand read through the documents his lawyer had drafted. All his assets were under her name and even this small company was under her name. As small as it was, it started as a front to disguise the money he gets from the blood diamonds but now it might actually be a company that can grow large scale if he focused on improving it. He looked out the glass window and the weather was as sunny as it gets. Might actually go ahead with his plan after all today.

His telephone rang and he answered immediately.

Rhys:McKnight speaking..

There was a pause and breathing.

Rhys:Hello...

The caller hung up and he stared at his telephone before placing it down. He shoved his hands in his pockets and continued to stare out from his office window, the sun hitting his face directly and not missing the chance to make his brown eyes sparkle in the sunlight. Oh he was such a gorgeous view on his own. In that suit tailored just for him and the shirt that revealed a little bit of his chest, small enough to catch a glimpse of the rough and hard physique underneath. The oh mighty Rhysand who had no idea that hell was about to make his way to him and it would leave a scalding burn. And a few permanent scars here and there. He was trouble alright just like Neelo had said when she first met him but she knew nothing of what was to come.

At Peter's office

The advocate who had worked tirelessly to find new information on Rhysand McKnight and maybe get his girl back in the process was on the verge of

giving up when the oh so needed miracle came in the form of a phone call.

Peter:Advocate P.K Mogorosi speakng hello..

Moilwe:The case has been reopened.

Oh and wasn't that wonderful. Ruby didn't have the information he needed anyways but this was getting interesting.

Peter:Tell me more detective...

Those canines and the dimple that Ruby raved about revealed themselves and what he did look like was a cat with Cheshire smile.

.

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#67

At Rhysand's house

That lunch hour Neelo was certainly not expecting to see Rhysand's car drive into the yard. Was it normal for him to be home by lunch time on Fridays?

She absolutely had no idea as she closed the curtains and pulled her cardigan close regardless of the scorching summer sun of Botswana. In a minute the door opened and she was waiting by the door for him. A smile softened his features and he opened his arms for her. She walked straight into his arms inhaling the cologne that could be said to be Rhysand's signature scent.

Neelo:Afternoon. I wasn't done making lunch.

Rhys:It's okay. How was your day?

He hugged her tight and she smiled against his chest. Rhys being Rhys picked Neelo up and she let out a squeal.

Neelo:I have pots tlherra...

Rhys:My kitchen suits you.

Neelo:Whatever. I got the job..

He looked at her. She could stay here even.

Rhys:Didn't I tell you not to worry?

Neelo:You did.

Rhys:Congratulations sweetheart.

Neelo:I am reporting on Monday.

Rhys:I'll drop you off before I go to work. Works just fine?

Neelo:Just fine. Let me down so I can finish cooking.

Rhys:Let's get out of town. Drive out of the city

sweetheart, away from the crowds.

Neelo slid down his large frame. Was that a suggestion to a weekend getaway?

Rhys smiled as would a predator ready for his prey.

Rhys:Exactly what you're thinking of sweetheart(rubbing her chin)

His phone rang and he slid it out. He answered immediately before Neelo could see the caller ID. He kissed her cheek and walked away talking on the phone. Neelo walked to the kitchen while Rhys and stood by the front door with a hand shoved deep in his pants pocket.

Rhys:I see. I will sort everything out before the end of the week. No one will be implicated in the process.

The caller talked some more and he looked up annoyed. He always had everything under control and he wasn't sure they were ready for the bombshell he was about to drop in a few months time. He moved his head to look at the kitchen. He

didn't know how he was going to teach his wife what he wanted her to know and if she would go along with his idea this week. Neelo might be sweet but she had a will of steel, she wasn't easily manipulated into agreeing into anything.

Rhys:Okay.

He hung up and thought of calling his brother, in all their dealings if someone was to be arrested it would be him. He wasn't just going to let his brother go to jail. He lived his whole life protecting Alex and his mother. Now he had a wife to protect and baby Nate. He still didn't know if Nate was the full name or the shortened version of the name. He could proudly say he had wife, it was all done in Bobonong. Now they had a few unnecessary ceremonies to wrap up the whole magadi process but Neelo was traditionally his wife. He was sure his mother was going to call later rather excited about her new daughter in-law. Neelo still didn't know but she was bound to find out sooner or later.

Neelo:I'm almost done autwe?

Rhys:Ee mma...

Two hours later Neelo had freshened up and was wearing a white summer dress that made no attempt to hide her fresh thighs. She wore that large sunhat she brought from home and Rhysand stood there in his tallness in faded Levi's and a black t-shirt that clung to his muscles.

Rhys:Ready my love?

Neelo:So all of these will be enough?

Rhys watched her as she added more items of clothing to the joint suitcase.

Rhys:It's a weekend affair baby...

Neelo:Okau but you will never know. Where are we going?

Rhys:You will see.

She took his hand as he held hers, pulling the suitcase with the other hand. She had her phone in hand along with two fleece blankets and that was it. She locked the door while he loaded the suitcase in the car. She walked to the car to join him. She smiled and buckled up.

At Peter's office

He bit the end of the pen. So apparently someone had information on Rhysand. Ladies and gentlemen he has been waiting for this moment and it has finally arrived. He didn't have to do anything and the state would have a strong case against McKnight. Obviously it was going to be under wraps till everything was finalised so as to not alert that criminal that they were onto him and he would grow old within the walls of a prison cell.

At the mall

The two walked with a trolley as Neelo threw in snacks inside. Mostly the snacks that Neelo craved and he didn't have a say in that.

Neelo:I am sure this is enough.

Rhys:As you wish my love.

They joined the line as the two conversed. Neelo was the one who had more to say as they moved forward.

Neelo:Wa bona gore it doesn't make sense?

Rhys:Ee...

Neelo:But besides that I have to save enough money and with my experience as an archivist I might open a book store. Not forgetting to remind my dad to check the farm. I worked hard to improve that farm. Nine months is no joke.

Rhys:I am sure he will without you reminding him every two seconds about it.

Neelo:Papa ke mogolo Rhys. He needs a push sometimes to get work done. It's not as if I am nagging or anything.

She kept quiet as Rhys and paid for the items and they walked out of the store. She unlocked the door and he placed the plastics at the back.

At Tantabane Game Ranch

An hour later, the two had arrived at the game ranch and Neelo was pleased to find out that Rhys had paid for camping. This was definitely going to be a new experience for her.

Neelo:We get to make a fire? A bon fire of some sort?

Rhys:Ee mma.

Neelo:I have never done this whole camping thing really.

Rhys:We will set everything later but now let's go

find something to eat and we will be back to set up our tent.

Neelo:No you're setting it up, I'll help.

He chuckled and pulled her to him as they started walking.

At Ruby's house

Ruby got ready to go to the hospital with her mother. Her father was getting well and apparently it was type 2 diabetes. So they had a lot to do to improve the old man's diet. Ruby wanted her parents to stay here with her that way they can monitor her father's health. Tomorrow he was finally going to be discharged then she will have to see if her parents will agree to staying with her.

Ma Ruby:I'm glad your father is getting well.

Ruby:I was really worried about him mama. He got the best help and why you guys didn't go to the

hospital back at home beats me.

Her mother shrugged as they made their way to Ruby's car. Ruby had to admit that Dr Colton was a really nice doctor. Even her father liked her and was always conversing with her whenever she was on duty. What was there not to love about her though? She asked herself as they got inside the car.

A Tantabane Game Ranch

Neelo was watching by the sidelines as Rhysand set up their tent. The sun on the other hand left gorgeous hues of orange as it set. The sunset was beautiful from this side and Rhysand stopped what he was doing as he caught the last rays of the sun shining on her. He will remember her standing in that white dress of hers starring at the sunset. With a child like glee she turned.

Neelk: Isn't it beautiful? Look at all the shades of

orange and this setting makes it all perfect babe.

Rhys:Stand there.

He slid his phone out and snapped a few photos of her. She was the epitome of beautiful. Inside out.

Neelo:How do I look?

Rhys:Like you walked out of one of my wildest dreams.

She gave him an angelic smile and faced the sunset once again. Rhysand continued with his task and he was done minutes later.

Rhys:Babe do you want to help set the fire?

Neelo:You see that I can definitely do my love...

There were already sticks and Rhysand came back with a lighter from the car. For this task Neelo didn't

need his help. Neelo gave him her sun hat and she removed one of her shoes so she can kneel down and blow into the fire. Her body arched marvellously as she did that simple task and Rhysand shifted his jeans. It was still too early for those thoughts.

Neelo dusted her knees as she wore her shoe.

Neelo:All done. Let's add more wood to keep it burning.

They did exactly that. The flames of the fire sparked up and Neelo smiled looking at her handiwork.

There was a large log that Rhysand pushed close to the fire just so they can sit and enjoy the warmth from the fire.

Rhys connected his phone to the car system and he pulled out the ring from the compartment. She didn't even notice it. He slid it in his pocket and grabbed the fleece blanket along with a few snacks. He sat next to her and he covered the both of them with the blanket.

Neelo:This is definitely something to write home about.

Rhys:Uhu, a small tent set up and you already want to write about it.

Neelo:No one has ever done this for me. It's simple and thoughtful.

Rhys:But if you feel unwell we can go okay love?

She nodded and tucked her head under his chin. They enjoyed the moment in silence, just the sounds of the wilderness surrounding them.

After bouts of silence Neelo looked up at him.

Neelo:I love you. I want you to know that.

Rhys:I know that and will never forget that.

Neelo:Good.

She pecked his lips and smiled before she got comfortable again. Rhysand rubbed her arm under the blanket. He looked up at the sky, it was still dusky pink and the stars weren't fully out. He bit his lip and looked down at his wife. His heart swelled with pride at that detail.

Neelo:Do you believe in soulmates?

Rhys:Since I met you, I've started to believe in them.

Neelo:I long did. The romance books tend to make one have high expectations when it comes to love but I would have never dreamed of the man being you. From the little you've told me about what you do, I know you are trouble love...

She shifted to look at him and touched his rough jaw.

Neelo:You scream trouble from a mile away and I wanted to resist you that night. I wanted to but I couldn't. I failed to do that and that was the best decision I ever took. You gave me a child we are yet

to meet and I know we didn't plan one..

Rhys:But he will be loved.

Neelo:Oh Nate will be loved. Fiercely.

Rhysand smiled, his eyes crinkling at the corners and he held her face in his hands. He brought his lips down on hers and she parted her lips inviting him to fake as he pleased. Rhys broke the kiss and tapped her nose earning him a laugh from her.

He pulled her back into his arms. He slid his phone out and played the song that reminded him of her.

Rhys:This song is for you and only for you.

Tears welled in her eyes. No one has ever dedicated a song just for her.

Rhys:Listen carefully and look up at the stars mh baby.

His deep voice said very close to her ear. She looked up. The stars were twinkling in the night sky.

Look at the stars

Look how they shine for you

And everything you do

Yeah, they were all yellow

I came along

The song played as her tears rolled down her eyes. She was being hormonal now but the gesture on it's own moved her. The song continued, she knew it but it made him think of her?

Your skin

Oh yeah, your skin and bones

Turn in to something beautiful

Do you know

You know I love you so

You know I love you so

Rhysand saw that as the perfect opportunity to let go of her arms. She will miss the warmth and obviously turn her head. He went on his knees and he waited as he slipped the ring out.

And your skin

Oh yeah, your skin and bones

Turn in to something beautiful

Do you know

For you, I'd bleed myself dry

For you, I'd bleed myself dry

It's true

At that exact part Neelo missed Rhysand's body warmth and she turned her head to see what was wrong. Her heart leaped in her chest as she saw him

on his knees with a ring, the ring sparkled in the dark, thanks to the fire and the natural moonlight.

She covered her mouth with both hands as more tears rolled down her cheeks. He mouthed an 'I love you' as she wiped her tears.

Rhys:I am just a man hopelessly in love with a woman and I'm here on my knees asking you to take this troubled man as your husband. To make an honest man out of his battered and dark soul. With this ring, I pray that this is the very first page of where our story begins and not where it ends. Neelo Jones will you be so kind as to allow me to be a part of your life till death does us apart? To allow us to build our family?

She was frozen still. His words all jumbled in that head of hers. It took moments for her to put it all together and she nodded her head crying. She extended her hand and he held it as if it was somehow delicate. He slid the ring on her finger and Neelo felt the new weight of the ring. Rhysand stood up and he helped her up, pulling her into his embrace as she cried against his chest.

Neelo:I-I lo-love you(crying)

He rubbed her back as she cried. She was not a pretty crier that's for sure but he loved her regardless. He managed to help her calm down and he just held her in his arms. She looked up at him and a sob escaped her lips. This was real?

Rhys lifted her head and rubbed her tears. He crashed his lips on hers and she kissed him back. Communicating the only way their bodies knew how. He made her wrap her legs around his torso and he walked towards the car where her back was against it. It all happened in such haste and before Neelo knew it, he was deep inside of her. She dropped her head on his shoulders as he pumped in and out of her. His groans were sexy. It gave her satisfaction that him being inside her could make him groan like that. Minutes later she cried out in ecstasy and he reached the same hilt and groaned. She breathed hard and he didn't let her go nor did he make any

attempt to slide out of her. He lifted her head and he licked his lips.

Rhys:I love you(slowly)

She nodded and he started to move inside of her, slowing down his strokes and her moaning. He held both her hands and intertwined them with his. Giving her slow strokes and she couldn't keep her eyes open with the pleasure rolling off her in waves and currents.

He kissed her forehead and he gave her the last few strokes that sent her off the edge and she moaned his name. He pulled out and gently placed her legs down to see his semen dripping down her legs, she couldn't get anymore pregnant than she was. He was sure her panty was already wet. He pulled up the jeans and the boxers that were on his knees. He watched her till she was back to earth and her eyes flickered open. He got hard again looking at that innocent face and he kissed her. He couldn't keep his hands to himself.

Neelo gave in to the kiss once more till he broke it and instead licked the base of her throat and she let out a weird noise. He looked back at her. In the moonlight she saw his smile of satisfaction. He was bad. Her mind suddenly alerted her as if it didn't know but he did it so well.

Rhys:I don't know why I can't get enough of you.

He said in the most huskiest tone she has ever heard and that sent little shockwaves of electricity all over her body and her swollen nub throbbed against her wet panties. His strong calloused hand held the back of her neck to pulled her in for another kiss. This one was filled with hunger and lust as his body fought to dominate hers through and through.

He broke it and looked at her.

Rhys:We have all weekend. Fucc!

.

TROUBLED

#70

At Ma Rhysand's house

She stood by the door as she waved Lebopo off and McKnight nodded his head. The minute she closed the door, she wished her estranged abusive husband could have stayed where he was hiding.

She heaved a sigh and looked around the house, now she was going to remember him in her sitting room and his daughter giving her the most brightest smile ever.

She better get such images out of her head. Rhysand won't be very pleased to know that his father was around and had been here.

At Tantabane Game Ranch

Neelo wore her sandals with the phone between her shoulder and ear.

Neelo:Mama I am perfectly fine. Did papa tell you that I got the job?

Ma N:He did. Congratulations!

Neelo:Thank you. Are you okay now?

Ma N:And what kind of question is that?

Neelo:The day I left it seemmed as if you had a vendetta against Rhys.

Ma N:I don't have anything against him.

Neelo:Le sure?

Ma N:Ee...

Neelo looked at her feet as she held her phone.

Neelo:Okay. He proposed last night and I said yes.

Ma N was silent for a while. This boy moved fast.

Really fast for her liking.

Neelo:Mama are you there?

Ma N:ye-yes. Congratulations on that again.

Neelo:Thank you.

The door opened and she smiled looking up at Rhys.

Neelo:I have to go and I love you. Say hi to dad for me.

She hung up and stood up on her feet.

Neelo:And how do I look?

Rhys:Like my wife..

She laughed.

Neelo:Smooth. Real smooth Mr McKnight.

Rhys:Are you ready to go?

Neelo:Yes sir.

She held his bicep as they walked out of the small chalet.

At Peter's house

Peter saw Neelo's post on Facebook and he rolled his eyes after reading the caption. Did she seriously think that a life with a criminal would do? Someone who broke the law more than once and she wants to marry him? That was stupid.

His phone beeped with a message from Ruby and right now he was not in the mood to pretend to like her. Maybe he will pretend on Monday morning but for now he needed to work on the case and make sure there are no loopholes this time. He would represent the State once Rhysand was caught but for now he needed to be alert and help in gathering evidence. He replied Ruby and placed his phone down.

At the mall

Alex crossed the road holding the plastic that had a few essentials and he wasn't paying attention when he bumped into someone.

Alex: I am so sorry I sh-(frowning) Summer?

Summer gave him a smile that reminded him of exactly summer.

Summer: Alex? Is that you?

Alex: In the flesh.. It's been long...

They shared a brief hug and Summer could smell him on her. He got more handsome and chiselled over the years.

Summer: So long. I last saw you when you graduated.

She looked at his hands and he wasn't wearing a ring.

A man like him? She never showed him she had a crush in him because he always treated her like a little sister and not someone he could pursue a relationship with.

Alex:Ne o tapeya gore Summer. Always Alex I don't understand this and that.

She giggled.

Summer:I felt so dumb after you explained everything.

Alex:Did you manage to graduate though?

Summer:I did actually but the problem is that there are no jobs around these days. I just dropped off my CV from that Chinese shop and I have more to drop off(waving her envelope in the air)

Alex:Any job is fine?

Summer:Beggars can't be chooser well can they Alex?

Alex:I guess not. I-would you mind a job as a stay in maid?

Summer:Not at all. As lo g as I am able to send money home and maybe get an off month end.

Alex:I was looking for one and if you don't mind I can get your number and I will call you?

Summer:Sure.

He handed her his phone and she paged herself on his phone.

Summer:Done.

Alex:Thank you and I will call you. Nice bumping into you.

He walked away with the plastics and she held the big brown envelope close before she walked away.

.

.

.

*

A WEEK LATER

N.B. If you want to sponsor an insert you can send a message via the page inbox.

TROUBLED

#71

At Alex's house

Wawa was already tired with this bedrest and the fact that Alex ended up hiring a live in maid was way out of her control. She picked up her phone to check the time. Neelo said she will be here for her lunch hour to check up on her and it was already ten minutes into lunch time for government employees. She folded her arms over her breasts and looked at her tummy. She wasn't having another child ever again if this is what she has to endure.

Meanwhile outside the yard, Neelo parked Rhysand's car and slid her feet into sandals. She hated heels with every fibre of her being. She got out of the car and opened the gate. The short distance to the door only took her a few seconds and she knocked on the door. Summer removed her headsets and walked to the door. Was Alex home for lunch? She had long dished and her boss said she didn't have the appetite and requested for oats instead. She opened the door and she smiled uneasily. They didn't give her a list of people to allow in the house.

Neelo:Hi. Uhm you must be Summer right?

Summer:Ee mma. Dumelang.

Neelo:Hi. Again. Ke tlile go cheka Wapelo. Can I come in?

Summer opened the door and stepped aside as the short lady walked inside the house.

Neelo:Nice meeting you..

Neelo said as she made a beeline towards the passage. Summer closed the door and shook her head. She sat down and put her headsets on. She continued to circle words on the crossword puzzle she was keeping herself busy with.

Neelo knocked and opened the door.

Neelo:Molwetsi batho!

Wawa:Wa swaba Neelo!

Neelo:How are you feeling?

Wawa:I hate this bedrest and I hate having a maid do what I can do..

Neelo:She seems nice.

Wawa:They all do until they develop an interest in your man and snatch him away from you. Mme tota mo go nna ngwanyana wa ny*la...

Neelo:Calm down Wawa! Now Alex wouldn't do that and I think Summer is nice..

Wawa:She's too beautiful for my liking too...

Neelo:Kante wena?

Wawa:If he hired help an older woman who is around 40 would do not a beautiful girl like Summer. She has a nice body. Her voice is sweet, well yours is softer and sweeter and o montle Nene. Go ntena gore!!

Neelo laughed. Wapelo was just being overly insecure.

Neelo:Wawa being insecure is not pretty. Truat your man.

Wawa:I will trust him the minute this baby is out of me and I can be around him.

Neelo:My advice to you? Insecurities turn a man off and that might just being you pushing him to cheat. But either way men cheat even if you are doing everything right but don't give him any reason to cheat.

Wawa sighed and rubbed her tummy.

Wawa:I guess you are right.

Neelo:No need to raise your blood pressure and endanger the baby more. Already you're on bedrest mntase.

Wawa:I want tea..

Neelo raised an eyebrow and shook her head. She had thirty minutes with Wawa before she went back to work. She will eat in the office.

Neelo:Does summer know how to make your tea?

Wawa:Ee.

Neelo:Give me a few minutes.

She walked out and Wapelo stared at the white ceiling. Alex should come back and give her a back massage. Her backaches intensified each and every day.

Neelo tapped Summer's shoulder. She saitched off her music and gave her a smile.

Neelo:Hi..Uhm Wawa wants tea and she said you know how to make it.

Summer:Let me make it. I will bring it in a few minutes.

Neelo:Thank you.

Neelo walked back to the bedroom and sat down next to the bed.

Neelo:Your tea is coming up. Wawa all you have to worry about is your pregnancy and nothing more okay?

Wawa:I'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

The ladies discussed baby clothes and which shop had the best deals in terms of baby stuff in general. Even when Summer walked in with Wawa's hot tea, they didn't stop talking. Summer sat down in the lounge and continued with what she was doing before. This job paid a lot of money that would help

her in the long run, at least she wasn't underpaid for her services though.

Neelo checked the time and looked at Wawa.

Neelo:I have to go.

Wawa:Thank you for checking up on me. It gets boring here.

Neelo:I will pass by next week and I will call later after work.

Wawa:Bye.

Neelo:Bye bye...

Neelo stood on her feet and yawned a bit. She had to eat when she arrived back. She waved and walked out of the room. She stopped by the lounge to say bye to Summer and she was well on her way.

At The Magistrates High Court

Neelo changed her flat shoes to the heels she hated so much as soon stepped out of the car with her takeaway meal. She fixed her skirt and pushed her back. Neelo picked her handbag and closed the car door, making sure to lock the car as well. She walked inside the building as her heels clicked and sighed. She couldn't wait to go home. She was tired but she was glad she saw Wapelo today.

In the same building, Peter exited the courtroom and walked to the reception. He was about to leave when he had the brightest of ideas.

Peter:Hello..uhm does a Ms Neelo Jones work here?

The receptionist nodded and he asked for directions where he can find her office and walked there.

Seconds after Peter had disappeared in search of Neelo's office Neelo passed by the reception. She said her hi's once again and made her way to her tiny cramped office. She did her best to utilize the space there and it was as simple as it could ever be. She

hated these heels but a girl has to be professional around these streets. They shouldn't catch her slipping.

Peter knocked on the office door and there was no reply. He was about to open the door when he saw her make her way to the office. She was in heels yet again but she hated them. He wondered why.

Neel was surprised to find him by the door but she pretended he wasn't there as she removed the office keys and unlocked the door. She walked inside and placed her takeaway and handbag on the table. Peter walked in as if he owned the place. She folded her arms and Peter could see the hint of the cleavage as she glared at him.

Peter: If looks could kill I would be dead.

Neelo: And if I had the ability to kill you would be dead.

He raised his head and there was no hint of a smile on her ethereal features.

Peter:I'm supposed to be scared?

Neelo:take it however you like. Why are you here?

Peter:To see you of course.

Neelo:Uhu! Go simolola leng re nna ditsala?[since when are we friends]

Peter:Neelo you can stop pretending you hate me...

She sat down and she opened her takeaway meal. She did not have time for this in all honesty.

Peter:Neelo?

She used the fork provided to eat and she looked at him. He was making a fool out of himself at this point.

Neelo:Why are you here? Surely it must have sunk into your head that we are no longer an item.

Peter:Ah. But we could be..

She laughed and almost choked on her food.

Neelo:I didn't know you are delusional as well.

Please leave my office...

Peter:Neelo the guy you-

Neelo:Oh stop right there. Leave! I can call security on you.

He chuckled.

Peter:And we can call the police on your little fiance. Who will be laughing now?

Neelo looked at him and the ring on her finger.

Peter:Can we talk now?

Neelo thought about it and sighed rubbing her head..

Neelo:Sure. Close the door.

Peter smiled like the sly wolf that he is and closed the door.

TROUBLED

#72

Inside Neelo's office

Neelo leaned back. She just wanted to understand his reasoning.

Neelo: You want me?

Peter: Did I stutter?

Neelo: You want me to send my child away so you can have me? (frowning) just so I can save my fiancé from the law's wrath?

Peter: Even if you put it that way but yes.

Neelo: O sure o ile law school? (are you sure you went to law school?)

Peter: Are you taking the deal or you would rather

raise a child all alone with it's dead beat father in prison for life?

Neelo:Oh my! That would be bad...

Peter:Glad we see it from the sane perspective. We were good together babe and we still can be...

Neelo had long lost her appetite for the food and she decided to listen to him.

Peter:I will be waiting for an answer and I hope it will be soon cause time is ticking. Maybe he can get five years if you take the deal.

Neelo:I see. You got this all figured out don't you?

He was about to answer when his phone rang.

Peter:One second.

He picked up Ruby's call.

Peter:Hey.

Ruby:Hey. Are we still on for tomorrow?

Peter looked at Neelo who kept a straight face.

Peter:We are. I'll pick you up. I'm still a bit busy. I will call you later.

Ruby:Okay. Bye and stay productive.

Peter:I will. Bye.

He hung up and looked at Neelo.

Peter:At this point you should know me better than that.

Neelo:Fancy since at some point I thought I knew but turns out I didn't.

Peter sighed and looked at her.

Peter:I was stupid at that time and I know I hurt you Neelo.

Meanwhile Rhysand made his way to Neelo's office. He paused at the door hearing a male voice. He placed his ear on the door to listen.

Inside the office Neelo just looked at Peter.

Neelo:I have work to do.

Peter:Think about us babe and what we can be. You know which decision to take, we can still make fire. The past doesn't have to affect our future together.

Rhysand moved from the door as he head the chair scrape the floor and footsteps. The door lock turned and he was face to face with the man who just propositioned Neelo. Peter let out a chuckle of pity looking at Rhysand. He was sure that Rhysand lost already.

Neelo blinked seeing Rhys and Peter giving each other hard stares.

Peter:She hates wearing heels if you didn't know buddy.

Then he walked away as Rhysand came face to face with Neelo who was sitting behind her desk. He gave

her a questionable look and Neelo she didn't move from where she was.

Neelo:You can come in and close the door..

A part of him wanted to walk out and think about what just happened. Who was the guy who walked out of her office and why did he sound as if he knew a lot about her but he would keep his cool because the more he thought about it, he was going to be angry about the issue.

Neelo tucked the stray hair behind her ear as she held her breath. She could see he had questions and he was angry. She wasn't going to lose her cool though. Rhysand checked the time. They still had time though and he wanted to get this over and done with.

Neelo:Babe are you going to come inside?

He sucked in a deep breath and walked inside the small space, his presence filling the space and his cologne wafting to her nose. She was so glad she didn't hate his cologne right now. She has read countless of scenarios where women hated their partner's colognes during pregnancy. He closed the door and instead of sitting down, he folded his arms.

Neelo:Uhm. Okay I guess you need an explanation...

She placed her hands on the desk and started to explain her history with Peter and all that before she delved into what Peter just said minutes ago, not leaving a single detail. Rhysand was quiet as she told him and he could see from her eyes that she was being honest. Neelo had no reason to lie to him.

Neelo:That's all....

She kept quiet and waited for him to say something

but he was quiet.

Neelo:Say something..

Rhys:Do you have your ID card on you?

Neelo:Ye-yes.

Rhys:Grab your bag my love..

Neelo:Okay.

She wore her shoes and picked her handbag, not forgetting the office keys on the desk. She walked to him and he kissed her cheek and led her out of the office.

At Alex's house

Around 6pm, Alex's car parked in the yard and he walked to the door. He knocked but there was no answer and he tried to open the door but it was locked. He tried his key but it was locked from the inside. He knocked a couple of times and a minute

later, the door was opened by a wet Summer who had her hair in a bun and she still smelled of the sweet scent of citrus fruits. She had a towel wrapped around her body and he could see he disturbed her bath time or shower time or whatever the hell she was doing in the water.

Summer:I am so sorry. I sh-

Alex:It's okay.

He stepped inside and for the few minutes she had her back to him as she closed the door he could see her legs. God!

Summer:Uhm your food is in the microwave. Let me go get dressed and uhm...okay!

She quickly walked away and he breathed in and out. He walked to the bedroom where he found Wawa fast asleep with the novel on her tummy. He gently removed it and pulled up the blankets. Even though it was summer, she never slept without blankets. He kissed her cheek as he got undressed.

Meanwhile in the bedroom at the end of the passage, Summer finally walked there after she had drained the water in the bathtub. She knew this was a formal setting so Alex was her boss. Her boss had disturbed her bath time and she had no choice but to go open the door regardless of the fact that she was done or not. She half closed the door knowing that nobody ever walked to that side and if they needed her, she was usually called by name.

In her towel Summer opened the drawer that had her panties and she picked the full panties that her mother had bought her two months ago. A part of her was ashamed that her mother had been supporting her as well but now she had a chance to support her. Her small breasts rarely needed a bra so she donned on a sweater and a pair of jeans. She had dinner to make as well.

The minute she stepped out of her room, Alex did so

too and it looks like they were both heading to the kitchen.

Alex:What did you make for lunch?

He asked as soon as he caught up with her.

Summer:Oxtail stew and phaleche.

He smiled and that nearly took her breath away.

Alex:I love oxtail stew. My mother makes the best oxtail stew there is so I am yet to taste yours.

She smiled and he warmed the food himself as she opened the pantry to see what she can make for dinner. She expected Alex to leave the minute his food was all warm but instead he sat on the kitchen stool after washing his hands. First thing he did was take a bite of the oxtail stew and he closed his eyes to savour the taste.

Alex:What did you put in here?

Summer:Uhm the oxtail, veg-

Alex:This is so good.

He exclaimed as he started to eat the food. Wawa never made oxtail stew because she said it was not nice and she wasn't going to cook something she didn't like so Alex last ate that at his mother's place. This was heaven.

Alex:You should make this more often.

Summer:I will take note of that.

Alex:So ever since graduation what has been happening?

Summer told him as she started to boil the macaroni. Alex listened attentively, occasionally getting side tracked by the way her lips moved and he didn't miss her lips that got more apparent the more she talked.

Summer:But thank you once again for the job. It has been nothing short of a miracle on my part.

Alex: You needed a job and I needed a house helper.

Summer: True true but still...

She smiled gratefully and went back to her pots.

.

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#73

At Alex's house

Wawa woke up and she could hear the laughter and the giggles coming from the sitting room.

Something clenched in her heart at the way Alex's laughter flowed from out of him as if it was something he normally did. She placed her hand over her heart and rubbed it over and over again.

He never laughed that way with her and he was always preoccupied with work or whatever he did most of the time he wasn't home. She cleared her throat so she could call him since she was on bed rest.

Wawa:Alex?(shaky voice)

Summer stopped giggling and she strained her ears.

Summer:I think Ms Wapelo is calling you. Let me get her food ready.

Alex:Okay. I'll be back in a few and we'll continue this conversation.

Summer:Ee rra(smiling)

She stood up and headed to the kitchen. He rubbed his face and stood up on his feet. He walked along the passage and pushed open the door he had left slightly ajar. He frowned as he saw distress on Wawa's face.

Alex:Are you okay? Is something wrong with the baby? Should I take you to the hospital?

She shook her head and tried to keep her voice as

steady as possible.

Wawa:I didn't hear you come in..

He smiled a bit.

Alex:You were asleep and I didn't want to wake you up. You always look peaceful when you are asleep.

She nodded and thought of something she can ask him to do so he stays here in the room with her.

Wawa:I had back pains all day, can you massage me?

Alex:Do you even have to ask? Let me wash my hands first.

He passed the bed and walked to the bathroom. She rubbed her heart once again as she pushed the blankets off. She was about to unbutton the dress when there was a knock.

Summer:Good evening, can I bring food over?

She asked innocently by the door and Wawa shook her head. Summer nodded and walked away. Alex walked out of the bathroom and went to close the door.

Alex:Which of your oils should I use?

That made her swallow hard. She always made sure to tell him her favourite oil when he went to the shops sometimes and he forgot.

Wawa:The lavender fragranced one.

Alex:Okay.

He walked to the bed and he unbuttoned the dress she was wearing. Her gorgeous breasts were up in his face and he swallowed. He wasn't going to do anything other than massaging her body because of the back ache his child gave her. Once the clothes were off her, he asked her to lie on her side so he can start the massage. His oil clad hands started to release the knots that were on her body and she

found herself relaxing as he did that.

Alex:How does it feel?

Wawa:It's good.(low voice)

He wanted to say something but he kept it to himself as he massaged her thoroughly and even extended the massage to her bump, arms and legs. She didn't look at him as he did that and by the time he was done she had closed her eyes and was sucking a deep breath. He lifted her chin up so she could look at him.

Alex:Wawa wee?(softly)

She still didn't open her eyes to look at him.

Alex:Wawa look at me..

She opened her eyes and he saw tears well in her eyes.

Alex:What's wrong?

Wawa:It's nothing. Just hormones.

He rubbed her chin knowing that she was lying and there was something bothering her.

Alex:Did anything happen while I wasn't around?

Wawa:Uhm no. Thank you for the massage. I feel better. Goodnight.

With that she closed her eyes and a line tear rolled down her eye. He used his thumb to wipe it away and kissed her forehead.

Alex:You'll tell me what's wrong akere?

Wawa:I'm fine.

She moved her head so he could let go of her chin and she placed her head on the pillow. Alex sighed and waited. The Wawa he knew was such a loud mouth and usually spoke her mind in seconds if something was bothering her so this was so out of character. Especially for her. He covered her up with the blankets and kissed her forehead again.

Alex:Wapelo?

She kept her eyes firmly closed and he sucked in a breath.

Alex:I love you okay lady bug?

No response. He sighed and kissed her forehead again.

He walked out and he called Summer. Wawa rubbed her heart again hearing him call Summer. She forced herself to sleep and relax. She should think of her baby and nothing more. It's the little things that he does with other women that hurts and eventually he might fall out of love with her. If he ever loved her to begin with.

Summer looked up as Alex approached.

Alex:Did anyone pass by when I was gone?

Summer:Yes. Her friend. I think her name is Neelo..

Alex:Alright...

With that he walked back to bedroom to retrieve his cellphone. He paused to look at her sleeping body before he walked out.

He stepped out of the house for a minute as he called his brother. Rhys picked up immediately.

Rhys:Hello.

Alex:Hey...

They talked for some time and he got to the real main reason why he called.

Alex:Can I talk to Neelo for a minute? It's about Wawa.

Rhys:Okay.(handing Nene the phone)

Neelo:Hello...

Alex:Hi. Uhm do you know what could've offset Wapelo? I heard you came over.

Neelo frowned at the other side of the line.

Neelo:No. She was her usual self. Bubbly and all. A se gore maybe the baby's coming? I have no idea tota waitse Alex.

Alex:Thank you. I'll see what's wrong. You can hand Rhys the phone.

She did so and the two brothers talked for a while before Alex said his goodbyes.

At Ruby's house

Ruby thought of texting Peter but she hated the way he dismissed her earlier on when she called. Even this week, he had been a bit distant. It was either that or her mind was playing tricks on her. She wasn't sure which was which. She sighed and waited for him to calk insyead because he said he will call back.

.

.

TROUBLED

#74

At Alex's house

In the bedroom Wawa failed to sleep as the little cramps on her lower abdomen kept her awake. She sat upright and she thought of talking to Neelo. She hoped she wasn't going to disturb her as she rubbed her tummy. They eased up a bit. Neelo's phone rang for a good minute before she answered.

Neelo:Wawa are you okay?

At that question, she broke down into tears holding the phone. There was an ache in her chest and she knew the truth. It has been looking at her straight in the eye for some time now and she was trying to ignore it.

Meanwhile in the lounge Alex sighed as he yawned and stood up. Summer had retreated for bed and he was sure Wapelo was fast asleep. He still didn't know what was wrong with her. He switched off the lights and walked along the passage. He frowned hearing sobs from their bedroom but as he was about to open the door he paused as she started to speak.

Wawa:He is going to cheat Neelo(tears rolling down her eyes)He is so comfortable with Summer and for as long as I have dated Alex he has never been so comfortable with me.

Alex heard the raw emotion in her voice and looked down while he was at the door.

Wawa:he forgot my favourite food and I know his favourite food. He doesn't know that I learnt how to make oxtail stew but the day I had planned to show him I learnt how to make it I found out he cheated on

me...

She gasped for breath as she put the phone on loudspeaker and on her bump as she furiously wiped her tears. Neelo had no words of comfort near, all she could hear was a broken woman. A piece of the woman she had been when those boys back in uni played her real good. She could see how much it tore Wawa apart and that's why she was insecure. It went far deeper than what meets the eye.

Wawa:Go bothoko Neelo. I stayed when he cheated on me more than once but I was the popaye. An A class clown and ke pallwa ke go hema..

Neelo:Baby breath, for the baby. Breath Wawa, he is not worth your tears sweetheart.

Wawa:My stupid heart loves him but he doesn't know me. I w8sh he knew me as a person than he knew every inch of my body..I can't stay in this relationship for my sanity. I never bring up the cheating but I know he will cheat on me cause I-I...

She rubbbbed her aching chest as hiccups along with

tears sounded in the room and Alex didn't know how it came to this. How he broke her without even realising he was doing that. The loud mouth and the overreacting was a defense mechanism and he broke her. He cussed under his breath as he covered his face with his hands. He didn't mean to, he swore he loved her and he didn't mean to break her like this.

Wawa: I feel like I was just there for sex and I feel used but it's my fault. I let him treat me like this..Neelo it hurts and ahh-

She let out a scream as she rubbed her stomach.

Neelo:Babe what's wrong? Wawa?

Rhys heard the panic in Neelo's voice and he looked at her. She looked at him.

Neelo:Wapelo wee?

Wawa:I have cramps.

Neelo:Hospital. Urg call that good for nothing man to take you to the hospital. Re etla...

Rhys frowned hearing Neelo call his brother that.
What the hell was going on here?

Wawa:Okay(grunting in pain)

Before she could call him the door opened and he walked in.

Wawa:Go bothhoko...

His heart thimped against his chest painfully as he looked at her state. She was supposed to havr a stress free bed rest and he was the cause of the stress and the early doctor's appointment. He picked the car keys from the dresser and he picked her up as well.

He looked into her eyes and she looked away. Her screams woke Summer up and she walked out of her room to see Alex walking out if the room carrying a heavily pregnant Wawa. She watched from a distance as he walked along the passage. Wawa closed her eyes as the pain intensified but it couldn't match her aching heart. Her heart felt as if she had more than a million pins poking at it and she

couldn't make it stop.

Alex quickly opened the door and he looked at her. He didn't want to place her down so he can unlock the door but he did so. Wawa kept her hands firmly around her tummy and wished her little bambino was hanging in there for her.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo changed clothes as Rhysand wore his. He still had no idea what was up but Neelo was fuming. Her face was pink.

Rhys:What did I do? Why are we angry?

Neelo:It's what you didn't do..

She slipped her feet in her push in and picked her phone up. Maybe he will take her to a private hospital. They will have to take their best guess.

Rhys:Kante?

Neelo:Till death do us apart. If you dare cheat on me or even kiss another woman I will put those shooting lessons that start next week to good use. Banna ke diaka mxm! A reye.

She walked out first and he followed.

Neelo:Eseng ke kiba kiba ka mpa for nine months
Rhysand McKnight.

Rhys:Wha-

Neelo:Let'a start at the private hospital first before we check others.

She stepped out and the cold breeze had her rubbing her hands together. At least she dressed warm.

Rhysand opened the car door for her and decided to blame her raging pregnancy hormones for this sudden outburst of emotion that was so foreign to him. He pressed the key and the gate slid open.

Rhysand started the car and Neelo looked at the phone on her lap.

At the hospital

Wapelo was admitted and Alex was chased out. He had no one to blame but himself and now look. He paced up and down, the hotel staff pitying the father to be and hoping the pregnant woman was going to be fine. They had the finest doctors around and a skilled obstetrician to help. Alex lifted his head and saw his brother along with short fiancée making their way to him. The glare Neelo gave him made him wish he was six feet under.

Neelo:It's your fault so you know...

Alex was about to defend himself but that was the saddening truth. Neelo went to sit down on the bench and willed herself to calm down. Wapelo will be fine. Rhys looked at his brother, he was lost and he needed a very clear explanation on what the hell was going on.

Alex knew that look on his brother's face and he was sure he was not happy. He knew his brother had a temper he kept guarded at all times because he didn't want to turn into his father and the sickening realization that Alex himself was turning into the father he so loathed hit him in the tummy he almost vomited on the floor. Before Rhys could speak a word two ladies made their way to them and Rhys frowned.

Alex was too busy with his thoughts and guilt that he didn't notice what Rhys saw.

Obstetrician: We have managed to stabilize her and she is out of the wo-

She paused as Neelo made her way to them and Marang was about to ask why the tall man who looked scary was looking at her when she set her eyes on the lady that stood besides him. Neelo blinked and frowned and it took minutes before Alex realised what was going on.

Neelo felt sick to her stomach as she rubbed it and excused herself looking for the bathroom. The rest of them stood there with questions in their heads.

.

.

.

*

*

*

I did tell you this weekend will be fun

TROUBLED

#75

At the hospital

Marang's eyes were fixated on Neelo who disappeared along the corridor. She was confused and she looked at the other people. She cleared her throat.

Marang:Uhm I-I...

She was still confused and Rhysand excused himself following the path taken by Neelo. The obstetrician took over after establishing that Alex was Wapelo's baby daddy and told him the state of her current patient.

The last time Marang had been this perplexed was when she was still a teenager and she rubbed her

temples. It felt like looking at herself through a mirror. Once her colleague was done talking she asked Alex the most random question.

Marang:What's her name?

Alex:Neelo.

He provided and excused himself to go see Wapelo in the maternity ward. Marang saved the name to memory. She hoped Neelo was okay, she didn't look so good.

In the bathroom Neelo heaved up some more as Rhysand rubbed her back. He had no idea what happened back there. When she was done he helped her on her feet.

Rhys:Better?

She nodded and he led her to the sink to rinse her mouth and wash her hands.

Neelo: Tell me that lady doesn't look like me Rhysand.

Rhysand faced the other way. It was obvious, they didn't look like twins but they had similar features it was hard not to say they didn't look alike.

Neelo held back tears.

Neelo: Ng ng... Rhysand we don't look alike I'm the only child and my parents never cheated on each other...

Rhys: Baby calm down.

Neelo: Ga re tshwane Rhys (we don't look alike)

She said that over and over trying to convince herself but she knew what she saw. The realization that there had been infidelity in her parents marriage didn't sit well with her. Rhys just held her in his arms. He lifted her face and wiped her tears away.

Rhys: Don't stress too much marshmallow. We will look into it. Take deep breaths okay baby?

In Wapelo's room Alex stood by the door. His conscience not letting him walk inside knowing he put her there. He stressed the poor woman and now she almost gave birth too early. He breathed in before he decided to walk inside and face what he did to her.

He sat down next to her by the bed and he watched the way her eyes filled up with tears and she tried hard to blink them back but they cascaded down her chubby cheeks. He gently removed the oxygen mask and wiped her tears but the subtle shift of her head told him that the gesture was not appreciated. He placed the mask back and looked at her. For the first time he saw the broken her. She always masked it with being loud and other than that she was right. He had no idea who Wapelo was and the realization hit his heart as would a spear and left it bleeding. She knew him but he didn't know her as his girlfriend and the mother of his first child.

Alex:I'm sorry.

She breathed heavily under the mask before she removed it and turned her head to face him.

Wawa:I have to leave before I-I lose myself.

Alex took her hands in his and kissed them.

Alex:Wawa I love you. I swear I can do better.

Wawa removed her hands and shook her head. She was the one to always go back to him after he cheated. She chased after him when he was the one in the wrong. How foolish of her to believe that such a man would love her. Such a promise has been made before and he didn't hesitate to break it. She had made him the centre of her world and it broke her even more that she wasn't even that important in his. She was the one who had to beg to see his family.

Wawa:I can't. I-I can't do this anymore. You want me because you feel guilty that I almost lost your son. You..Alex don't love me.

Alex:I love you Wapelo. I am sorry for everything.

Wawa:Sorry is just a word you casually threw my

way knowing I would jump that you chose me instead of the side chick or the girl who had your attention at that time. I watched you tolerate my love. If it's all in my head tell me now. If I got it wrong somehow. At some point my love should be celebrated but i watched you tolerate it Alex. I don't want that. I want to be loved fully for who I am.

She stopped to breath and Alex hated the idea that she wanted to leave him. They can fix this, as long as they love each other.

Wawa:I'll pack my things once I'm released. My mom will take me home. We will come up with a co-parenting plan.

Alex breathed heavily. He was a man he didn't cry.

Alex:You can't do this to us Wapelo.

Wawa:You did this Alex. You showed me that I am not the woman you would jump through hoops of

fire for. That I am not the woman worth your time or worth laughing with and being comfortable with. I gained the weight of you then lost it. Trust me I can do it. Don't make this harder than it is. You always have a replacement ready so let her step in and win your heart over. I am done trying to put myself in there because clearly I don't belong there.

He looked up at her and she was serious. The loud and carefree Wawa was gone replaced by the broken version he crafted himself and she wanted none of that half full love he gave her.

Wawa:That is all. You can go. You never really gave a damn and it's fine. Go Alex! Leave!

He sighed and didn't even have the energy to fight her decision with the fear that she might get stressed again. Maybe after the baby is here they will talk. A part of him hated himself for what he turned her into and that she has had enough of

tolerating his bullsh*t.

He walked out of the room and he saw Rhys with Neelo. Neelo had puffy eyes but the look she gave him could very well kill him if she willed it to be done so.

Neelo:Babe let me check on Wapelo. I'll be back.

She left Rhysand and walked past Alex as if he were a mere statue that didn't deserve her time. Was that the sweet Neelo Rhysand had introduced to him?

He sat next to his brother and Rhysand had wanted to give his brother the benefit of the doubt when Neelo told him exactly why they were here at the hospital when they could be doing better things like strengthening their own child and consummating.

Rhys:Is it true?

Alex:That?

He wasn't sure he liked his big brother's tone.

Rhys:That you cheated.

Alex didn't know what to say. He didn't know that it had affected Wawa that much and she always said she forgave him for that at the end.

Rhys kept his cool. They were in public and he hated unnecessary scenes.

Rhys:I hate that you are slowly turning into the man I spent half of my life protecting you from. It started just like that. Cheating on mother before the physical abuse started and I hate for you to turn like that scumbag but then it's your own life.

Alex felt so sick that he was being compared to his father and Rhys and wasn't lying. Not by a long shot and that just bothered him some more. It was a blow he delivered lethally with no need for physical fists.

Rhys:Careful. You might just lose everything you

hold dear and you will be to blame. No one else.

That was all he said before he stood up and he walked to the room Wawa was in. He stood up and rubbed his eyes. Wapelo said it was over and he didn't know how he should accept that. He walked out of the hospital. He needed to get his head right or better yet numb the thoughts and emotions.

After Neelo and Rhys had checked on Wawa to make sure she was fine the two deemed it better to leave. Unfortunately a voice called out her name and Neelo turned. She sucked in a deep breath and Rhys and rubbed her arm.

Marang:I apologise for what happened earlier are you okay?

Neelo:I am. Thank you for asking, it's nothing.

Marang nodded and didn't know what to say next.

Marang:Uhm I'm Marang Colton..

Neelo:I'm Neelo Rhysand..

.

.

.

Tomorrow is yet another date. Goodnight.

TROUBLED

#76

At the hospital

Neelo:Neelo Rhysand McKnight..

She said again as she extended her hand and Marang shook it.

Marang:Nice to meet you. Uhm I don't know if this is the right place to ask questions...

Neelo sucked in a deep breath. She didn't think it was the right place either.

Marang:Can I have your number and I will call. When you're not busy and I am not busy as well.

Marang took out her phone from her coat pocket and she handed Neelo the phone. Rhysand looked at

the two ladies and he knew it didn't take a rocket scientist to assume they may be related in a way. Neelo paged herself in the phone and handed it back to Marang.

Marang:Thank you.

Neelo nodded and Marang walked away. She had so many questions and she didn't know how she was going to ask her father. She needed to sleep at this point.

Rhys:Let's get you home. We have had an eventful day.

Neelo:That's for sure..

They walked away.

At Alex's house

He knocked on the door a couple of times. He was just about to go the bar when he hit the u-turn and

came back home. Rhysand's words about him being like their father still wouldn't leave his head and he didn't know how to deal with it at this point. Summer heard the banging and she wore her gown. It had been a hot night and she was only in her panties. She walked to the door and unlocked it. Alex was alone and he looked like he has been through a lot already.

Summer:Are you okay? What happened?

It was the softness and the concern in her voice that had him sitting down on the couch and wanting to weep for what he had lost. Wawa had been like this the first few months and he always shut down her concern with blistering kisses because at that time he had not been looking for a life partner.

Summer sat next to him and rubbed his back as he placed his head on his knees. Her mother's warning about being close to her boss amplified. She said

she didn't want her daughter to be a home wrecker as people believed maids to steal other people's men. She didn't see that though, she has known Alex from way back and she didn't want to steal him unless he wanted to be stolen which was not the case. Alex lifted his head and looked at Summer's big eyes that were filled with so much concern that it touched the depths of his heart. His eyes went to her soft lips and he wanted to allow himself to taste her. She started to speak but he watched the way her lips curved and he found himself holding her cheek and kissing her. At first she froze but she relaxed and kissed him back. His rough hands pushed the gown and he squeezed her breasts. She moaned into his mouth and at that moan his mind replayed how Wawa was crying telling Neelo about how he was going to cheat on her. The fact that she had been sure and he was now...

He stopped and forced himself on his feet. He covered his face. What was wrong with him? Summer quickly fixed herself up and stood up on her

feet. She knew she was selling herself short but hey...

Summer:It's okay. I'll be in my room if..if you want to continue or anything...

She walked away and left him there with his thoughts. Alex cursed under his breath. He was a mess. Wapelo was in the hospital, she almost lost their child and he was here. Wanting to f*ck their maid. He was a selfish bast*rd that's for sure.

The following morning

At Marang's house

She couldn't sleep and Joshua was still sleeping. She picked her phone up and decided to search Neelo on Facebook. Instead she found a Neelo

Jones and she looked like the girl she met at the hospital. She went through her pictures and she sucked in a deep breath. She never knew her father and mmaiye had said her mother never talked about her dad.

Joshua opened his eyes and he pulled his wife to him.

Joshua:Sweetness?

Marang:I might have a sibling.

Her husband paused and she turned to face him.

Marang:Scary isn't it?

Joshua:Are you sure?

Marang:I met someone who has similar features as me. She looks a bit like the younger me..

She shook her head. She will deal with that later.

Marang:I have baby fever..

Joshua:Here we go again..

She rolled her eyes.

Marang:The quads are almost 7..

Joshua:Mara-

Marang:wa gana? Just a baby and me getting off the pill. It's not as if we can't provide for another child.

She got out of the bed and walked to the bathroom.
She rubbed her face.

At Ruby's house

She woke up and checked her phone. Not even a single missed call nor a text from Peter. Was she annoying him or was she expecting too much from something that was nothing? It's not as if he asked her to be his girlfriend but weren't they headed that way? She sighed and placed her phone down. What would happen if she stopped talking to him first because she was usually the one who called first or texted. She shouldn't even be this desperate to be in

a new relationship to begin with. She would let him go cause it seemed as if she was the only one here seeing them as something more.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#77

At Rhysand's house

Rhysand turned to face Neelo's side of the bed and she wasn't in bed. She walked out the bathroom and sat by the edge of the bed.

Rhys:Morning..

Neelo:Rhy I-I am confused.

Rhys>About?

Neelo:Everything just happened so fast and I don't know how my brain will process this. Rhys yoh ke confused to the last number.

Rhys:Right now you do not have to worry too much.

Neelo:I am worried mme kana. The possibility of you

going to jail an-

Rhys:You promised that you are not stressing about that.

She looked up and rubbed her tummy.

Rhys:We are going to focus on the now and all the memories we are going to make marshmallow and that is that.

Neelo:Okay.

Rhys:Don't worry your pretty little head. I can handle it.

Neelo:Yes sir.

Rhys:Come here.

She crawled up to him on the bed and he held the back of her head to kiss her.

At the hospital

Wawa woke up as the nurse was leaving food for her. She wasn't sure she was going to love hospital food but she had left her phone and had used Neelo's phone to call her mother to come over.

She rubbed her baby bump and lifted her fingers to her lips before she placed them on her tummy.

Wawa:I am sorry I put you in danger buddy. I am so sorry baby and I promise that it will never happen again. On God!

She reassured the growing foetus and he made his presence known by delivering a kick and she half laughed. That was one strong kick.

Wawa:I love you too baby.

At Alex's house

Alex sighed as he got ready to check on Wapelo. He picked up her phone and he managed to open it since there was no password. It was his phone that had passwords and fingerprints to be opened and she never even asked to touch it. He wanted to put it down because what if she found out but then again she wasn't going to know at all. He found himself going through her messages and her Facebook messages where she ignored so many hi's from guys.

She didn't even respond them. What did that say about himself? Ever since she came back after that last cheating saga and their short break he has never even cheated on her. He thought back to what she said on the phone last night and he closed his eyes. Summer must have posed as a threat to her and the fact that she said he was going to cheat and the first thing he did when he came back was almost

f*cking Summer. He went through her WhatsApp and she rarely talked to a lot of people except her family, two or three workmates and Neelo. He opened the wardrobe and got one of her bags to pack her some clothes. He knew she didn't want to see him but he cared.

Minutes later he walked out and Summer was on the couch. Shame over what he did yesterday crossed over his features and Summer ignored his presence. She acted so cheap last night and he was probably firing her.

Alex:Let's pretend last night never happened. For what it's worth I'm sorry I put you in that position as your employer.

Summer:Okay. I made breakfast.

Alex:I won't be eating breakfast. We crossed a line that shouldn't have been crossed.

Summer:What line? Yesterday never happened. It

never happened. Not at all.

Alex:Good. No mention of this to anyone.

She nodded and he let out a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes as he nodded and walked out of the house. Summer could remember how his kiss felt and the way his hands felt on her body. Like he was a man in control who knew which buttons to press to have a woman long to be touched by him again and again and again. The memory would never be wiped away from her mind.

At Rhysand's house

Marang had looked up Marang on Facebook and she was so pretty. Not that she didn't see her beauty last night, she had been so confused and a lot had happened. She saved a picture and she went to her contacts. She stopped on her father's number and asked herself if it was wise for her call him and ask

now or to meet Marang so they could talk before she called her father?

She didn't know but it was going to eat her up but this was new. She met Marang yesterday. It has not been a whole day since she met her and already she wanted to ask daddy. She placed her phone down. She was such a daddy's girl and it showed. She should wait for a week before she asked him and all. Rhys walked in the bedroom and she looked up at him.

Rhys:I think it somehow slipped my mind...

Neelo:What?

Rhys:The day we got engaged your bride price and damages had already been paid that morning.

Her jaw slackened. He what?

Rhys:What do you want to eat?

Neelo:Why didn't anyone tell me?

Rhys:Now you know.

She picked a pillow and threw it his way. He caught it

Neelo:I love you even if you are this secretive.

He laughed and threw it back.

Neelo:We will check on Wawa later mme akere?

Rhys:Ee mma.

At the hospital

Wawa silently watched Alex put the stuff he came with down and he sat down.

Alex:How are you feeling?

Sge wanted to chase him out but no, she made the mistake of making him her baby daddy not that her baby was a mistake but Alex was.

Wawa:Better than yesterday.

She was tight lipped and Alex figured he wasn't

going to get anything out of her.

Alex:Wapelo I still lov-

Wawa:I don't want to hear it. We are just going to co-parent. Nothing less, nothing more.

She just gave him the freedom to do as he pleased with any woman he wanted. He should be jumping for joy not confessing his love for her which he failed to prove just a few hours ago and all this time they had been together.

Alex:Can you think this through? Please? I am so sorry, I will try to do right by you...

Wawa:Men do right by the women they love the first time. I am done Alex and you can't convince me otherwise.

He sighed and looked at her. Why did he have this guilt that she knew what he did last night? It was guilt because he knew it was wrong and that she had

been right about him.

Wawa:After he is born we will draw up a co-parenting plan that way each of us has equal access to him and there are no issues of hewehewe ke gana ka ngwana and stuff like that.

Alex:As you wish.

Wawa:Thank you.

He nodded and stood up. He will try some other time. Wawa sucked in a deep breath before she spoke.

Wawa:Alex?

He looked up at her.

Wawa:Do right by the next woman in your life, better yourself for her. Get to know her as an individual and not just her body. Take her out on dates and make her feel like a little teenager who is deeply loved. Don't cheat on her because as much as women forgive cheating it breaks them each and every time because they feel like they lacked something and it's

not something you heal from fully.

That chipped a part of his heart because he never did that with her and she had loved him still. He was such a fool. He couldn't even bare the thought of another man loving her right and his son calling that man daddy too.

Wawa:Thank you for bringing these over and all the best in your future endeavours.

Wawa said trying to inject a bit of energy into her sentence.

Alex:I love you.

Was all he said before he walked out. It felt like he lost something important and he didn't know how to get it back. He will change. He swore on his unborn child's life.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo's phone rang and she picked up.

Neelo:Hello?

Caller:Is this Neelo? Ke Marang.

Neelo:Hi Marang.

Marang:Are you free tomorrow? I hope I am not being too up in your face or anything like that..

Neelo:Not at all. I am free tomorrow..

Marang:Can we meet? Even if it's just lunch..

Neelo:Sure. You can send the details and I'll be there.

Marang:thank you. Uhm bye.

Neelo:Bye.

She hung up and she placed the phone down. That was the first step.

4 MONTHS LATER

TROUBLED

#78

Inside Rhysand's office

He hated that Neelo was caught in between his dealings and that lawyer was using her to win over Neelo. Good thing that came out of the deal was that what he had planned initially was taking place and he was subtly extracting himself and his brother from the illegal business. They had enough money to last them twenty years if used wisely. His assets were safely signed over to Neelo so she and Nate would have financial security. On top of that he was a lot more involved with this business and he came to realise it was making money even if it was started as a front.

His phone rang and a smile curved on his lips as he

answered.

Rhys:Marshmallow?

Neelo:Hey Rraagwe Nate. I was just checking up on you.

Rhys:You want something.

Neelo:I do not..

Rhys:You forget that I know you sweetheart..

Neelo:When should I drop this façade? Ke tenega gore ga ke mmona hei marn!(I get angry when I see him)

He chuckled and rubbed his stubbled jaw, her pregnant self didn't shave him like he would've preferred but it was the effort that counts. It all came from a very good place.

Rhys:Maternity leave yaago e simolla leng?(when is your maternity leave starting)

Neelo:Friday and it's still a Tuesday. Gosh I am exhausted Rhysand. Nate is exhausting.

Rhys:I know baby...

Neelo:I have to go. We will talk later and I am tired of this cover(whispering)sue me but ke tired.

She hung up and Rhysand placed the phone down.

At Neelo's office

Feeling more like a whale Neelo moved back as the devil's advocate walked in with a smug smile in his face. Oh how she wished she could wipe it off with a single slap but patience. If her future self had told her she would have to tolerate this human's company in the near future she would have chosen death as the better option. She hid her hands and slipped her rings off and opened the drawers to place them there.

Peter made himself comfortable and looked at her. Oh the case was coming along fine. It wasn't as if he was not going to come at McKnight for everything

he had, he was going to and he wanted to let Neelo believe he might get a lesser sentence. What did she know about law anyway? Two birds killed with one very powerful stone. He gets the girl and he takes down the bad guy. Shaking his head he focused on her and smiled. She had that pregnancy glow people always said women had. He could imagine her swollen with his child and those pretty eyes shining up at him.

Neelo breathed in. She wanted to tell him off but she had to put on an Oscar worthy performance.

Neelo:Hey Pete(smiling)

Peter:Hi. How was your day?

Neelo:Stressful. And in case you were wondering I will be leaving the city soon.

Peter:Why?

Neelo:My mother needs me back at the village. Plus I am six months she wants me there. Akere you said

I shouldn't bring a child?

Peter:Yes. Yes. Why so soon?

Neelo:Do you ever argue with old women?

He laughed and she joined in.

Peter:I guess not.

Neelo:Exactly.

She put her hands together and she willed her eyes to produce tears. All she had to do was think of the prospect of losing Rhysand and voila tears on sight.

Neelo:And Peter?

She injected that tone that sounded more like a plea mixed with gratitude.

Peter looked at her eyes. His memory took him back to when he broke her heart and she was just as broken.

Peter:Yes?

He reached out to touch her hands. She didn't have McKnight's ring as well. That filled him up with pride.

Neelo: Thank you for saving me. I-I... (breathing in) He...

Peter: What is it princess? I hate that you still live with that monster and I wish this can happen sooner but trust me. It will.

Neelo: yo-u know his family history and that week (she faced away sniffing)

Peter gently made her face him and rubbed her hands.

Neelo: When I wasn't in the office and I told you I was sick, he be-oh God!

She broke down crying and covered her face with her hands. Peter stood up and walked to the side of her desk and forced her on her feet. He had been a jerk but McKnight was an even bigger jerk.

He held her in his arms and rubbed her back as she sobbed.

Peter:You can talk to me. About anything..

At Wapelo's house

Wawa rubbed her baby's back and burped him. She needed to get him to sleep before she could relax herself. These past four months have been the best. With her son three and a half months old, motherhood was one of the best experiences she has ever had and she knew it was going to last for a lifetime.

There was a knock in the door and she walked out of her son's room holding him.

Wawa:Nana robala mama o batla go robala(baby sleep mommy wants to sleep)

Her co-parenting with Alex was fine as well and since he paid damages, their son was using his last name.

Wawa opened the door and Alex stepped in. She walked away from the door and he closed the door.

Alex:hey I came to check on you guys.

She sat down and she started to rock the babe but he just stared at her with his cute small hands in his mouth. She yawned.

Waw:That's kind of you. He won't sleep.

Alex took the baby from her and he saw his son's eyes light up too. They made this cute boy together?

Alex:You can catch up on your sleep. I'll be with him.

Wawa:Sure?

Alex:Yes. We will be fine right boy?(looking at the baby)

Wawa:Thank you..

She stood up yawning and smiled looking at her son. She kissed his soft chubby cheek and gave Alex an appreciative glance before she walked away. Alex wistfully looked at her as she walked to the bedroom. Was it time to shoot his shot? Again?

.

.

*

*

I thought I posted this before I fell asleep but anyway...

TROUBLED

#79

At Neelo's office

Neelo stopped crying and escaped his embrace. She wanted to cringe but she had to do this.

Peter:What is it?

Neelo:He-uhm...he suspected that I was seeing someone and he slapped me.

Peter's face drained of all colour as he looked at Neelo's red eyes. He wondered why there had been little communication and why she wasn't at the office.

Peter:you should get a restraining order...

Neelo dabbed her eyes with her fingers and shook her head.

Neelo:I'm leaving in a week. There is no use and what if he does it again?

Peter:I am so sorry..

Neelo:It's okay. I can't believe I was this blind you know(sniffing)I always ignore the red flag and the guys take me for fools.

Peter:Neelo I will never stop apologising for ever cheating on you. I was a fool but real men don't lay their hands on women.

Neelo:Is it hard to find a man like my father? A man so honourable that loves me fully?

She looked up biting her lip before she blew a breath and looked at the desk.

Peter:Good men are still there.

Neelo checked the time as her eyes widened

Neelo:If he finds you here-

Peter:We will deal with him.

He hugged her and kissed her cheek. A wet kiss for that matter and looked into her eyes. He pushed her hair back. She didn't deserve any of this.

Peter:I promise you, you will be safe okay?

She nodded and he kissed her cheek once again and moved back. He walked to the door as she sat down.

Peter:Bye..

Neelo:Bye(smiling tearfully)

He walked out and closed the door. Neelo breathed in and she wanted to scrub Peter off her. She was sure Rhys was close with his stuff. She opened her desk drawer and wore her rings. They fit so perfectly on her finger. She smiled and placed her ring hand on top of her 8 month belly.

Neelo:Nate just know that we love you baby boy.

At Neelo's parents house

Ma Neelo at first had been thinking that her husband was bluffing when he said Neelo saw someone who looks like her but it wasn't a joke. She didn't like this one bit but she had to be open and welcome this girl into her family. Already Rhysand was a part of her family now another girl.

Ra Neelo smiled as Marang spoke over the phone. They had done test two months ago and they came back a match. From there he wanted to find out how his former lover had managed to hide the pregnancy from him. He waited months and after a year went by he decided to move on because she no longer came back to the village. At the time he was still learning the ropes from his father at the farm and all he had was the van that now no longer works but was loved back in the day.

Marang:Are you listening?

Ra N:Yes. Go on...

Marang:I mean uhm we have talked and met and Neelo is wonderful. Feels good to have a little sister actually.

He laughed.

Ra N:Well she has been an only child and you two are similar...

Marang:It's the height nothing more(laughing)She said she will be there and I was thinking that you can meet my kids who are your grandkids and my husband when she goes there. We are coming along too.

Another interesting fact. He had grandkids. He just didn't know why Marang's mother had kept her away from him. He wasn't going to deny the pregnancy and she had been his first love to be honest. When he saw Marang he knew, Marang had her eyes and even a blind man could see that she was his daughter.

Ra n:That would be great. I cannot wait.

Marang:Ee rra. I will call later and bye.

Marang hung up and smiled. She hoped she was not moving on too fast. Ra Josh has been and will always be a great father figure to her but she had spent years of her childhood and teen life longing for a dad but to find out that he never denied her just that her mother had hid the pregnancy from him and he was surprised to find out her mother died when she was a toddler. There was a pain in his eyes at that statement that he couldn't just hide and a part of her blamed her mother. They would have been a family and maybe some of the terrible things that happened when her granny died would have never happened. She sighed and stood up. Yet another day of duty and another day not pregnant. Yay for her husband for refusing to give her another child!

At Wapelo's house

Three hours later Wapelo woke up from her well

needed nap and she yawned. She didn't hear any baby cries when she was asleep. She got up and looked at her breasts, she forgot to wear the breast pads and now look. She changed her t-shirt and walked to the sitting room where she found the boys sleeping soundly. She tiptoed back to her room and grabbed her phone. She walked back and took pictures of them sleeping. The click sound woke up Alex as he lazily opened his eyes and Wawa slid the phone in the back pocket of her jean.

Alex yawned looking at her, her curves were more prominent and her skin still glowed.

Wawa:Should I take him?

Alex:It's okay(looking down at his boy)I was putting him to sleep and it wasn't my intention to fall asleep.

Wawa:It's okay. You know how your son gets...

He chuckled and looked at the sleeping baby. He was so comfortable on his chest. Wawa looked at the baby as well. She sat next to him to look at her baby's sleeping face. She had been so fascinated by

his small features when he was born.

Alex: Bona gore re dirile ngwana o montle (we made a beautiful baby)

Wawa: I hate to admit it but look at him (in a baby voice)

He laughed and she slapped his arm.

Wawa: You're going to wake him up..

Alex looked back at the sleeping babe.

Wawa: Nxo bathong. I could stare at him all day.
Thank you.

Alex: For what?

Wawa: For Kgosi..

Alex: I should be thanking you...

The two admired their baby who was sleeping with no care in the world.

.

.

.

TROUBLED

#80

At Wapelo's house

The baby coughed in his sleep and they stopped looking at him as Wawa stood up.

Wawa:Do you want something to eat?

He nodded. Wawa was a pretty good cook and he closed his eyes when he used to decline her offers to cook with her. He used the excuse that he was busy or that he was simply tired. The past four months have been such an eye opener for him. He stood up, careful not to wake Kgosi and he walked to the bedroom Kgosi slept in. He gently placed the

child in the cot and looked at their small creation for a few seconds before covering him up and walking out.

He walked inside the kitchen and Wapelo looked at him.

Wawa:It's just fish and chips. I won't be long.

Alex:I have time.

She nodded and went back to peeling the potatoes as the oil heated up in the pan. The fish was on the counter and he folded his shirt sleeves.

Alex:I can help. What do you want me to do?

Wawa:I won't be long mme kana.

Alex:Two is better than one..

A nostalgic feeling lodged in Wapelo's chest. How can she miss something she never had? At one point she had given up trying to bond with him and now she wanted to put a distance between them but he was doing something she had wished he had time or energy to do with her.

Alex didn't miss the way her eyes stopped shining and how she put down the knife. She wiped her hand on her loose pants and flashed a smile.

Wawa:Do you know how to peel potatoes?

Alex:I will do my best.

She nodded and moved from the counter as she

seasoned the fish. He watched her for a good minute before he peeled the potatoes.

At Rhysand's office

Rhysand made sure Neelo was seated and she re-read the documents. She last saw the documents three months ago. He had picked her up from work and as much as she hated that he signed everything in his name to her, he made her see it was for the best.

She placed the papers down and played with the rings on her finger. She looked up at him and sighed.

Neelo:I hope they don't have solid information on you. I want Nate to grow up with his father in his life.

Rhys:And I will be there.

Neelo:I know I can't change the past and what made you choose crime as a better alternative..

He sighed. At that time it had seemed like a fast way to make cash. He was used to making a lot of money at one go hence not using his degree post graduation.

Rhys:I am so sorry that right now we are in this mess.

Neelo looked up at him with unshed tears, Peter might've played right into their trap but she knew that her husband was going to jail one way or another. A lone tear rolled down her cheeks and Rhys used his thumb to wipe it away.

Neelo hated that small voice that told her that she will have to say goodbye sooner rather than later. She wanted Rhys to hold their baby son in his hands. Her child deserved to be held by his dad. Her lips trembled as she tried not to cry but a painful sound

escaped her throat and she still didn't take her eyes off him.

Neelo:I-I(stopping as she shook her head)

Rhys:Babe we said we are not going to stress ourselves...

He said looking into her eyes. He saw the unmasked pain behind those brown swirls. The tears that started to roll down uninvited and he saw the way her chest rose, her full breasts rising with it and how she had bit down her lips to stop the sobs that were going to follow.

Rhys:Babe...

Neelo:We never had time together Rhysand(shaky voice) Nate hasn't felt a father's touch...

She said. With a shaky breath she stopped talking. She committed his features to memory. That smile that had a girl doing whatever he wanted. She did his

bidding at her own free will. Ah the eyes that had captured her attention the very first time they met at the salon and she couldn't bear to lose him. They had been together for a mere eight months and the heaviness in her chest was a heaviness she couldn't bear. It was too heavy for her and she smiled, with tears running down her cheeks.

Silently Rhys wiped her tears and held her cheek in his large hands and he saw the pleading look in her eyes. They knew what they were planning why couldn't they just run away and forget it all? As troubled as he was, he held her heart in her hands and he was unintentionally making her heart bleed. Profusely for that matter.

He placed his forehead on hers and she let those sobs escape her soft pink lips. Her teary eyes were silently begging him to say that this was a dream and was not going to be their reality. He kissed her tears and she dropped her head on his shoulders

and let the tears roll down full force.

At Wapelo's house

Alex ate the food and he stole a glance at Wapelo who had eaten the french fries first before she cut into the fish. Wawa felt his eyes on her and she didn't dare lift her head, instead she continued to eat silently.

Alex:You're still beautiful like the first time I met you at the bank.

Wapelo finally looked up and he smiled.

Alex:Those formal pants looked good on you as well.

Wapelo:That's the past...

Alex:You had a certain light that was in your eyes.

Wapelo:I was unbothered at that time..

Alex:I know you still don't believe I am sorry but I am and I still love you Wapelo.

Wawa:We talked about this. We are strictly co-parenting Alex.

He sighed and rubbed his head. He placed the plate down and looked at her. He had dimmed that light in her eyes and he breathed into his fish smelling hands.

Alex:I never should've said goodbye to us when you said we should break up.

Wawa:Don't do this...

Alex:What? That I still love you Wapelo and that I am one hell of a selfish bast*rd that realized that he can't live without you the moment you stopped taking his bullsh*t.

Wapelo stood up with her plate and headed to the kitchen with the plate. Alex followed her and he

thanked his ancestors that Kgosi was asleep.

Alex:Wapelo my life isn't complete.

Wawa:I don't care. I don't care Alexander!(voice shaking)You broke me.

Alex:I know I made you bleed...

Wawa:And you didn't care Alex! I want to hate you so bad..

She held the counter.

Alex:I am sorry..

Wawa:I can't do this with you. I don't want this us anymore.

Alex:Please!

He pleaded and walked to her as he held her hands. She removed her hands to wipe her tears.

Wawa:Our chapter is over and done with Alex. Thank

you for Kgosi, out of the toxic love we shared came out something beautiful and I love you but I cannot be with you anymore.

Alex defeated moved back. She had made up her mind.

Alex:Wawa please, lady bug just one more chance and if I f*ck it up you can leave...

He said as he fell down on his knees. For the first time in front of her. He didn't want to quit on them yet, he knew he hurt her but he can stitch her heart back to normal.

Wapelo used her arm to hide her face as she cried. He was a bit too late, if he had committed himself into doing this way before she left she would have considered it and rejoiced over the fact that he saw how he hurt her over and over. Now she was protecting her sanity and her heart.

She removed his hands from her knees and moved over and he looked down. Tears in his eyes, needles poking his heart and it wasn't stopping. He breathed heavily as his tears fell on the white tile.

Wawa:I'm sorry but I can't...

He stood up and she saw the tears in his eyes as he bit down his lip and nodded.

Alex:No second chances this time?

His voice shaking was a first and she nodded.

Alex wiped his tears away and looked at her. He lost her and he had to accept that but it felt as if his chest had been ripped apart.

Alex:I will respect that.

TROUBLED

#81

At Wapelo's house

Alex let Kgosi wrap his hand on his finger and her smiled. A wave of sadness rolling over him, she said no but maybe it was too soon. Only four minths have passed and he was pushing his luck. Didn't make things better regardless. Kgosi tried to put his father's finger in his mouth and he chuckled pulling it back. Alex picked the boy from his crib and checked his nappy, he needed a nappy change and he was surprised that Kgosi didn't fuss.

Wapelo stood by the door with the freshly pumped milk in her hand. This was what worked when his father wanted to feed him. Alex was such a good father to their boy but he had failed as a father and

possible life partner. She had accepted that and it took two months to let it sink in that she let him go for her own sanity. Love wasn't always enough. Trust and loyalty is the foundation and one can choose who to love once those two were established. They didn't have trust nor loyalty and who suddenly hits a 360° change in 16 weeks? It wasn't possible. She was with him for more than a year and he never changed for anything.

She shook her head and walked in. Kgosi started kicking and she smiled.

Wawa: Thank you for spending the day with him.

Alex: I will always make time for my son.

Wawa: Mmhm...

She placed the bottle down and smiled at her baby who smiled back as she walked out leaving Alex with the baby. Alex felt the tension and he hoped it would get better. She had made her point and he

understood.

An hour later Kgosi was firmly placed on Wapelo's hip as Alex walked out of her house.

Alex:Bye.

Wawa:Bye bye.

Alex:Call me wheb he needs anything..

Wawa:I will..

He walked to his car and got inside as the door closed. Immediately cutting Wapelo and her son from his view. They would make a great family but he messed up along the way now he was frustrated and heartbroken at the same time. He started the car and switched on the radio before he reversed.

As if the radio station knew what he was going through, he found a particular sad song playing and he squeezed his eyes shut, tears threatening to

escape his eyes.

Only know you've been high when you're been
feeling low

Only hate the road when you're missing home

Only know your lover when you let her go

And you let her go

He joined the road as the song played in the radio, further emphasizing his faults. He was human for crying out loud. He angrily punched the car horn and swerved off the road before he hit something so as to cool down. The red car behind him swerved off the road as well. The driver didn't know what was wrong but immediately as they swerved, the driver saw no impending danger.

Alex stepped out of his car to catch his breath and he swallowed heavily though he wasn't eating

anything currently. The cool evening breeze hit his face and his heartbeat slowly gained it's normal rhythm. He looked down at his feet on the gravel. This was how it felt to love someone and they choose not to acknowledge your feelings? In his case Wapelo knew and returned the feelings but she didn't want to get burnt again, he left her feeling jaded and now he was jaded.

He looked back as he heard footsteps. He saw the red bottom heels and he looked up to see a woman in a blue pantsuit. He could see her face structure and if it was those days, he could be flirting already but now? Now those lustful feelings he knew could betray him didn't show up.

Her:Hi. Uhm are you okay?

Her English was accented as well. Maybe she had been a private school kid. Most of them had accents.

Alex:I'm fine.

She looked at him and he didn't look fine. She smiled softly.

Her:I'm Neo..

He nodded and leaned by his car. Neo looked at his structure, he looked ragged but in a sexy way. His eyes didn't give anything away but his body language did. It was the way his Adam's apple bobbed and his jaw ticked. He had a fine jaw as well, covered by a stubble. She looked down and the way those Timberland boots looked good on him, a man with taste. She looked away when he turned and her face heated that she had been checking this gentleman out. She had sworn never to get close to the male specie again after that incident. She breathed in and faced him.

Alex:You were honestly concerned?

Neo:Yeah! I thought there was something dangerous ahead.

He let out a laugh that didn't quite seem like one.
She wasn't sure she was making sense.

Alex:That's nice of you.

Neo:I guess. You look like you have a lot on your
mind.

Alex looked at the stranger, it's not as if thwy will
meet again one day.

Alex:Have you ever lost the one real thing you have
ever known?

Neo stared at the sky then back at him. She can't say
she relates.

Neo:I don't think I have...

Alex:That's where the real pain is...

He finally said and he brought two fingers on his
head to salute before he got inside the car and
joined the road.

Ruby's car passed and she played her classic

bangers on her way home. She can say with a tone of finality that she was over Rhysand. She did him wrong and he was justified in moving on.

She last talked to Peter four months ago. She decided that she will let him call first and he never did. That had hurt a bit but it had been a blessing in disguise. Four months of self discovery and focusing on her goals. A smile lit her face, life didn't revolve men. She was striving in her singleness.

At Aone's house

Kago looked at his brother's house. To think that people are going to move into this house, a house he wanted his family to use. He sighed and he could imagine Neelo and his brother in this house. Last he heard of Neelo was that she was expecting and magadi has been paid already.

It didn't come as a blow but it was still unexpected. He guessed one doesn't have to have a time frame for mourning or grieving and things just happen. He walked to the door and walked out of the house making sure to lock it. He was waiting for his bosses to approve his transfer and he will find a house this side.

He stood by his car and glanced at the house once again before he got in. As much as his family blew the funds Aone had left for them, he did his best to support his parents with his salary. He started the car, reversed and drove off.

At Katlego's house

He looked at the documents he had been sent. After months of hoping he would be seen as a good candidate it was finally happening. He smiled and touched his heart.

He will tell Neelo the good news once it is all finalised. He didn't want to stress the pregnant woman did he? He was happy for her and she deserved happiness after what she did for him and Aone. She was the most selfless person he has ever met, not everyone can sacrifice their happiness for a cause.

He signed the documents. This had been their dream and he was making it happen. The dog made its way to his table and wanted to place its paws on the table. He held the documents and laughed before he rubbed the dog's head.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#82

At the police department

Inspector Moilwe looked at all the facts that they had. Everything was coming along fine and Peter as the state's lawyer knew his stuff. He was sure this was going to catch Rhysand offguard and that will be good. The element of surprise is good when working with a criminal like him.

Now they had to arrest him and trial him. This time he would get jail time even for life. He smiled. How they missed this, he didn't know. The informant proved to be much better than Ruby who gave nothing but bank statements.

He closed the files and he smiled.

At Rhysand's house

Silence was the couple's friend as each contemplated a future without the other. Neelo was on autopilot as she paged the novel without actually reading a thing in the book. Rhysand was by the porch. The silence was deafening and he resisted the urge to smoke. Neelo wouldn't appreciate that and her health came first to his. He covered his face. At least he had time to cover his tracks and he has always been careful. Whoever snitched had a death wish because this diamond smuggling thing was honestly bigger than him. It involved ministers and people in high places that would hate for their names to be mentioned anyway.

He stood up and walked to the house. His throat bobbed and his eyes got teary when he laid his eyes on his very pregnant wife.

Rhys:Marshmallow?

She looked up and placed the novel down. She wasn't even reading. Rhysand's steps towards her were fast and he was by her side in seconds. He helped her stand on her feet and held her waist.

Rhys:Sweetheart I don't want you to worry about a thing okay?

Neelo:It's hard no-

He shut her up by placing his pointing finger on her lips.

Rhys:No negative thoughts. We are spending time together and we are not stressing over this.

Neelo wanted to debate but he held her gaze so she nodded.

Rhys:Good. I love you okay?

Neelo:I love you more.

He smiled and that smile left Neelo's heart aching. He placed her small hand on his chest and she blinked back tears. She knew he was a bad idea at first glance but she was in too deep. Too in love with him, expecting his first born and his wife. If that didn't show how she decided to use her heart instead of her head she didn't know what would.

Rhys:Would you like to dance?

He asked meekly and she let out a soft smile, her eyes softening as well to mask the pain.

Neelo:I'm too heavy to dance Rice...

He chuckled and kissed the top of her nose.

Rhys:Then you're Mrs Rice.

Neelo scrunched her nose in playful disgust and pushed him back.

Neelo:No sir! Nope! Not this pretty thing.

Rhys:Pretty?

Neelo:one, leave my nose out of it though I look better than most pregnant women and two,it's your fault. Pull out didn't work.

Rhys:Keep it down you're corrupting Nate.

She rolled her eyes laughing and held her tummy. She didn't want to stand for too long, her back ached and she hated that part about pregnancy.

Neelo:Nate should know that his father fu-

He quickly covered her lips and she laughed into his hand and he joined her. He removed his hand and she stopped laughing to catch her breath.

Neelo:His father fuc-

And he covered her mouth again. Neelo bit his palm and he quickly removed it and she quickly said it.

Neelo:Nateyourdadf*ckedme!!

She laughed and lightly placed her palm on his chest.

Neelo:There, I said it hooo!

He laughed and looked at his palm.

Rhys:That hurt Mrs Rhysand.

Neelo:Nate your dad made sure you were made when we slept together before we got to know each other.

Rhys:And you're already teaching my child bad things already.

She shrugged.

Rhys:That dance...

Neelo:I am heavy Rhys, ke a ikemela baby..(batting her eyelids)

Rhys:those eyes are not working on me.

He took a few steps away from her and switched on the sound system. He slipped his phone out and he

connected it. He played the song that fit the mood. He walked back to her and she smiled.

Rhys:step on my feet..

Neelo:It won't hurt?

Rhys:No.

She placed her size 3 sock clad feet on his and he placed his hands on her back. That was soothing. He was moving her around as she placed her head on his shoulder. You&I blasted the speakers and she could hear his heart beat. Her hands wrapped around his neck and she smiled alone.

In his baritone voice he sang the song as he danced since she really was not doing a thing just being there. He sang the words very close to her ear and she figured this was going to be one of the songs that would be close to her heart

Rhys: They never tried like us

You&I, we don't wanna be like them

Wr can make it till the end

Nothing can come between You&I

Not even the gods above, can separate the two of
us

Her heart swelled with love mixed with pain. She bit her lip as they moved to the song. Rhysand kissed her neck and they danced to the song. They didn't need words, the way they understood each other even in silent rooms was more than enough.

The song ended and she stepped off his feet and she looked up at him with gleaming eyes. She brought her shaky lips near as he lowered his head to her neck. Their lips touched, his hands moved to the nape of her neck and she moved back.

Neelo:I love you in spite of the fear that the world would divide us, so baby can we dance through an avalanche?

He smiled tipping her head.

Rhys:Bet ma...

She smiled and he kissed her with a smile, she gladly parted her lips for his tongue to slide in and take control. He got the message and their tongues touched as he moved his hands to the back of her head for a more greedy kiss.

From thereon it was quick work of the clothes on their bodies, quickly disposed of and her husband finding the means to make love to her 8 months pregnant self. Where there is a will there is always a way, she said to herself as he finally found her core and oh boy he hit all the right places to get those

screams and moans. Oh and the back scratches too. They never did words from the first encounter did they?

She trusted him to make the angels come through and he didn't disappoint. He brought her to the edge before he shot her into the stratosphere. There was god in every move, he was living proof of that.

It was hours later when Neelo was soundly asleep. Her head on his chest and her hands protectively over her bulging stomach when Rhysand's phone cut through the silent night. He was awake. He found it hard to sleep when his mind was running wild. He picked up the call and there was a silence that scared him.

Rhys:Hello?

Alex:She is done Rhys!

His broken voice got to him and knowing he spent

his whole life protecting his little brother...

Alex shook his head as tears choked him.

Something was missing in his heart and the missing part hurt him.

Alex:I-I changed! I love her Rhys. I-

The phone line went dead and that had Rhys on high alert. He looked at his wife sleeping soundly. He pushed her hair back and kissed her forehead. He had to check on Alex now at this time.

Rhys and slowly placed her head on the soft pillow and got out of bed. He put on his boxers and his jeans as well. He found a t-shirt and a jacket.

He bent by the bed side and kissed her cheek.

Rhys:Hey marshmallow?

Neelo murmured something senseless in her sleep.

Rhys:Babe I have to check on Alex. I don't trust him not to do anything stupid. I'll be back before you know.

Her eyelids fluttered open before they closed and he sighed. He kissed her cheek and grabbed his car keys, alid his feet in the shoes and walked out of the room leaving his pregnant wife alone.

.

.

*

*

*

Tissues ready plus wine and whiskey? Good.

TROUBLED

#83

At Rhysand's house

Neelo turned in the bed alone and she opened her eyes, not feeling his body next to her. She rubbed her eyes in the darkness before she removed her hands. Her eyes adjusted to the darkness as she moved her hand on his side of the bed. She was too tired to want to think about his whereabouts so she closed her eyes and went back to sleep.

At Alex's house

Rhysand knocked on the door as he rubbed his arms. It was chilly but concern for his brother had him leaving the house without a jacket.

Alex opened the door and he was in a drunk stupor.

Rhys:Alex get a grip on yourself..

Alex:You will never understand heart break Rhysand.

Rhys walked inside and closes the door looking at his brother. He was a mess, after how he played Wapelo he expected her to come back just like that?

Alex sat down and rubbed his head, not able to stop the tears.

Alex:The past four months I waited. For her ti come back and say she loves me and we can try again. That never happened.

Rhys:Alex it was just four months. Do you think after all the forgiving she ia focusing on herself without makibg her world revolve around you.

Alex:I asked her again and she said no. She loves me

but she can't give us another shot. We could be a family along with Kgosi..

Rhys listened to his rant silently. Alex was hurt but he knew deep down he was the cause of this. Had he acted right in the first place he wouldn't be wailing like a baby...

Alex:Can we go to her house? Maybe she changed her mind.

Rhys:Don't be silly. You are going to suffocate her when she already said no...

Alex:It hurts..

Hitting his chest.

Alex:Right here Rhys. Right here, it hurts so much I wish I can rip out my heart.

Rhys rubbed his back.

Rhys:This is a lesson learned Alex. You never

intentionally do sh*t to a woman and expect her to take it lying down.

Alex rubbed his eyes as he picked his phone and dialed Wapelo. Rhysand just watched him as the phone rang and he placed it on his ear with tears streaming down his face. This was what he called true love but too late. He was too late to start loving Wawa the right way.

Wapelo answered and Alex sniffed.

Alex:Hey..

Wawa frowned.

Wawa:Are you okay? Why are you calling this late?

Alex:I am so sorry Wawa...

Wawa sighed and rubbed her head. They talked about this.

Wawa:It's okay. It's late Alex..

Alex:Please give us one more chance. This is the

last time, I won't hurt you anymore.

Wawa was silent.

Alex:Ka go kopa...

Wawa:Sleep Alex it's late.

She hung up and Alex lowered his head, tears threatening to choke him. Rhys knew better than to kick his brother when he is down and he rubbed his back.

Alex:I just don't want her to go....Is that hard to ask for?

His voice broke and he looked up, licking his lips.

Alex:I can't seem to not need to need her,I can't breathe and it hurts...

Rhysand just rubbed his back. He rubbed his back as he cried. Cried for how he messed up and what he lost.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo's phone rang and she faced the other way as it rung. She wanted to cover her face and sleep but then the phone. What if it was Rhysand?

She turned and the caller id flashed in the screen as she picked it up. Why the hell was Peter calling her at thia time? She yawned and wanted to put her phone down but she should probably answer.

Neelo:Hello?

Peter:Hey...are you awake?

Neelo:You woke me up...

Peter: Since you told me about the abuse earlier I can't stop worrying about your safety..

Neelo closed her eyes. She had to force herself into that fake role, she was so tired and wanted to tell him off.

Neelo: I will be fine. You said soon.

Peter: I don't know why I decided it was a good idea to drive at this time of night but thank God!

Neelo: What do you mean?

She sat upright.

Peter: I'm outside the house and I can't see the car, this is your chance and he won't hurt you. We'll get a protection order against him.

Neelo: What do you mean?

Peter: I'm outside your house.

Neelo's heart skipped a beat. It was a wall fence but she assumed he was tall enough to look inside the yard and she did know Rhys was out.

Neelo's voice shook as she replied.

Neelo:Outside?

Peter:Yes.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#84

At Rhysand's house

Peter:Hello? Neelo are you still there?

Neelo:Uhm yes...don't you think you should wait the law..

Peter:We can go to the polic station and you open a case against him.

Neelo got out of bed, her body aching in the nicest of places and she walked to the window. She pushed the curtain back and she was glad there was a brick wall with security. If there wasn't Peter would be at the door demanding to be the hero who saves her from her doom. Shs closed her eyes abd rubbed her tummy.

Neelo:Okay. I'm opening. Let me pack a few clothes.

Peter:Don't be long.

Neelo:I won't.

Her heart beat accelerated as she rubbed her stomach. She sat down and breathed in and out. She picked her phone up and called Rhysand. His phone rang in the room and her eyes widened. Why would he leave his damned phone?

She pushed her frizzled her back and she dialed Alex. She didn't know why she did. His phone rang on forever and she cut the line. Her phone rang and Peter's name flashed on the screen. She watched the phone ring and closed her eyes.

Meanwhile outside Peter frowned. Why was she no longer answering the phone? Maybe she was scared, he knew that people who were abused usually

developed Stockholm syndrome so she might be scared to leave the house. He was sure Rhysand wasn't in so he didn't know how he was going to enter the yard to help her out and explain to her that abuse is not love. Rhysand was no man and he was definitely going to jail for a long time if he had his way.

Neelo tried calling Alex's phone and she was about to cut the call when it was answered.

Neelo:Hello? Is Rhys there ne rra?

Rhys:Sweetheart?

Neelo:Peter is outside the gate..

Rhys:F*ck! I'm on my way. Don't let him in.

She nodded and hung up. His call came through and she watched it ring again. She closed her eyes as her baby kicked. That was one hell of a strong kick.

Neelo sucked in a breath and she moved her legs up and down while she waited for Rhysand.

Peter knew she was inside so why wasn't she answering? He checked his time and assumed Rhysand might be home soon. He looked through the electric fence and he didn't even want to try and touch it because it might actually be one.

Neelo waited as twenty minutes passed and she heard the car engine of the familiar car. Outside Rhysand let out a low chuckle as he stepped out of his car.

Rhys:Hello. How can I help you?

He asked him as Peter's eyes were stuck on his face. He couldn't wait to put him behind bars and the fact that he forgot him just as easily gave him a fair advantage.

Peter:Hello Rhysand...

Rhysand raised an eyebrow as the street lights fully showed Peter's face.

Rhys:And you are?

Peter couldn't wait to wipe the smirk off Rhysand's face. Maybe Neelo shouldn't give up the child and Rhys can watch him take his whole family. That would be perfect.

Peter:Forgot me so fast old friend?

Peter smirked revealing his canine

I am lagging behind with inserts.This moving houses business is tiring as hell but let's try a marathon today. Re tla tlhaela ha re tlhaelang teng.

TROUBLED

#85

At Rhysand's house

Rhys folded his arms. The disbelief visible on his features. This man was here for his wife. The wife he married legally and was expecting his first born son. He looled at his shoes and reigned in his temper before he looked at Peter. At first when Neelo had told him everything she knew about Peter, he knew that the name sounded familiar and even seeing his pictures hadn't sparked anything.

He just had that nudgibg feeling that he saw him somewhere or someone like him. Peter calling him old friend was a much needed indicator that he knew him.

Peter watched Rhysand who quietly assessed him as if he was something to be put on sale. He had to be patient for the law to take it's course so he wasn't going to rush and blurt out everything or that he was even coming for him. Peter started walking to the other side of his car.

Peter:See you around old friend.

Rhys:Wait a minute..

Peter paused in his tracks and his head turned.

Rhys:Why are you here?

Peter:Just passing..

That was all he said and even though Rhya knew thw truth he wasn't going to cause a scene. He was much smarter than that. Peter reversed his car and he let out a curse slip. If Neelo had been fast enough, he could have saved her but he will see her at work. The usual time.

Rhysand pressed the button on the key and the gate slid open smoothly. He saw the curtain being pulled back and he knew who it was. He walked to his car.

Three minutes later the gate and car were both locked as he made his way inside the house. He locked the door as well. He will see how to deal with security tomorrow morning, if people like Peter can casually come here at this time of day his wife and child weren't safe at all.

Rhysand pushed open the bedroom door and Neelo looked at him with those doe eyes of hers with tears.

Neelo:Y-you didn't tell me where you're go-going..

He walked to her and just pulled her into his arms.

Rhys:I'm so sorry sweetheart..

Neelo:Yoi left me alone and h-he called..I was alone.

You left your phone Rhys and I was scared.

Rhys closed his eyes as his chin settled on her head. Her shaky voice nudged at his conscience, he left a heavily pregnant woman all alone, her hormones were all over and now she was crying.

Rhys: Intshwarele love (moving his head to hold her chin between his fingers)

Her eyes shone with the tears that threatened to spill down her smooth cheeks. She closed her eyes and the salty water did spill, her husband used his thumb to wipe the tears away.

Rhys: It won't happen again. I swear..

Neelo: Why did you leave me alone? Go bosigo..

Rhys: Alex called and I went to check on him just so he doesn't do anything stupid. I wanted to wake you but you were sleeping so peacefully I could not disturb that.

Neelo: Alex is an adult Rhys and..

Rhys:I know but heartbreak makes people do stupid things but that's no excuse. Sorry autwe mogatsaka?

She didn't want to smile but she found herself smiling.

Rhys:And we'll end this Peter charade.

Neelo:Thank you..

Rhys:Am I forgiven?

Neelo:No. But I'm going to sleep.

Rhys:I'll join you in a few minutes.

He let her go and she walked to the bed. Neelo got undercover as Rhysand stripped off his clothes. He joined her, making sure she was comfortable and was the little spoon as he held her. One hand on her belly and both of hers on the belly as well. Neelo closed her eyes trying to go back to sleep but nix. She turned to face him.

Neelo:Ga wa tima lebone(you didn't switch off the light)

He got out of bed fo do so and joined her in seconds.

Neelo:Wa re Alex ia going through a heartbreak?

Rhys:Yes..

Neelo:Mxm! O matepe gore(he is too sensitive)

Rhys:Neelo!

Neelo:ng ng Rhys, he is a grown adult who decided to cheat on Wawa more than once and now that she chooses herself and doesn't want him wa lela? Nyaa monnao o matepe Rhys.

Rhys:Neelo their issues are none of our business.

Neelo:But you left me alone for the issues akere Rhysand?

Rhys:Baby we are definitely not fighting about this, you should sleep.

She squinted her eyes as he yawned.

Neelo:On God if you cheat I'm shooting you.

Rhys:I know. I would do the same..

She rolled her eyes and faced the other way as he spooned her.

Rhys:You're tense sweetheart. I said I'm sorry(yawning)

Neelo closed her eyes to try to force herself to sleep.

The following morning

At Wapelo's house

She found a lot of missed calla from Alex and she sighed. She chose her own happiness and now he suddenly remembers that he was in love with her. She thought of calling Neelo but she shook her head.

Neelo was heavily pregnant and she didn't need to know everything happening in her life.

Wapelo pushed back the blankets. How Kgosi slept peacefully through the night was a wonder to her but either way she was very grateful for that single day of full rest without her son screaming his lungs out for her.

As Wapelo got out of bed, Alex's car parked outside the yard. He looked at his hands and rubbed them against the material of his pants. Wawa said they were just co-parenting but he knew he wanted her for life. He stepped out of the car and walked to the door. It wasn't too early. 9am was reasonable and she did say she was off this week so she was awake.

With his nerves racking, Alex knocked on the door and waited for it to open. Wapelo opened the door in a silk gown and her bonnet on her head. She rubbed her eyes and came face to face with a clean

Alexander.

Wawa:uhm morning. I just checked on Kgosi an-

Alex:As long as he is okay then I'm good.

Wawa:Okay. Come in. I guess..

She moved from the door and Alex watched her close the door. Wapelo turned to face Alex.

Wawa:Why are you here so early in thw morning?

Alex:Marry me..

Her body shut down completely and her eyes nearly popped out of the sockets. She should what?

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#86

At Wapelo's house

Alex held his breath without batting an eyelid as Wapelo stood frozen to the spot. Her mouth moved but there wasn't a single sound escaping her perfect lips. The baby's vicious cry tore through the awkward silence and as if on command, Wapelo moved from the spot and walked to the baby's room. Alex rubbed his jaw and waited for her to come back.

Wapelo walked back with the baby on her hip. Kgosi was sucking his bottle stress free and when his eyes landed on his father he lifted his hands and Wapelo looked at her son.

Wawa:Do you mind taking him? He saw you and I don't think he will be satisfied until you take him.

He took her from him and he held his bottle. Kgosi sucked on it looking at his father. Alex smiled looking at his boy. He lifted his eyes to Wapelo.

Alex:What do you say?

Wawa:No.

Alex:No?(frowning)

Wawa:Yes.

Alex:I love you Pelo and I want to marry you. I didn't do this on a whim.

Wawa:No. If it was months ago I would have jumped at the chance to be Mrs McKnight but not anymore.

Alex I want to do me, there will be distrust and I still don't trust you. I might love you but no. I won't marry you nor take you back.

Alex:Can you please think about it then?(looking at Kgosi)we can give him a family. A proper one with both parents present.

Wapelo looked at Kgosi then back at Alex.

Wawa: You were all I wanted but not like this. I'm still learning to love myself and not put up with BS.

Alex: I changed.

Wawa: That used to be your anthem Alex but I am not falling for that. The problem is that people like you always want back the love they pushed aside but people like me are gone forever when they say goodbye. There can never be an us Alex. We will co-parent peacefully and in the future if we can see if it's the right time to introduce our significant others to Kgosi.

Alex's throat dried up as he looked at Wapelo. She was really gone. She slipped right through his fingers and she wasn't changing her mind. He had hoped that the idea of raising Kgosi with her as a family will move her but it hurt him more.

Alex: So you are throwing this away?

Wawa:You can't throw away things that were never there in the first place Alex.

He swallowed dryly and if it wasn't for Kgosi in his arms he didn't know what state he would've been in. Wapelo smiled and looked at Kgosi who looked back at her.

Wawa:You can clean him up while I take a bath. Is that alright with you?

Alex:Yeah(low voice)

Wawa:Thanks.

She walked away as Alex sat down. She paused to look at him. The way his shoulder's had dropped when she said she wasn't marrying him and the hurt in his eyes that he failed to hide. If it is meant to be it will be but now she was letting this love go.

Alex looked up and blinked back tears. That heavy feeling was back again and he could feel the

headache at the back of his head. Thrumming silently and as if on cue, his lips shook and the tears forced their way out. A tear hitting his son's forehead and he looked down. He sniffed and wiped the tear from his forehead.

Alex:I'm sorry for breaking our family okay?

He said in his lowest voice to the baby who suddenly stopped playing with his hands. Alex smiled sadly. He read somewhere that babies can sense moods. Maybe Kgosi sensed his. Alex licked his lips and gave the baby his thumb. He will live. He will accept reality for what it is now. It was clear that their ship has long sailed and now they had to strive to be the best of parents to baby Kgosi. Sometimes giving up is the strong thing.

At Rhysand's office

His phone rang as he walked to the door. He looked at the number. He was tired of the random calls that were hung up as soon as he answered. He never got the time to consult a private investigator about that.

Rhys:Hello?

Voice:Hello. Is this Rhysand?

Finally! After months.

Rhys:Yes. Who am I speaking to?

The voice cleared his throat.

Voice:Your father.

At the mention of that Rhysand's body went cold and he swore his heart pumped in reverse.

McKnight held the phone waiting for a response but there was none.

McKnight:Rhysand?

Rhysand held the phone away from his ear and looked at the number. Where did he get his number?

McKnight>Hello?

Rhys closed his eyes. He didn't need this. He had a lot on his shoulders and he didn't want to worry about his sperm donor.

He immediately hung up and went on to block the number. He slid his phone in his pocket and breathed into his hands. He stood there for more than a minute before he walked out of the office.

At Neelo's office

Neelo closed the file and rubbed her tummy with her rings shining because of the sun's rays. She smiled. The door opened abruptly and she almost fell out of

her chair, heart racing and all.

She placed the hand that was on her stomach on her chest as she breathed in and out. After a minute passed she raised her eyes and lo and behold it was the annoying creature of them all. His eyes were fixated on the two rings on her finger. She could see the way his throat bobbed and how he couldn't take his eyes off her hand that was on her chest.

She was really done with this charade.

Peter:You're wearing his ring?

Neelo:Good afternoon to you too...

Peter:Nee-Neelo you're wearing his ring!! His ring for crying out loud!!!

.

.

.

TROUBLED

#87

At Neelo's office

Neelo:Hello Peter...

She placed her well manicured hands on the table, the rings staring at Peter right in the face.

Peter:You're wearing his rings!!

He said and she looked at her hands.

Neelo:Take a seat, I don't think you'll be able to stand in a few minutes.

She sounded so cocky and nothing like the woman who was crying abuse yesterday. Neelo maintained

eye contact as Peter sat down slowly. She smiled and looked down.

Neelo opened her drawer and opened the file she had.

Neelo:Uhm Pako Mogorosi(touching her chin)

Peter's face morphed into one of complete shock.

Neelo:You told me about him akere? Your late brother..hmm..you mentioned it in passing baby boy but well being an archivist tends to come in handy.

She paged through the file.

Neelo:Ah..(feigning surprise)turns out he was into illegal activities.

Peter swallowed. That was why he wanted to be a lawyer so bad, he had to redeem his brother. He was so close to turning his life around and they killed him.

He was the striking resemblance of Pako so as to say.

Neelo:He died as a casualty between two dangerous groups. Okay what does the file say?

She looked at the file and he held her hand to stop her.

Peter:Why are you doing this?

Neelo:You'll see...

She smiled sweetly but Peter had a feeling her intentions weren't as sweet.

Neelo:It turns out that your brother is the sole reason you're going after Rhysand. Am I right? Other than me of course...

Peter:Neelo why are you doing this?

His voice broke and she wanted to feel sorry for him but nope. He was going to send her baby daddy to jail. He was going to grill her husband in court and she wasn't having that. Everyone protected what they loved.

Neelo:That's it. Vengeance is what you're after but a look into your history tells me that well sir-

She looked at the file again.

Neelo:Your drug lord father is still roaming the streets and you haven't ratted him out simply because you don't use his last name. Great news indeed.

Peter:Neelo stop!!

Neelo:A simple DNA test can prove that he is your

father and "Mr upright let the law take it's course"
why don't yoh hand him in as well?

She said finally and glared at him, placing her hands
on the file.

Peter:What game are you playing? Where is the
sweet Neelo?

Neelo:I'm playing the exact game you're playing but
smarter. I let you think of yourself as my saviour and
you never saw me coming..

Peter's exaperated breath escaped his lips.

Neelo:So this is what is going to happen, you are
representing the state and well we do know the
information you have. You don't trust women Peter.
We are the devil's advocate but I learnt that from you
advocate(laughing bitterly)

Peter couldn't believe his ears. He thought everything was going to be endgame.

The door opened and in walked the man he was supposed to help the state put behind bars. Neelo genuinely smiled at her husband.

Neelo:Hey baby..

Rhys:Hey sweetheart.

His deep voice echoed in the room and Neelo looked at Peter.

Neelo:He gets the lightest sentence. Something ranging from 6 months to a year. Not that preposterous 10 years. God no! I don't know how but if he doesn't I don't know how this information will land at the police station. It's also unprofessional to dicuss cases as well...

Peter looked back as the door closed and he suddenly felt claustrophobic. His chest tightened as

he helplessly looked at Neelo. He didn't have enough influence to sway the judge's mind.

Neelo:Peter darling that's what happens when you play stupid games with people's lives. You play stupid games, you win stupid prizes. This is how the world works...

Rhys felt the stupid prizes part, now they resorted to blackmailing Peter just so he can be close to his family. It was selfish but as selfish as it was it had to be done.

Peter:You never wanted me back?

Neelo:A burnt child dreads fire. I won't go back to what broke me. Not in a million years.

Peter:When did you start to be so conniving?

Neelo:You started with the blackmail. Choose you or he gets life imprisonment or whatever you said four months ago.

Peter was lost for words.

Peter:I can't dictate the judge's verdict a-

Neelo:You are a resourceful man. Do what must be done. There is a lot at stake.

Peter:He changed you. Neelo you're not this person.

He was defeated as he said that. He craned his head to look at Rhysand.

Peter:Must be nice having a woman fighting your battles.

He then remembered the information he had dug out for Neelo. Pako. But other than Pako he saw Peter somewhere..

Peter:I used to look up to you..

Rhys frowned.

Peter:That time back in school, I was grades behind you and you saved me from the bully.

It then fell into place.

Peter:You started to walk me home along with your brother just so I won't be bullied and after you were done ka your finishing year, no one has ever bullied me ever again. Then I found out that your bullet was the ine that killed Pako..

His lips trembled as he looked at Rhysand.

Peter:I was working for him to stop illegal dealings because he used the money to buy coke. He was a coke addict did you know that?

Rhysand just looked at him without saying a word.

Peter:I have no part in my father's drug dealing but I guess I couldn't save Pako from my father's drugs and him from being a smuggler.

Rhysand lickded his lips but he still didn't say a word. A tear dropped and Peter quickly wiped it away.

Peter:I thought it would be better if I avenge him. That way when you're down no other people will be fascinated by the fast lifestyle of crime..

He looked at Neelo who didn't even look the other way.

Peter:I didn't see you as the thug's accomplice. He changed you and even if you didn't want me back, you didn't have to stoop to that level..

He sniffed and stood up.

Peter:I will see what I can do. I am not promising anything.

He forced his lead like feet to walk him to the door.

Rhysand moved from thw door and he looked at Rhysand once again before he turned the door handle and stepped out.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#89

At Rhysand's house

Neelo turned on her side trying to ignore the pain but she opened her eyes as she willed herself to breath. She got out of bed and walked to the lounge. She found him on his laptop working.

Rhys:what's up sweetheart?

Neelo:I have these pains that won't go away..

Rhys:When did it start?

Neelo:A few hours ago...

Rhys:Why didn't you tell me?(closing his laptop)

Neelo:I didn't think it would be a big deal..

Rhys placed the laptop down and stood on his feet.

Rhys:Will you be able to walk to the car? Let me put a t-shirt on okay?

She nodded as he picked the car keys from the table and placed them in the palm of her small hand.

She walked to the door while Rhys and walked to the bedroom. He quickly put on a t-shirt and he paused. She was almost close to her due date and if she was about to give birth she might need the baby bag she long packed two months ago.

He walked out of the room and made his way to the nursery. He picked the navy blue baby bag and took a good look at the nursery he helped set up. A smile ghosted his lips, this baby will be loved that's for sure.

He quickly walked out of the room and was heading to the main door. Neelo sat in the car as she rubbed

her tummy.

Neelo:I hope you are not planning on making an appearance because I'm not ready...

The cat door opened and her husband was holding the baby bag. He put it in the back and got inside the car.

Neelo:And?

Rhys:I have a feeling Nate is on the way..

She sighed and leaned back. Rhys and buckled her up before he pressed the keys to open the gate. He started the car and Neelo closed her eyes trying to ignore those quick stabs of pain in her lower abdomen.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo closed Neelo's bedroom. She had long prepared the room for her daughter when she comes here for botsetsi because she was definitely not going to nurse Neelo at Rhysand's place.

She walked to the bedroom she shared with her husband and her husband was still awake. Reading the Bible.

She got undercovers by her side and she looked at her husband. He didn't bother to look at her and she sighed.

Ma N:What is it?

He closed the Bible and placed it by the lamp on his side. He looked at his wife. All these months he has been trying to ignore it and when he talked about his other daughter she either shut down the topic or something came up. He also didn't fail to notice how

she avoided Rhysand when he was visiting with Neelo two months ago. She didn't bother pretending to like her future son-in-law. It was worrying.

Ra N:Why do you always avoid talking about Marang?

Ma N:I don't avoid it. She is just not my concern.

Ra N:Ke a bontshiwa(I am being shown things) What did Marang do to you? It's not as if she was conceived in wedlock. I met her mother years before I met you. I explained that and her age proves that.

Ma N:You cannot force me to like your long lost daughter. I haven't even met her.

Ra N:You could at least try to get used to the idea. She is also my daughter and I won't abandon her just because you hate her. She did nothing and even though I didn't know of her existence till recently she is my blood and I plan on being there for her. She is more like Neelo too..

She was about to speak when he continued.

Ra N:Same goes for Rhys. You don't make it a secret that you hate him and for what I do not know. He is a good boy and loves your daughter but it seems like you don't care about your daughter's feelings. You hate the man she loves and do you think that will make Neelo love you? She will resent you and you will lose your whole family.

Ma N:that doesn't change that he might be hia father's son.

Ra N:His father's sins do not define him but for whatever grudge you hold against him, hope it will make you happy once Neelo decides to hate you. Will she trust you with her son when you hate his father?

She closed her mouth.

Ra N:Nene is quiet but she is smart. Quite frankly it's her choice, what if she chooses Rhysand's mother to help her during botsetsi because she doesn't trust you around her son? You are going to be the one destroying your family with bitterness. Bitterness

that we ourselves but you know where it comes from.

Ra N got out of bed and grabbed a pillow before walking to the wardrobe for extra blankets. He walked out of the room and made his way to the spare bedroom. Ma Neelo watched him go and the door closed. She was alone in the room and she closed her eyes.

Neelo wouldn't do that would she? On top of that, Marang was still a literal stranger, how could they blindly trust a stranger whom wasn't there all these years and now all of a sudden her husband has another child? Rhysand was a criminal and who was going to pick up the pieces when he abuses Neelo or even leaves her? It was going to be her. She had warned Neelo of him but she went ahead and fell pregnant for him. Her father went ahead and accepted his magadi. She shook her head and covered her face with the blankets.

At the hospital

Neelo laid on the hospital bed as Rhysand pressed his phone.

Neelo:Nna I don't have a phone and you're on yours.
O ipona o dira sentle(are you doing a good thing?)

He placed his phone down and looked at her.

Neelo:Babe it must be a false alarm cause i feel f-

She screamed and placed her hand over her hip.

Rhys:False alarm?

She glared at him as another hit her and she screamed. Rhysand walked out to call for a midwife or any medical practitioner he could find. He was back after a minute and walked to her bedside.

Rhys:Those online classes you were forcing me to

attend said you should breath..breath my love.

She sucked in a breath as another contraction hit and she couldn't even cry. The door opened and in walked the midwife followed by the obstetrician and a nurse. The contractions stoped for a minute as Rhysand intertwined her hand with his.

She was checked and indeed this was the real deal. She was going to give birth and that sent a shiver of fear down her spine. She has heard stories of mothers losing too much blood or complications arising during child birth. At times the mother dies or the baby or both.

She looked at Rhysand.

Neelo:I'm scared...

Rhys:I'm here every step of the way. You have the best health care at the moment baby...we are in thia together okay?

.TROUBLED

#90

At the hospital

Rhysand held her hand as the midwife urged Neelo to push. He wiped the beads of sweat on her forehead as she screamed pushing.

Midwife:That's it, we are close. Give me a strong push..

Neelo:I-I can't...(out of breath)

She wanted to cry so bad and she could feel the tear already. Rhysand squeezed her hand.

Rhys:Baby you can..One more time okay?

She couldn't and her energy was drained. The past six hours felt like hell. Having to bear the contractions and the obstetrician giving her an epidural? The worst.

Midwife:Push!!

Rhys:Hey marshmallow one last time(softly)

Neelo:I-

Rhys:I know you're tired but please my love!

She bit her lower lip and held onto his hand tightly as she used the last remains of her energy to push the baby's head out. She screamed and Rhysand closed his eyes for a second as her scream pierced a hole in his heart. He wasn't going to get her pregnant ever again after this one.

Neelo screamed again as she pushed one last time and she stopped as her body fell onto the bed.

The midwife looked at her as she pulled the baby out along with its umbilical cord. The nurse handed her a scissor to cut the umbilical cord. Rhysand was relieved as he saw the midwife holding the baby and he kissed his wife's sweaty forehead.

Rhys:You did it little mommy..

Neelo smiled for a few seconds breathing hard.

Midwife:Can you push one last time? The after birth..

She nodded weakly and tried to gather her strength. She pushed and the nurse smiled.

The midwife lightly slapped the baby and he gasped for air and his little cry filled the room. Neelo was relieved but weak as she watched them wrap him with a blanket. He was alive and healthy..

The midwife walked towards Neelo with the baby and Rhysand let go of her hand as she took the baby in her arms. She looked at Nate. Finally! Tears filled her eyes and her lips wobbled as she looked at Nate then her husband and back at Nate. They did that? A whole human being?

Rhysand rubbed his eyes before blinking a couple of times. He had his own family to love, cherish and protect.

Neelo:W-we have a baby..Hello Nate..(softly)

Her tears fell on his little face and his eyes were still closed. She used her thumb to wipe the tears that fell on his little face. If someone had told her that newborns look all wrinkly and kind of old she would've laughed and she smiled weakly. Either way he was their baby..

She looked at her husband as he tried his best to keep the tears at bay. He has never shown emotion this way and that made her want to sob in joy. That they had a baby together.

Neelo:Can you hold him?

Rhys:He is too small and I don't want to drop him..

Neelo:The nurse will show you..Mo tseye..

Rhysand looked at the small tiny human being that was said to be his child. He got him from his mother as the nurse approached to show him how to hold the baby correctly. He was too small in his arms and Neelo's eyelids fluttered closed at the sight of her husband with her baby. Nate looked too small in his arms and with that a smile formed on her lips.

Rhysand looked at the baby and back at his mother who had closed her eyes.

Midwife-She is tired, we'll clean her up and the baby..

He nodded and handed the midwife their son. He kissed Neelo's forehead.

Rhys: Thank you sweetheart.

He walked out feeling all emotional and sh*t. F**k!

He sat by the chairs next to the room and slid his phone out. It was now a little after 5am...

He covered his face emotionally. He was finally a father. She-wow!

As he laid his head, Marang wore her white coat as she finally started her morning shift. She saw her brother in law and frowned. Was there something wrong with her sister? She couldn't believe she had developed the older sibling gene overnight.

She stopped in front of Rhysand and cleared her throat. He lifted his head and Marang smiled.

Marang:Hello...uhm is everything okay?

Rhys:Yes. Everything is fine..

Marang:Is Neelo okay?

Rhys smiled and Marang could see why Neelo loved him. He had one hell of a smile.

Rhys:She just gave birth.

Marang:As in now now?

He nodded.

Marang:Does father know?

Rhys:I- I totally forgot that we have other family members.

She laughed softly and he rubbed his head.

Rhys:Everyone is probably asleep maybe I will notify

them around 8am..

Marang:Okay. Congratulations!

Rhys:Thank you..

Marang:I will check on Neelo in a few and I hope they assisted you guys diligently..

Rhys:They did. Thank you.

She nodded and walked away. She touched her flat tummy. She was tired of begging Josh for another child. The quads were old enough and now she had a nephew, Seeletso was pregnant and here she was. Still trying to make her husband see reason. She walked inside her office. She might remove the implant today without his knowledge. It won't hurt anyone.

At Alex's house

Around 8am he saw the message from his brother

and he smiled. Rhysand was finally a father and although he never mentioned it, the fact that Ruby had aborted his child ate him up. He never showed and that was most probably the sole reason he hated Ruby.

A door knock sounded and he rubbed his eyes as he walked to the door. He was already running late but at least he was done getting dressed. His jaw slackened as he saw two men in uniform accompanied by detective Moilwe..

Moilwe:top of the morning McKnight..

Alex didn't answer as he folded his arms.

Moilwe:Either way..we are looking for your older version and he can't be found at his residence, where is he?

.

TROUBLED

#91

At the hospital

Neelo woke opened her eyes to see her husband holding their baby in his arms. They had dressed him in the clothes she bought.

Rhysand looked at her as she tried to sit upright.

Rhys:Hey lil mama..

She smiled and nodded.

Rhys:The nurse wanted names for his birth certificate, is it okay that I added a second name?

She paused. It better be a good name or else they were going to fight. Rhysand looked at the baby in

his arms. He was so peaceful and tiny. His eyes were still closed and the nurses had said once Neelo wakes up she was supposed to feed him. Said something about colostrum or something.

Rhys: Press that button for the nurse to come. They said they were waiting for you to wake up.

Neelo: What time is it?

Rhys: To nine..

She nodded and pressed the button. Rhys and looked at his son. It was unreal that he had a son. Just a whole family.

He gently placed Nate in his mother's arms and Neelo pushed the blanket back. Look at him.

Rhys: Can't your mother or my mother come here?

Neelo: That would be good. I don't think I will be able to travel with him there..

Rhys: I already told them..

Neelo:thank you(looking at Nate)Hey babyyy(soft voice)

The door opened and the nurse walked in as Rhysand's phone rang and he excused himself to go answer the call.

Rhys:Hello..mother..

Ma Rhys:I just packed my bags. I will take a bus there..

Rhys:Thank you so much mother. I appreciate it...

Ma Rhys:I can't wait to see my grandson. Is her mother coming?

Rhys:I don't know. Uhm Mr Jones gave me her number so I can tell her and she gave me attitude. I don't know tota mama..

His mother's smile widened at the end of the line. It was rare for Rhysand to say mama even though she

knew her first born loved her to death.

Ma Rhys:Okay. I will go to the bus station and when I arrive I will call you.

Rhys:Thank you. I don't think we both know what to do with a newborn baby(chuckling)

Ma Rhys:That's why we are here. Let me get going my boy. Bye.

Rhys:Bye..

He hung up and rubbed his head. He just wanted to be close to the child and he was glad his mother wasn't too old fashioned to the point of saying he shouldn't be allowed near the baby during confinement. He was literally here when his son was born...

He walked into the hospital room and Neelo lifted her head to look at him. Nate was sucking on one of her breasts and he smiled.

Rhys:Hey you two..

Neelo:Hey..

Nate latched on her boob and she smiled. This was beautiful.

At Alex's house

The police left his premises and he sent his brother a text alerting him. This was not right. Rhys just welcomed his son and now the police were hot on his trail..

He covered his face. This was frustrating as hell.

At the hospital

Rhys and watched as Neelo put him to sleep.

Neelo:We are going to have really long nights.

Rhys:We'll be together through the long nights..

Neelo:Most definitely.

Outside the room, the police officers led by detective Moilwe made their way inside the room. The door opened and Neelo's eyes darted to the door.

Moilwe:Oh wow! Nice family you got there..

Neelo covered her baby up and she watched the way the light dimmed in Rhysand's eyes.

Rhys:Detective..

Moilwe:Sorry to interrupt and all but McKnight you are under arrest. Everything you say or do will be used against you in the court of law.

One of the police officers walked to him to try and handcuff him but he moved his hands.

Rhys:I never resisted arrest.

He looked at his wife and new born son. He whispered in her ear.

Rhys:I love you okay? Kopa gore o ska itsenya stress autwe?

She nodded and sighed. Damn Peter! Damn him!!!
He kissed her cheek and lightly kissed his son as well.

Rhys:Take care of him and my mom is coming to help with the baby okay baby? I love you..

He moved away and looked at the police officers.

Rhys:Lead the way.

Moilwe:Easy like that?

Rhys:Yes.

The men walked out and Rhys looked back at them

one last time before closing the door.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#92

At the hospital

Neelo wiped the lone tear that rolled down her cheek and looked at Nate.

Neelo:Hey baby(shaky voice)daddy will be back okay?

She said looking at her newborn boy in her arms. She just hoped Peter will keep his end of the deal, she couldn't see herself living the next 10 years without her husband and Nate growing knowing his daddy was in jail. She wouldn't survive that.

She sighed and forced herself to calm down as her baby sucked on her boob. Such a sweet boy. She wanted to know his second name too..

She smiled sadly and kissed his forehead. She wasn't sure if she came with her phone though.

Meanwhile Rhys and followed the police officers out.

Rhys: Can I follow with my car?

Moilwe: We don't trust you.

Rhys: You can trail behind me..

The detective looked at Rhys and he wasn't even fighting them. The first time he never did and even now he wasn't fighting them.

Moilwe: Okay.

Rhys: Thank you..

He walked to his car as they watched him. He slid his phone out and he saw Alex's message. Fuck!

He unlocked the car and got inside dialing Alex.

Alex:Hello...

Rhys:Bro hi...listen up, mother is coming to help Neelo with Nate..

Alex:Rhys the po-

Rhys:I know. Mother is coming. I'm going to the station with my car, pass by and pick it. Neelo needs the car and please take Neelo and Nate home when they are released from hospital. Take good care of my family bro. Can I trust you with them?

Alex swallowed. Rhysand was so calm about this and he nodded.

Alex:Yes.

Rhys:I think I will be at the station in an hour. You can come pick up the car, call my lawyer as well.

Alex:Okay.

Rhys:Don't stress..I'll be out soon. Ga se sepe..

He said blinking back tears. His wife just gave birth to their new born. It was a big deal.

Alex:I hear you.

Rhys:No one-

He paused as he started the car to reverse out of the parking spot. Neelo had the documents for everything so he wasn't worried about her lacking anything.

Rhys:You know how everything rolls Alex. Take care of them for me bro...

Alex:Ee rra.

Rhys:Thank you. Let me hang up right now.

He hung up and wore his seatbelt. He drove off and the police car followed behind him.

At Peter's office

Peter got the news of Rhysand's arrest and he covered his face. There was no time for pity parties when it came to the law. He slumped down on his chair knowing that there was no way he was going to convince the judge to give a lesser sentence looking at the fact that they had the right evidence.

Not enough to put him away for life but enough to put him away for a few years and have him blacklisted. He leaned back and sucked in a breath. He might as well give this his best shot. He wanted to be partner after all. They were bluffing weren't they?

He had a few hours to think about it all so fuck it all. He was a lawyer through and through.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo checked the room and smiled. Neelo was

finally going to be here, even though the baby came early but she will be here so she can show her how to take care of a new born.

Ra N:Shouldn't we go to Francistown? Nene gave birth and she needs us..

Ma N:She knows she has to be here for her botsetsi besides her staying there will be exposing the baby to a lot of bad aura. You can go get her while I prepare for her.

Ra N:She just gave birth I don't think she will appreciate travelling with an infant.

Ma N:Neelo doesn't have a house in Francistown or else she would've told us. Instead she is co-habiting with a man who had the nerve to call...

Ra N:That man is your future aon in law who paid magadi as well as damagea for his son.

Ma N:Okay. Neelo needs to come here either way. It's her first child as well, it is a five month long confinement..

Ra N shook his head.

Ra N:I am going to fill the tank and if you want to go with me to Francistown to see Nene you will tell me. Ke emella ka bo 12..

He walked out. He couldn't believe his wife. Ma Neelo walked back inside Neelo's room. Everything was set for her daughter and grandson. She took out her phone to call Neelo but she wasn't answering. She had expected Neelo to be the one to call and tell her that she gave birth.

At the hospital

Marang passed by and checked on Neelo who was relieved to see her older sister. Her phone was home, her husband arrested and her little bundle of joy was fast asleep. He was such a cutie. She would go through those labour pains all over again for this

cute thing. Not that she wants another baby soon.
Hell no!!

Neelo's room opened and her mother-in-law walked in. She smiled.

Neelo:Dumelang..

Ma Rhys:Hello my child. I demanded Alex brings me here immediately. What's his name?

Neelo:Ke ene Nate..

Ma Rhys:Who named him? I'm sure Rhysand wouldn't be able to come up with such a name..

Neelo laughed as she tried to sit properly. Darn these stitches. Was it going to look normal after the stitches? Eve fucked up her descendants big time.

Neelo:Bathong kopa le buise monna wame sentle..

Ma Rhys looked at the baby who was sleeping peacefully.

Ma Rhys:Reminds me of these two when they were

newborns.

Alex shook his head smiling a bit.

Neelo:Ngwana yoo ekele monnamogolo(this baby looks old)

Ma Rhys:Ke tla go beletsa Nate Neelo(laughing)

She laughed and looked at her baby.

Neelo:Uhm I don't have my phone..

Alex:The old lady wants to come back later.

Ma Rhys:Alex!! When are they releasing you ngwanaka?

Neelo:Tomorrow morning. Nate is healthy, I'm healthy and all...

Alex:Excuse me for a few minutes.

He walked out and Ma Rhys looked at Neelo. She knew a part of Rhysand was devastated when Ruby

aborted his child and now he has a child.

Ma Rhys:There is a lot you have to do..

Neelo:A lot?

Ma Rhys:ng. But we will deal with that. Is your mother coming?

Neelo:I have no idea. I don't have my phone on me but I will call when it comes. Thank you for calling.

Ma Rhys:Anytime..

Neelo fixed the pillow and continued talking to her mother in law.

At the police station

Rhysand sat in the questioning room as detective Moilwe looked at him. He was not going to answer a single question till his lawyer was here.

Moilwe:You have been cooperating all this while now you decide to go mute?

Rhys:There is nothing to discuss unless my lawyer is here..

Moilwe:If you admit you might get a lesser sentence...think about it.

Rhysand leaned back as he slackened his jaw. He was going to wait for his lawyer to show up.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#93

At the police station

Rhys and looked at his lawyer as he explained. Right now if the police started to investigate they wouldn't find a thing. He worked with dangerous people who anonymity was a very integral part of the business.

Rhys: That is that...

Lawyer: Are we going to plead guilty?

Rhys: Not at all. The last time I was arrested they didn't have any solid information on me to put me in prison. I just let them...

Lawyer: I will see what to do from what you told me and from what I already know from being your lawyer. Can I say smart move on the property and bank accounts?

He let out a suave smile.

Rhys:Everything is in her name and at this moment I don't have a penny to my name. Even those offshore accounts as well.

His lawyer saluted. This man wasn't afraid of prison was he?

Lawyer:Currently we are looking at 5 to 10 years of prison.

Rhys:Shit! I can't do time for that long...

Laywer:I know. I don't know what evidence the state has against you.

Rhys:I don't want to stress my wife but she has a file. She will give it to you. Give it your best shot...

The lawyer raised an eyebrow and Rhys rubbed his stubble. He can't do time for that long. What woman would wait 10 years for a man in prison? He knew he was crazy and by that time he came out he might kill Neelo and whichever idiot decided to fuck her. He

wouldn't want to think that far..

Lawyer:I will do that.

Rhys:Thank you..

Laywer:Are you going to talk to the police?

Rhys chuckled.

Rhys:If they are so sure of their story they wouldn't be questioning me would they?

The laywer smirked and Rhysand smiled leaning back.

Lawyer:You're smart.

Rhys:That is why I have a smart laywer abd wife as well.

Laywer:I will work on this. I will appeal for bail as well.

Rhys:Thank you..

The laywer nodded.

Lawyer:Do you need me during the questioning?

Rhys:Nah! I got this covered.

His lawyer stood up and closed his briefcase. He saluted and walked out as Rhysand licked his dry lips. Alex had the car keys and he talked to his brother to keep the laptops, hide them where the police won't search and find anything. He just hoped his little marshmallow was okay and wasn't stressing. She had Nate to take care of.

Detective Moilwe walked inside and looked at Rhys.

Moilwe:Ready to talk?

Rhys:There is nothing to talk about..

Moilwe:We are trying to help you here, you can be under state protection an-

Rhys:Can I go to the cell please?

Moilwe wanted to beat the information out of

Rhysand but then again that was unethical and Rhysand was a big man who looked like he can kill a man just by snapping his neck.

Moilwe:If you want to talk you will let us know.

Rhys:Okay.

He got up and lifted his hands to be hand cuffed. Moilwe suspiciously looked at him. His calm aura was unnerving and it irked him in all the wrong ways. Rhysand was supposed to be panicking right now. He was facing time and he had a new born child with his girlfriend or whoever that woman was to him. Surely he would talk because his child and woman needa him but it looked like he didn't care.

He cuffed his hands and Rhysand kept a straight poker face. The detective led him out of the room and called one of the officers to take Rhysand to the cells.

At the hospital

Neelo smiled as Ma Rhys looked at the baby. She held her phone in hand finally unlocking it. She found missed calls from her dad and mother as well as Wawa.

She called her father back.

Neelo:Papa hello..

Ra N:Hello Nene, Rhysand said you gave birth..

Neelo:Ee rra I am still in hospital. Mama o kae?

Ra N:Back at home..

She frowned.

Neelo:What do you mean?

Ra N:I am in Francistown. I was by the house and ekete ha gona ope..

Neelo:Oh. Papa can you come by the hospital?
Where Rangz works ko ne re ira DNA test teng..

Ra N:Okay. I'm on my way..

Neelo:Thank you papa..mama o setse?

Ra N:Back at Bobonong...

She maintained her smile.

Neelo:Okay. It's okay..ne ke tseela gore wa go mpaya botsetsi(I thought she would be the one helping me with the baby)

Ra N:I'm on the way ngwanaka..

Neelo:Ee rra. Go sharpo papa.

Ra N:Bye!

Her father hung up and she sighed. She sent Wawa a text message as Rhysand's mother looked at her.

Ma Rhys:What's wrong? Is your mother not coming?

Neelo:I think she will come...uhm isn't Nate cute?

She asked just so she can change the topic.

Ma Rhys:He looks like Rhys when he was a baby bathong. Gatwe second name ke mang?

Neelo:I have to ask one of the nurse waitse(chuckling)

Ma Rhys:I don't want to see..

Neelo:If I hate it I'm going to change it..

Ma Rhys:Bathong!

She looked at Neelo. Alex had explained that Rhysand was arrested. Again. She didn't want to stress the new mother about that but she just wanted to know.

Ma Rhys:Are you okay?

Neelo:Ee mma.

Ma Rhys:Are you sure? That Rhysand is not here..

She exhaled and held back tears.

Neelo:I have Nate to think about..

Ma Rhys:Ao ngwanaka...

Neelo didn't want the sympathy and very soon everyone will know Rhys has been arrested. She didn't know how her sister's family will react to that. Imagine inviting a criminal into their lives. They all lived upright lives and she was a gangster's wife. She was sure they will judge her and she didn't want to deal with that. She was sure her mother will say "I told you so"

She knew her husband killed even though he was the sweetest to her, hell she could shoot without misisng unddr hia guidance and what did that say about her?

Ma Rhys:It's okay, it will work out in the end.

Neelo:I hope so.

She wiped the tears that had rolled down her cheeks. She didn't even notice. She smiled tearfully at her mother-in-law. Not everyone knew they were married and they will be shocked when they find out.

Ma Rhys:Whatever you need, we are here autwe Neelo? We are family after all.

Neelo:Ee mma..Can I feed him?

She stretched out her hands and her mother in law stood up to place Nate in her arms.

Neelo>Hello baby. That was grandma autwe boy boy?(in a soft baby voice)

She took out her boob and held Nate steadily as he started to latch on her boob. This was heavenly.

*

*

7 more inserts to go Ha.a!

TROUBLED

#94

At the hospital

Ra Neelo knocked on the door and opened it after he was told to enter. He looked at Rhysand's mother for a second before he nodded and she smiled. She was a fairly beautiful woman. He had to admit to himself.

Neelo:Papa hi..

Ra N:Hello Nene. How are you feeling?

Neelo:Okay I guess.

Ra N:You look down...

Ma Rhys:Let me excuse myself...

She stood up and walked out as Neelo's dad sat on

the chair.

Ra N:What's his name?

Neelo:Nate..

Ra N:Nate?

She nodded and her father shook his head with a smile.

Ra N:Back in the day we used to name our children names with meaning...

Neelo:Papa ga ke batle[dad I don't want](laughing)

Ra N:Nate suits him..I have a lot of grandkids..

Neelo:Yah neh! Kana Rangz kids are grown gore and they are so sweet..Harmony o tswana Rangz ha mo phateng(Harmony looks exactly like Rangz)

Ra N:I am yet to meet them but I'm glad you and your sister get along..

Neelo:She is me in a way. An older version. Papa you never told me of your relationship with Marang's mom..

Ra N smiled wistfully. Ah the good old days when everything was simple.

Neelo saw that little smile. Her old man had been in love once and her heart pinched.

Ra N:Our love was pure, she was a university student by the way..

Neelo nodded.

Ra N:After her semester holidays she disappeared. She never came back and that was that.

Neelo:But before that..

Ra N:We would always go to the river, well I would help her carry water and since I had that farm, there used to be mud huts by the way. We would spend time there looking at the stars. This time we had rabbit meat and she was like if she asked me questions about having a child. Well I was in my prime but I wasn't ready for one yet. I guess.

Neelo blinked and smiled. His face had lit up.

Ra N:She said if we were going to have kids one day

the girl child would be Marang and the boy would be Lethabo...Marang because the sun's rays bring light and Lethabo just because of happiness.

Neelo:You loved her(softly)

Ra N:I did but she stopped coming to the village along with her mother and I got so busy this side that one day the ache wasn't as bad and I stopped hoping for her to come back to me.

Neelo:Papa!

Ra N:I met your mother years later. It took a lot to convince her because it seemed as if she had been scarred by a relationship as well...

Neelo:You love mama..

Ra N:Of course I do...

Neelo:Not as much as Marang's mom and it's okay..

Ra N:True love comes once in a lifetime and if you have it, please nurture it and never let it go. It's rare..

Neelo:Rare as the glimmer of a comet in the sky.

He nodded. Neelo realized. Her parents loved each

other but they were not in live with each other, they settled for each other. She closed her eyes for a second before looking at her dad once again.

Neelo:I love you papa.

Ra N:And you are the best thing that has ever happened to me and now I have grandsons I can teach farming..

Neelo:No wonder you and Rhys get along. Farming.

Ra N:He is a smart young man. Where is he by the way?

Neelo:uhm-ah....

She licked her lips and looked at Nate. Tears blinded her eyes. They knew he was going to be arrested but...

Her lips quivered slightly as she faced the window. Ra Neelo looked at his daughter as she tried to let the air blow into her eyes and dry her tears.

Neelo:He has been arr-arrested.

There was a sharp silence and she waited for her dad to start going on about her bad life decisions.

Ra N:How are you feeling?

The tears dropped and she mumed her lips. She swallowed the hot summer air and it burnt her throat.

Neelo:Weak papa..

Ra N:We are here for you. Whatever you need. You love him?

Neelo:He is my forever dad. It hasn't been a year but this has been the happiest 8 months of my life...

Her father could see her brokenness and how she tried to keep it under bay. She was really trying to be strong.

Neelo:I have to think of Nate mme akere? My sweet little boy..

Ra N:Nene...

Neelo:I'm strong papa. You raised a strong girl and your gene is strong. Rangz has been through hell and back but o strong le ene...

Ra N:Nene we are here. We are going to help with Nate and be there for you...

Neelo:You see I already miss him but it hasn't been a full day.(swallowing)

Ra N:It's okay to feel that way...

Neelo:did I ever say thank you?

Ra N:For what?

Neelo:For going to the farm with that skorokoro papa. I would never have met the love of my life...

He chuckled.

Neelo:I met him at the salon but it wasn't an interaction though..

Ra N:Nene you speak as if he won't be released.

Neelo: You never know. I want to go back to the first night..(breathing in) His voice is in my head telling me not to worry but I can't help but worry. His safety, did he eat? Does he want to see our son? Papa I don't know how I'm going to survive kana!

Her voice went up an octave and she covered her mouth with her hand. She was going to wake up Nate and she didn't want to wake up the sweet child.

Ra N: We won't promise that it won't hurt my baby but we will be with you through it all.

She nodded and forced a smile. She started humming to her baby as tears rolled down her eyes. Her father got the baby from her and placed him in the small cot. He hugged his child as she sobbed silently. She didn't have to be strong around him. He was still his little girl.

Hours later after her father had left with her mother in law her phone rang making her snap out of her temporary escape. She looked at it and her mother's number flashed.

She cleared her throat before answering.

Neelo:Hello mama.

Ma N:Hello..how are you?

Neelo:Okay..

Ma N:When are you coming here with Nate?

Neelo:I don't think I will be able to travel mama. O ka mpaya botsetsi kwano?

Ma N:Neelo?

Neelo:Ma?

Ma N:Do you have a house?

Neelo:Nyaa mma but the stitches and Nate is a new born. Mama please, this is my first child.

Ma N:Your father will bring you here..

Neelo:Mama ka go kopa. I don't think I will be able to travel. Mama please...

She was near tears.

Ma N:I prepared everything here and you said you were going to come here..

Neelo:He came early and mama ka go kopa!

Ma N:Neelo that man's house is not yours, you should be home with the new baby..I am supposed to help you through botsetsi. Did he change your mind?

Neelo:Mama ka go kopa. I'll pay for everything a guesthouse, o tla tla phakela le phakela, I can't travel and I need you here.

She waited a heartbeat and her heart shuttered at her mother's response.

Ma N:Your dad will bring you here Nene.

She closed her eyes and it seems like all she did was cry today. It was supposed to be a happy day because she brought her baby to this earth.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#95

The following morning

Neelo opened her eyes to tend to Nate. She didn't know how she was going to go about this mothering thing but she was going to be the best mother to Nate. Because he deserved it.

The nurse walked in and she smiled a bit looking at the new mother.

Neelo:Nurse have the documents been submitted?

Nurse:For?

Neelo:His birth certificate?

Nurse:Let me ask for you.

Neelo:If not can I see them? I just want to see

something..

Nurse:Okay. Give me a moment..

The nurse walked and Nene smiled looking at their creation. Her mother will come around. Who wouldn't want to see this sweet boy?

Neelo:Hey baby(smiling)I love you okay?

The nurse came back with the documents and she handed them to Neelo. Neelo looked at the name and chuckled. "Screw you McKnight!" She said mentally and gave the nurse the documents back.

Nurse:The documents are okay?

Neelo:Ee...thank you.

At Rhysand's house

Ra Neelo picked Rhysand's mother at the house. He

opted to spend the night at a local guest house.

Ma Rhys:Goodmorning.

Ra N:Morning...

She opened the backseat door and Ra Neelo stopped her.

Ra N:The front seat is unoccupied.

She opened the front passenger door and got inside. Ra Neelo joined the road and she watched him. He was very soft spoken and that's why he had a sweet daughter.

Ma Rhys:Neelo says she ia being released today.

Ra N:that's good. I'll drop you guys off here.

Ma Rhys:Is her mother coming to help her with the baby?

Ra N:Can I be honest?

Ma Rhys:Suure...

Ra N:I don't know too. O ganne go tla kwano..

Ma Rhys:Oh. I'm here and I really have nothing to do with my time. I'm living for my grand children. I can help.

He looked at her as she flashed a smile.

Ra N:That would be very much appreciated. Thank you so much.

Ma Rhys:You don't have to thank me, we are family are we not?

Ra N:we are...

He continued to drive and she started talking while he chirped in. By the time they had arrived at the hospital they had had a good share of laughter. They didn't want to stress Neelo about Rhysand's arrest, she was a feeding mother and stress wasn't good for her. Not at all.

Ma Rhys:Let me see what I can help her pack..I saw the baby room back at the house and they prepared well..

Ra N:Okay. Let me call someone while you walk in.

He dialed his wife's number and she answered.

Ra N:Hello. Are you coming to help Nene with the baby?

Ma N:I talked to her to come here.

Ra N:Your child needs you there, I won't force her to travel there because she doesn't. Ga o sa batle lesa.

Ma N:What is that supposed to mean?

Ra N:Rhysand's mother will help your daughter with her first child. Stay stubborn and watch your daughter detach herself from you.

Before she could answer back he hung up and slid his phone in the back pocket. He rubbed his face

and smiled seeing Marang.

Ra N:Hello...

Marang:Hello..will you be in town for long?

Ra N:A week ngwanaka but I can extend my visit..

Marang:Thank you..

Ra N sat on the benches as Marang sat down talking to her father. It was still unreal that she had a father, she had a whole family on the other side.

At Wapelo's house

Wawa couldn't wait to see Neelo's baby. That was Kgosi's cousin. At least her child won't be lonely and will have a play mate.

She will have to ask Neelo when she can see the baby. Neelo saide his name was Nate.

She went to check on Kgosi..

At the hospital

Neelo was careful not to let the stitches come undone as her mother-in-law held Nate and her dad the bags.

Ra N:Are you fine?

Neelo:Ee rra...

Her phone rang and she paused as she answered.

Neelo:Hello..

Voice:Hello, this is Rhysand's lawyer..

Neelo:Oh hi. How may I be of assistance?

Voice:I'm sorry if my visit will seem rude but Rhys says you have a few documents I need to see..

Neelo:Of course. I'm on my way home and I will give

them to you let's say an hour. So far how is my husband doing?

Voice:Your husband is a tough one..

She smiled.

Voice:I just applied for his bail. We will see how it pans out while we are awaiting a trial date and the case...

Neelo:Okay. You know his house?

Voice:Yes Mrs McKnight...

Neelo:Alright. Thank you and bye.

She hung up and joined the elders as they walked to the car. She had a checkup and her mother-in-law said she knew what to do for the stitches to heal quicker. She trusted her wisdom. Elders knew things and she was a new mother.

She wondered if her p*ssy will look the same? Will

Rhys enjoy sex with her again after he witnessed the birth of their child? Or better yet will she enjoy sex with her husband? She had time before it came to that so for now Nate was top priority.

The door was already opened and she sat at the back, Ma Rhys placed Nate in her arms. Why was he such a peaceful baby. It's day 2 of seeing him and still shocked that they made a whole child.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo sat down as her husband's words rung in her head. She sighed and stood up heading to the kitchen. She will give it a week and take it from there.

At Prison

Rhys sat on the bed as he patiently waited for his

lawyer to give him feedback about the bail. He sat there wondering if Neelo ate and if Nate remembered his father holding him even though if he is just a day old.

He will try to be strong, Neelo really doesn't need him to be breaking down if it's his lifestyle that brought him here. He covered his face with his large hands and a tired sigh escaped his lips.

.

.

*

*

*

3 MONTHS LATER

So five more to go yoh ha.a!

TROUBLED

#96

At Prison

Ever since he landed here, he has been declining her visits but he couldn't put his wife off any longer. He didn't want to hurt her and himself. He sucked in a deep breath as he placed his handcuffed hands on the table where the officer can see them. His bail had been denied and he wasn't sure how to feel about that.

His wife walked in, all smart in a little black dress and denim jacket. He cussed under his breath. Mamas was hot and glowing.

Neelo looked around. She had tried to get him to see

her these past three months. She was always hurt when he didn't show up. She wondered what changed his mind or was it because the trial was tomorrow? She didn't know..

She sat down and she didn't want to break down and cry. She should be happy that she is seeing her husband.

Neelo:Babe hi..

Rhys:Hello marshmallow...

His deep voice resonated in the room and just like that the Rhys effect started taking place.

Neelo:I miss you..

She said looking at him. His hair had grown and that neatly trimmed beard was no longer there. Her fingers ached to touch him but instead she touched her lips.

Rhys:I miss you everyday sweetheart. How are you holding up?

Neelo:Nate is 3 months old. He has your lips in tiny baby form though..

He smiled and it reach his eyes. Neelo licked her lip glossed lips.

Neelo:Your mom says he looks exactly like you. I saw your baby pictures.

He laughed and looked down.

Rhys:That is world class embarrassment..

Neelo:You didn't look bad in diapers though babe..

Rhys:Neelo wa swaba..

She laughed and placed her hands down. They quickly went silent, they didn't want to address the elephant in the room.

Neelo:I'm praying for tomorrow..

He looked down and covered his face with both hands. Neelo looked around and the prison officers were watching her intently. She took a risk and touched his hands.

Neelo:Big boy we said till death. For better or for worse..I'm not backing down from that.

The officer cleared his throat and she placed her hands on the table. Rhysand moved his hands and she grimaced. This was hard. He cleared his throat and she decided to change the topic.

Neelo:Anyway Nate is a sweet boy and I saw his second third names..

He chucklef.

Neelo:I should've expected that.

Rhys:You didn't even want to change the name Nate, I thought it was a nickname for a full name..

Neelo:I didn't want to name him Nathan or Nathaniel or even Natefo. Nate is fine..

Rhys:I can't argue with you when you did all the pushing hun...

Neelo:Don't remind me. Di stitch ne di nyesa and having to nurse them as well..

Rhys:Sorry about that my love..

Neelo:It was all worth it don't worry about it. Am I allowed to kiss you?

He laughed and she covered her face with her hands blushing.

Rhys:I don't think they allow that but you can give it your best shot.

She removed her hands and looked around before she half stood up to place a soft kiss on his lips and

sat down before an officer walked to their table. Rhys touched his lips and smiled looking at her.

Neelo:I love you.

"Time up!"

She sighed and he mouthed an "I love you"

Neelo:See you tomorrow babe. Bye!

She stood up on her feet and walked out. Rhys stared at her pert bottom and he moved his eyes to the prison guards who were staring as well. His wife was a whole 11/10 and he was proud of that. He wondered how it would be like to part her flesh and bury himself deep inside of her. He really hoped for a better verdict.

He stood up and was escorted back to his cell.

Meanwhile Neelo signed herself out. She was happy to have at least seen her husband. Her phone rang and she sighed.

She took it out as her mother in law called.

Neelo:Mothers...

Ma Rhys:Wa ntlwaela Neelo..

Neelo:Is Nate okay? Ngwana wa Rhys o matepe bathong...

Ma Rhys:He is sleeping. How did the visit go?

Neelo:Pretty good. We'll just attend court tomorrow...

Ma Rhys:Really hoping for the best.

Neelo:Me too. I'm on my way....

She hung up and sighed as she walked out the door. She looked around and walked to the parking lot.

At Peter's office

He looked at everything and he had a strong case.
Tomorrow was the day.

He smiled and leaned back on his chair.

At the mall

Alex walked around the store carrying Kgosi. It was their daddy son day and he adored his son. Wapelo was busy at the moment plus he had finally accepted that it was over for them. There was never going to be a Wapelo Alex love story, just two parents to an amazing little boy.

While in the store Alex frowned as he spotted that girl from months ago. He shook his head and focused on getting what Kgosi wanted. Neo tucked

her hair behind her ear as she walked in the store. She blinked three times, registering that man she once stopped her car for.

He had a child? A long buried ache resurfaced and she swallowed. She forced a smile and did her shopping.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#97

At the shop

Neo joined the line and her breath caught in her throat as the stranger stood behind her. She turned her head and he held her gaze.

Alex:Hi..

Neo:Oh hi stranger..

Alex smiled. He never told her his name did he?

Alex:I'm Alex, you said your name was Neo?

Neo:You remember? (Touching her necklace)you seemed distraught...

Kgosi started touching Alex's face and he smiled

looking at his son who wanted his attention.

Neo:He looks so much like you...

Alex:Thank you..

She let out a slow smile and faced forward.

Alex:Neo?

She turned and he used his free hand to rub his head.

Alex:Would you like to have lunch with me?

Neo:I'm sure your girlfriend won't appreciate that..

Alex:whoa! I don't have a girlfriend and I'm a little crusty at this..it's been a long time aince I asked anyone out.

Neo:Sure? Won't this little guy mind?

She said as she touched Kgosi's hand and he gave her a gummy smile.

Alex:Of course not..is that a yes?

Neo:You are being brass but yes. Lunch wilk do.

Alex:Thank you...

They started to make small talk all the way to the counter where they paid for their stuff and walked to the parking lot.

Alex:I'll put these in the car and you do so I, we'll meet by that fast food place.(pointing at the direction of the shop

Neo:Okay. Give me a minute.

The two split and Alex walked to the car.

Alex:Hey buddy please behave for daddy...

He said to Kgosi who started with his inaudible baby talk.

Minutes later Alex was sittng down waiting for Neo

to show up. He was thankful for the baby seat the place had and Kgosi was comfortable as well. Neo walked in and looked around. She spotted him and he waved. She had reapplied her gloss and checked if she was fine and smelled fine.

Neo:I hope I didn't keep you guys waiting for too long.

Alex:Nope..should we order?

He called the waiter. Meanwhile Wapelo removed her shades as she walked inside the restaurant. She paused for a minute and squinted her eyes. Was that Alex with their son and another woman? He was already letting her son hang around random women? Wow! She breathed in and out and she walked by their table to go place her lunch order. She sat down and pressed her phone. She wasn't crazy so she was not going to do anything crazy. She heard the girl's laughter and turned her head. She was sure they didn't see her but she could see them. The girl played with Kgosi who giggled. Imagine the girls he

must've exposed her son to.

Twenty minutes later her order was ready and she got the doggy bag. She passed by them and Kgosi saw her first. He clapped his hands and she smiled.

Wawa:Hello babyyy...

Neo got a bit uncomfortable as Wapelo placed her doggy bag down and picked her son up.

Wawa:Hi.

Alex:Uhm hey...

He stopped himself for wanting to explain and Wawa kissed Kgosi and placed him down.

She walked away and Neo looked at her. Who was she?

Alex:Uhm that's Kgosi's mother.

Neo:Oh.Okay.

Wapelo walked to the car and sat down. She dialed Neelo who picked up.

Wawa:Neelo Alex is entertaining girls.

Neelo:Okay. Anything wrong with that? You guys are not together...

Wawa:Kgosi is not even old enough yet and he entertains girls with my son.

Neelo:That's wrong. Talk to him about it but I have a feeling it's more than that.

Wawa:He moved on so fast..

Neelo:Whoa! There is no time frame for moving on.

Wawa:And he had claimed he loved me...

Neelo:Wapelo! Listen! Reetsa! You left him for cheating and good for you babes, you chose your peace but honestly the guy was bound to move on. No one is stopping you from dating too...

Wawa:But still...

Neelo:Ng ng Wapelo, you refused his advances shortly after breaking up akere? You are jealous he moved on and don't tell me you will want him back.

Wawa:I still love him.

Neelo:Love alone is never enough. Kante? But you know what? Do you Wapelo...He was also bound to stop chasing you and accept his losses and move. You should do the same though...

Wawa:Akere you have a loving man. If Rhysand was to cheat and want you back you would take him akere?

Neelo:I would kill him but ga re bue ka nna, I have enough to worry about than you wanting to make another stupid ass decision again. Stick to your decision. Healing is hard and knowing your worth ia even harder.

Wawa:My problems are stupid?

Neelo:Know what, I am not starting a fight autwe?
Byee!

Neelo hung up in her ear and she just looked at the phone.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#98

At Rhysand's house

Neelo looked at Nate as he slept soundly. She wished that Rhys might be out tomorrow. So he can come home to his family. To them. Her. Nate and pretend as if that bad chapter didn't happen. At any point of their lives.

She sighed and walked out of the room as her phone rang. She picked it up.

Neelo:Hey sis.

Marang:Are you okay?

Neelo:Uhm..I'm fine...

Marang:I took a day off work, papa said he is on his

way. Neelo you should know you're not alone.

Neelo:You said papa?

Marang:I did?

She smiled.

Neelo:Thank you so much...

Marang:So he said he will be driving us to court, you are not alone autwe? Everything will work out in the end. Just don't give up.

Neelo:Thank you so much...

Marang:More than welcome...Heela wena gologa hoo!

Neelo:And that's my cue to hang up..

Marang:the kids can be too active if they had sugar, I don't know why Josh gave them sugar..

Neelo:Bathong!

Marang:Anyways sis, I'll call later. We can pray about it before you sleep.

Neelo:Thanks. Byee!

Marang:Byeee bye!

She hung up and placed her phone down. If her dad was coming would her mother come as well? She wanted to know that. Her mother was only her for a month after Nate was born and they managed to put their differences aside. One thing she knew was that her mother and mother-in-law didn't vibe. She wanted to know why but she wasn't going to add to more of her problems.

She rubbed her hands on her dress and walked to her room. The bed was lonely and she sometimes wished she had met him already reformed. Just so she doesn't have to go through such heartache.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo walked out of the kitchen in her shorts as she went to get the door. She sat down and thought

about what Neelo said. She was right? Knowing your worth is hard and she was the first to end their already unstable relationship. She breathed in and out as she held the door handle, turned it and opened the door.

Alex:Hey, i came back with this little bugger..

Wawa:Of course, come in..

Kgosi raised his hands and Wapelo got him from his father as he walked inside to place Kgosi's baby bag on the sofa.

Alex:Wapelo it's no-

Wawa:It's okay..As long as you don't introduce my son to random women. He shouldn't be exposed to such righy baby?

She looked at Kgosi with a smile and he smiled. She

placed him down so he can crawl. Alex looked at Wapelo's fresh thighs exposed. Hia Adam's apple bobbed. He won't be the first man to tap that and see if all the rumours he heard about sex after giving birth was true. Maybe be careless a bit and leave another baby in her..

Wawa:Thank you..

Alex:Uhm yeah..sure you're fine about it all?

Wawa:Yes(sighing)

Alex:That sigh is worrying..

Wawa:It's okay. You move on Alex..

Alex:You don't mean that..

She squinted her eyes.

Wawa:I was jealous I admit and fought with myself if I should take you back but what's done is done.

Alex:Oh..

Wawa:Honestly...

Alex:Alright. Bye.

Wawa:Bye..

He walked out and closed the door. Wawa sat down and watched her baby crawl around. Neelo was right, she shouldn't even be bitter. She was bound to be jealous but she should think with her head not her stupid heart. Her heart was the reason she had been hurt before.

Alex got inside the car and thought about calling Neo but he had his brother's court case to worry about tomorrow. He joined the road and drove off.

At Rhysand's house

Neelo grinned as she served the elders food. Her mother-in-law and father got on like a house on fire.

At first she had suspicions but it was all fun banter and older people getting along. Nothing sinister.

Ma Rhys:I'll look after Nate here when you guys go to court..

Neelo:Thank you.

Ma Rhys:You will update me about everything happening at court akere?

Ra N:Of course...

Neelo smiled. Her phone beeped with a message and she frowned. She opened the messenger message.

Ruby:Hey. Uhm I hope you're doing good. All the best for tomorrow's court day and stay strong. Sending virtual hugs

She read the message over and over. That was

sweet. She texted back.

Neelo:Thank you

Another message from Wawa popped up on her screen.

Wawa:Thank you for putting me to order I can think now but anyway hope tomorrow is kind and the universe hear your prayera sweet thing Will call in the morning sis...

She replied and breathes in and out. She needed an early nighy because her head was spinning.

Neelo:I think I'm going to have an early night today..

Ra N:Okay my child.

Ma Rhys:Goodnight love...

She nodded and left the two in the lounge. She wasn't even surprised that her mother didn't show up. She half expected it and the other half wanted her mother to prove her wrong and show up.

She checked on Nate before she headed to her own. Her sister's number popped up on her screen. She answered the video call and Marang smiled. She was just a ray of sunshine did she know that?

Marang:Okay sweetie?

Neelo:I'm not a baby Marang..

Marang:You are my baby sis...anyhow we did say we are praying akere?

Neelo:Ee mma...

She breathed in and out.

Marang:You don't have to say anything..

Neelo smiled with tears in her eyes. She was trying so hard.

Marang:Our tears are prayers when we can't speak.
It's okay..

Neelo broke down in front of the phone. All the anxiety of not knowing what will happen at court tomorrow, the fact that Rhys was absent, not by choice but it still hurt.

Marang watched silently and although she couldn't relate, she was going to be there for Neelo every step of the way. Neelo covered her face and sniffled. After minutes she finally looked at the screen with her now pink nose.

Marang:Let it all out then we will start.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#99

At The Magistrates High Court

Alex sat in his car as he breathed in and out. He wanted Rhys out so he can tell him their estranged father had contacted him. He apologised and told him they have a sister.

He wasn't sure how Rhys was going to take that because big brother had a lot on his plate. Rhysand's lawyer had called him to update him on a few things and he hoped everything was going to go well. The last time Rhys was released and the case dropped so he expected the same outcome. Alex placed his head on the steering wheel.

Alex:God I know I'm not a saint or anything along those lines but please spare my brother, he has a family that loves him so so much...

He breathed into his hands. He shouldn't cry, he was a man and he has to take care of both families and be strong for them.

He finally got out of the car and he spotted Neelo with her dad and sister. He walked to them and she looked at him.

Alex:How are you feeling?

Neelo:I-I don't know Alex. Promise me he is getting out today...

Both Marang and Ra Neelo looked at Neelo as her eyes pleaded with Alex.

Alex:Neelo ga ke itse...

She bit her lip and looked down at her black heel. Hell she worked here and she was attending her husband's trial here? F*ck!

Alex:Neelo as much as we want him out, qe are not the judge...

Neelo:I know..

He hugged her and she held back her tears just so they don't ruin her make-up.

Alex:Whatever the outcome, we are getting through this okay?

She nodded as he let her go and they walked to the court's open doors. She qas glad that they were early and the media house were nowhere to be seen. She couldn't risk breaking down in front of the flashing cameras ans becoming the next day's paoer NewsHeadlines.

They found their seats as Rhysand had his head down low talking to his lawyer.

Lawyer:The information we have will work in our advantage, so you get a lesser sentence..

Rhys:F*ck! Their informant must have a vendetta against me..

Lawyer:They don't have the full info do they, Rhys trust me..

Rhys:You looked into the case closely?

Lawyer:We are excluding the shootings, because wow the body count is uhm wow!

He chuckled. A lot of bodies.

Lawyer:That can give you a death sentence. Wa itse gore murder here...

Rhys:I know..

Lawyer:We'll give it out best shot.

Rhys:My life is kn your hands.

Lawyer:Not when I had to consult other lawyers....

Rhys:And I'm hearing of this now?

Lawyer:In case you flipped..

Rhys:Who is he?

Lawyer:Her..

Rhys:Okay. I just trust you..

The lawyer looked around the courtroom and spotted the family.

Lawyer:Your wife, brother and family are here..

Rhys lifted his head and his eyes locked with Neelo's eyes who was sitting between her sister and father. Alex keot a straight face and he smiled in her direction as the court started to fill up. She smiled back and he looked back at his lawyer.

At T&M Publications

Ruby sat at her desk and she sighed. She couldn't focus on her job, the journalists that worked here had gone to attend and a part of herself regretted ever giving the police a chance to delve in deeper into what Rhysand did.

A part of this was her fault and she wanted to see the lawyer who was representing the state. She will just get a written warning.

She grabbed her handbag and fixed the filea on her desk. She took her laptop with the other and walked away. She will text once she is in court.

With that Ruby had made the decision to attend Rhysand's trial. According to trusted sources the state did have a case against him.

At The Magistrates High Court

Once everyone was in court including the prosecutor the court was silenced.

Ruby rubbed her eyes. Was that Peter? She wow! Peter was the prosecutor and he wanted to date her? Surprising that she had found his message request from before he even met her. Did he want to use her for information?

Peter? Peter? She didn't miss the way Neelo shot daggers behind Peter and she closed her eyes trying to remember the name..

She opened her eyes. F*ck! Peter! Neelo used to go on and on about a law student who broke her heart. Now it made sense. Peter was Neelo's varsity ex. Why did it take so long for her to realise this?

"All rise!"

Everyone stood up and Ruby didn't miss how Rhysand still looked good. How did he do that? Other men could have been hot messes if they were in the same situation he was.

The judge walked inside the court room and unlike the last time, this one was a woman. Okay she wanted to see how this one was going to go.

Neelo nearly rolled her eyes looking at Peter. The fool better have seduced the judge or else she was going to make his life a living hell.

"You may take your seats"

Everyone sat down. As the number of the case was read out loud.

Neelo placed her hands on her lap as court day started.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#100

At The Magistrates High Court

After all was said and done and Neelo was already clinging to her dad's hands. They had had a break and court continued. The judge looked at both lawyers and they had presented a strong case. Both of them. She looked at the offender and she didn't want to lie that her heart skipped a beat when she looked at him. He looked like the rough type of guy to demand for sex and you had no choice but to give it to him and love it at the same time.

She looked at the court. This needed to be over and done with. The last recess she consulted with the members of the jury about her decision and they had all agreed on it.

Rhys looked at Neelo who looked nervous as hell and then back at his lawyer. He did his best and he wasn't going to fault him in any way.

Judge:I assessed both sides but as always the law has to be served. As everyone is aware, this isn't the first time Mr McKnight is in court. He was here almost a year ago....

Neelo wanted to the judge to say her verdict. The nerves were getting to her and she wasn't sure how long she was going to keep up the strong front.

Judge:This court therefore finds Rhysand McKnight guilty of money laundering...

There was an audible gasp in the crowd and Neelo bit down her lip to stop the tears. Marang held her hands tighter and Neelo blinked back the tears.

Rhysand looked down. They expected every damn thing.

Judge:Along with the criminal activity that was used to gain the money..

She paused and looked at the courtroom.

Judge:The accused has been sentenced to 5 years in prison for illegal movement of diamond and has 5 years in custody for the money laundering offence after he has served his sentence. A court fine of P50 000 will be charged as well.

The judge's words made Neelo's head dizzy. All she heard was five years and she had completely detached herself from the situation. She closed her eyes and held in her cries. She placed her head on her father's shoulder as the tears rolled down her cheeks. The judge continued talking and she didn't

even hear a word she said.

Judge: Court dismissed!

Everyone stood up as the judge stood up to walk away. Neelo swallowed looking at Rhysand. He looked defeated but was trying to appear nonchalant.

Marang: Hey you can see him now...

Neelo used her hands to wipe her tears as she stood up. Her legs felt like jelly and she held onto Marang's shoulder.

Marang stood up as well and held her sister's waist. She was going to fall in those heels and she wasn't in the right state of mind.

Rhysand looked at his lawyer.

Lawyer:How are you feeling about thw final verdict?

Rhys:A part of me expected it and another-I wanted to go home to see and touch my kid...

He closed his eyes and breathed into his hands. His lawyer tapped him on the shoulder and he opened his eyes.

Laywer:She is behind you...

Rhysand turned and Neelo was behind him with tears in her eyes. He hugged her and she placed her head on his chest.

Rhys:We'll be okay? Take care of Nate okay?

She nodded sobbing. Ra Neelo clutched his heart,

hopefully time will move on that fast so that Rhysand can come home to his family.

Neelo:I-I don't want you to go..

Rhys:I know sweetheart..

The lawyer gave the police officer a pleading look, to just give the couple extra minutes.

Neelo:I love you.

Rhys:I love you more baby girl. Take care of our baby okay?

She nodded and let him go as she sniffed. Rhysand looked at the officer and he gave him his hands. Neelo moved back as Rhysand was handcuffed. She watched him as the police officers escorted him out. The court house was empty at this point and she let out a loud cry. Rhys heard the cry and he closed his eyes as the officer pushed him forward.

Meanwhile Neelo held onto the table for stability and Marang held her.

Marang:Baby it's going to be okay..I promise you..

Neelo couldn't utter a single word as hot burning tears ruined her already ruined make-up. She gasped for breath and Marang sat her down.

Marang:Breath Neelo, breath my baby...please.

Her cry tore through the quiet court room and she hit her chest while trying to speak.

Neelo:T-This h-hurts like hell...

Marang:I know..

Neelo:You don't (crying)

She looked like a mess with the mascara running down her face mixed with the foundation...

Neelo:You fuuuckiiiiing doooont...

She trailed off crying.

Neelo:He is a half of me(screaming)I can't!!

Ra Neelo covered his mouth with his hands. She was a mess.

Neelo:I d-don't waaaaant hiiiim to goooo(breathing heavily)

Marang didn't say anything as she comforted her sister. Neelo couldn't stop the tears that rolled down her eyes.

Neelo:It felt like heaven a moment ago(crying)

Alex stood by the corner. He had watched everything unfold and seeing Neelo fall apart at the seams hit

him hard in the gut. She really loved his brother. That fiercely and how hurt she was made him shed a tear. He dabbed it with his finger as she gasped for breath. Her sister was a medical doctor so she was going to help if anything happens out of the blue.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#101

At Rhysand's house

Marang rubbed her arms. She felt so bad for giving her sister sedatives.

Marang looked at her dad.

Marang:She will be fine, looking at the case and the crimes he got the lightest sentence.

Ra N:I know.

Marang:I don't know why I know she will be fine, there will always be that ache in her heart but at the end of the five years period he will come back home and I hope she will open her arms for the love of her life.

Ra N sighed and closed the door as they walked out of the room. Rhysand's mother was playing with little Nate who clapped his hands seeing Marang. Marang chuckled and picked up her nephew. He was a cute little thing.

Marang:hey babyyy...

The two elders walked to the kitchen and Ma Rhys let the smile fall.

Ra N:Five years is nothing, that was the lightest sentence..

Ma Rhys:Alex said so too.

Ra N:He will be out in no time...

Ma Rhys:I feel sorry for Nate..

They both looked at Marang who was playing with Nate. Ah if they all had the same innocence Nate.

At Peter's house

He hadn't been happy about the sentence looking at the crimes. Although their evidence held a bit of weight in court, he had to admit Rhysand had one hell of a lawyer hence the bare minimum as a sentence. He closed his eyes.

He hoped this will please his partner and he wanted to celebrate his win but he didn't feel like he won anything at all. There was no wife to come home to so he could celebrate with, his mother was in a nursing home. She forgo her own aon due to the dementia and he felt empty. So empty.

He put his hands in his pockets and looked around the house. It was all furniture. No memories or anything he can hold onto and say this was special or anything special happened in this room. He actually felt so sorry for himself at this exact moment.

At Ruby's house

Ruby felt sorry for Neelo. She really loved Rhysand and she saw how Neelo zoned out when Rhys was sentenced. She breathed.

One day she will find that love worth sacrificing everything for. The one where she would smile as she got back home from work and he would be with their baby because he volunteered to stay with the baby for the day.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo walked into the baby's room. She watched as Alex stared at Kgosi as he slept. He has been cooped up in the room ever since he was back from Rhysand's court case.

Alex: And to think for the next five years he won't see his son gro-

A lump stuck in his throat as he looked at Kgosi. Rhys wasn't alone and he knew that he should be behind bars too but his brother didn't even mention him. Not at all. That was selfless of him.

Wawa: Don't beat yourself up about it..

Alex: Uhm yeah...

He swallowed and he closed his eyes. Just so tears don't roll down his cheeks.

Alex: I will spend each day loving my son and being there for him.

Wawa: I'm sure you will.

She sighed and walked out of the room.

The following morning

At Rhysand's house

Neelo finally woke up. She felt so lightheaded and she licked her lips. She closed her eyes again, swollen eyes and she didn't even know if she dreamed or not.

Yesterday's recollections hit her like a tirade and tears rolled down her eyes. She didn't know how she got to the house even because the ache in her chest was still there. Her phone rang and she wanted to cry out loud. The song he dedicated to her when he proposed. She touched her lips, she missed the way he felt on her lips.

She didn't trust herself to see him without breaking down so she didn't know when she will see him again. She placed her hands on her knees as the phone ringtone filled the empty room. The phone

atopped ringing and she picked it up. Her mother.

She didn't want a lecture so she placed it down and cried. Her cries woke up baby Nate in the other room. Ma Rhysand went to tend to the baby as her heart broke. Babies could sense energy and the fact that her baby cried when Neelo cried out loud.

She shushed the baby as she hummed to the baby.

Neelo sobbed against the pillow with a heavy heart as the phone rang again. The song reminded her of the good times. They were forever right? Why did it feel like it was the end of their love story?

.

.

*

TWO YEARS LATER

TROUBLED

#102

At Alex's office

Alex smiled proudly as he looked at the office space he rented. He hoped he was going to get tenders and the fact that he was Rhysand's brother won't make them sideline him.

The office door opened and he smiled looking at her as she handed him coffee.

Alex: We'll see how it goes..

Her: Yes sir. Did you pick up Kgosi from school?

Alex: Shit! I forgot babe..

He kissed her cheek and he stopped then he placed his free hand around her waist. He pecked her lips once, twice and then again before he went in for a full blown kiss.

Alex:I love you..

Her:I love you too, now go tlherra a ise a lele(before he cries)

Alex:Yes ma'am.

He walked out of the office and she looked around. Not bad. Not that Alex didn't have money but this was not a bad way to make more money.

She drank her coffee and looked at the table. He left his phone. She face palmed and picked it up. Typical of Alex to do that. Or was he trying to show her that he wasn't a cheater anymore, given his history with cheating and all? She shrugged and placed it on the desk. She sat down on top of the mahogany desk and let out a content sigh.

At the office

Neelo pushed her hair back as she looked at the files in front of her. She resigned a year ago and decided to take over Rhysand's company. So far so good and she had plenty of advice about business. She read books and tried an online course as well.

She was proud to say she was doing well on that part. She closed her eyes. Three more years to go. Yay!

She held back tears but shook her head. She had work and she was going to be home just in time to read a bedtime story for Nate. She felt the familiar nausea rise up and she placed her hands on the desk to hold it back. She closed her eyes and the nausea went down. Just a bit.

She opened her desk drawer and looked at the test. It's been a week of her trying to debate whether to take it or not. She was probably dreaming it and it was just the nerves of work. She pushed close the drawer and went back to work.

At Bobonong

At Ma Rhysand's house

She sat down to drink her usual cup of tea. She saw Lebopo the other day taking a walk with her dad. Lebopo looked so happy and she smiled. So he was really getting his shit together. Lebopo was going to have a beautiful childhood, she remembered how he was before he got abusive. He had love in him she just didn't know when it faded.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo hung the laundry at the back. Her husband had gone to the farm and the past two years have been okay. Neelo dared her to mention how she made a mistake about Rhys and she would cut her off. She shut up at that moment and never dared to mention Rhys.

She did meet Marang and she looked so much like Neelo just a few years older. She had Neelo's personality traits, both sweet and she gradually let herself accept the child who seems to have made strong bond with her father and her sister.

Twenty minutes later, she used the backdoor to enter the house with the bucket in hand. Life was simple. She still wondered where McKnight was though..

*

*

Si la now! My apologies if it's too short.

TROUBLED

#103

At the office

Neelo sat on the toilet seat and looked at the pregnancy stick. The instructions said 15 minutes. She rubbed her hands against her skirt anxiously waiting for the results. Her phone rang and she let it ring. She prayed and hoped it was just her body reacting to something she ate but that can't go on for more than a week right?

She was fucked if she was pregnant. She waa so fucking dead if that damn stick shows two red lines.

Neelo:God please come through for me, please..

She looked at her nails. She couldn't even keep calm right now.

Minutes later she got up and walked to the wash basin. She closed her eyes to breath in and out. She opened her eyes again and looked at the stick.

Her heart pounded and she placed her head against the mirror. She was defeated.

At Alex's office

He walked inside the office with Kgosi who lifted his arms for Neo to pick him.

Neo:Hey big guy...

Alex:Aaanty...

Neo:Yeesss...

She said smiling. Alex looked at his girlfriend and was wholly content with her. He wanted to raise the issue of babies with her, so they can try for a baby.

Neo:Why are you looking at me like that?

Alex:Like what?

She gave him her mosy heartwarming smile and focused on Kgosi. They had him for a week and he usually stays at his mom's house.

Neo won't lie, the first time she met Wapelo under formal circumstances she was anxious. Because that was the woman trusting her with her child and imagine if she flopped.

Wapelo looked calm and at first she didn't trust that Alex had gotten over his baby mama. You know these things, baby mamas and daddies always get back together and you were just a stepping stone in their so called love story. Wapelo proved her wrong

though, so far so good and she hoped it will stay that way. She never really went for men with kids but Alex was an exception.

Alex: We have an hour in the office and let me get on with some work. If he bothers you please let me know.

Neo: This little angel can never bother me.. Not in a million years right Kgosi?

He giggled as he revealed his baby teeth and Neo pinched his cheeks.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo sunk into the hot bubble bath. Ah. A week to herself, peace and quiet. She loved her son but a woman has got to be at peace with herself. Just a little bit of self love here and there then get that glow. Speaking of glow, she frowned. Neelo has been

glowing and she didn't want to assume anything but that was weird.

Her phone beeped and she smiled. Must be that hot client at work. She wasn't the one to go for clients. In all honesty. She prided herself in diligence and the utmost professionalism but dang papa was a rare breed, no comparing...

He ticked all the boxes. Not that she had a checklist. Oh no! She was going to live in the moment, she hasn't slept with any guy ever since she split from her baby daddy.

She wanted to fully dive herself into this motherhood thing and now she can play. Even if it's nothing permanent, it will just do. Getting married? She shook her head as she picked her wine glass by the side. No mam. She was not going to be the one to commit, she almost died.

She sipped her wine feeling all giddy inside. What did he say in the text? Her hands were wet and she honestly forgot to play some music from her phone.

At Neelo's house

As soon as she opened the door, her little boy ran to her.

She kicked off her shoes and bent down to pick him up. Everyday he was looking more like his father and less like her. How these kids disappoint when you where the one whi endured 9 months, labour, stitches and epidurals.

Neelo:Hey babyy..

Nate:Mama!

Neelo kissed the top of his curly head and he looked brightly at her. Her helper walked out of the kitchen

and Neelo smiled. She made a good decision to hire a much older woman. Not after what Wawa said about her former helper, not that there was any man in here.

Neelo:so let me go change okay baby then we are going to play and eat akere papa?

He just nodded and he held her cheeks. She giggled.

Neelo:Make-up baby..o dira jang yaanong?

He laughed and he pursed his lips like his mom and kissed her lips. Neelo moved her head laughing and used her thumb to wipe the lipstick off.

Neelo:Wa lapisa tlherra wena..a reye..

She said hi to her helper and she put the baby down to pick up her shoes. She started walking and Nate followed her. She waited for him and held his small hand.

Neelo:I love you..

Nate:labuu!

This boy was her life, she was strong just for him to be stable and not lack a thing.

The evening flew just as fast and when Nate was tucked all in after his bedtime story, Neelo walked back into her room and sat on the corner of the bed. She tried to forget that stuff just happened but it was hard.

She stood up and pushed her hair back with a huge sigh. Her hand lingered on her flat stomach for a few seconds before she dropped it and bit her lower lip. She picked her phone and went through her contacts list. She found the number and dialed it.

Voice:Hello...

Neelo:I'm pregnant.

TROUBLED

#104

At Neelo's house

She waited for a heartbeat and there was nothing but silence at the end of the line. Fuck him! She hung up and closed her eyes. She rubbed her tummy. How was she going to explain and-

This was all messed up. Such a horrible mess. She shouldn't have agreed to such nonsense now he was silent?

She stood up and started pacing up and down the room. She wanted to talk to someone but then they will judge her and she will go down. She let out a sigh as she threw herself on the plush comfortable bed.

She closed her eyes.

Neelo:Baby what are gonna do about you? Not that I would anything to you..

She laughed at herself. She still hasn't lost the habit of speaking to her pregnant tummy. She could be wrong too. These home pregnancy testing kits could give false positives. She wasn't pregnant. Her boobs felt fine and her tummy wasn't hard. But he didn't say anything at the end of the line? Did he know how this was going to ruin her reputation. Her phone rang and she groaned.

She picked it up and looked at the caller ID.

Neelo:Hello...

Voice:Serious?

She rolled her eyes..

Neelo:I never joke about important things. I'm in a

messed up situation. Why did I agree to sleep with you again?

She half screamed into her pillow. She so wanted to cry.

Voice:you okay?

She shook her head as if he could see her.

Voice:Let me video call then..

Neelo:It's okay(softly)I'll see what to do.

Before he could reply she hung up and used her hands to wipe her tears. She should sleep and she'll think straight in the morning. It was still fresh and she needed to come up with more lies. This was a mess. She sat upright and removed her clothes. She got up and walked to the wardrobe for pyjamas. She got dressed and walked to the door. She slightly pushed it open the door. Nate usually made his way to her room if her wakes up in the middle of the

night. The boy adored her cuddles and she just loved bonding with him. Such a precious little one.

At Alex's house

Alex rubbed Neo's arm as she cuddled into him. He didn't know how he was to start the baby topic.

Alex:Have you ever thought about starting your family?

Neo turned to face him. Where was this topic coming from?

Neo:Where is this coming from?

Alex:I just wanted to know, you're so good with Kgosi..

She smiled uneasily as he touched her cheek.

Alex:Have you thought about it?

Neo:I used to think about it. It's not part of my long term goals.

Alex:Why?

Neo:I am not the baby making type..

Alex sighed as she turned to face the other way. Neo closed her eyes. What he doesn't know won't hurt him. She sighed as he wrapped his arms tightly around her.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#105

The following morning

At Neelo's house

The nausea that morning had her over her toilet for over ten minutes. She felt so horrible she wasn't sure she was going to go to work. She got up on her feet and rinsed her mouth with the mouthwash before proceeding to brush her teeth.

She walked back to her bedroom to the sleeping toddler. He slept through anything that one, she was scared that stuff might happen and he won't even hear a thing. She sat on the corner of the bed trying to gather her thoughts. She was definitely skipping

work today. A hospital visit? No, Marang would be suspicious and Marang asked too many questions and too many questions wasn't what she was looking for. She sighed frustrated. They used a condom, for the first few times. The first time had been clumsy as hell and too rough. She didn't know how to explain herself cancelling stuff because of that. Then she got a hang of it. She did take those morning afters when they had it raw right? How the hell had this happened?

She couldn't even ask her doctor sister because she was going to know her reasons for asking. She can lie but there is only so much you can lie about.

Her phone rang and she got up to pick it by the night stand. She blew the hair in her face away.

Neelo:Hello?

Alex:Hi, sorry to call this early. I am meeting Rhys today. Do you want to come with?

Neelo:Uhm..you go..

Alex:When was the last time you saw him?

Neelo:Is that question really necessary Alex?

Alex:I was just asking..

Neelo:Okay. Bye.

She hung up and placed the phone down as her alarm rang. She was skipping work and seeing how this was about to go. How far along was she? Was the baby a boy or a girl? Shaking her head she got undercover and watched her toddler sleep. His small lips looked like his dad's and she held back a laugh as he moved into her and placed his fist on her chest in his sleep. Too territorial like daddy too.

At Alex's house

He placed his phone down as Neo walked inside the room.

Neo:Breakfast is ready. Let me fix that..

She walked to him and held his tie, Alex let go and watched her. She always made it look so simple.

Neo:Done(pecking his lips)

Alex:Love?

Neo:Rra?

Alex:Can you think about the starting a family issue?

Neo:Alex...

Alex:Think about it please love, just spend the whole day thinking about it...Please my love..

Neo:okay(sighing) I'll think about it.

Alex kissed the nape of her neck and she leaned into him.

Alex:I love you okay?

Neo:I love you more baby...

She smiled as he kissed her one more time before

letting her go.

At Neelo's house

Neelo sat on the carpet as Nate walked to her. She clapped her hands for him.

Neelo:Good boyy..

He grinned and she grinned back at him. Her phone rang and she saw the caller ID. She forgot. She completely forgot about it.

Neelo:Hello..

Lawyer:Don't forget today's appointment..

Neelo:Flip! Ne ke lebetse, I won't be late. Thank you for the reminder.

She said bye and hung up. Nate took her phone and started to press it.

Neelo:Ng ng...

She locked it and gave it to him. Nate shoved a part of the phone in his mouth and she had to take it from his small hands.

Neelo:The Nate se dire yaalo nana..

He fought with her for her own phone and she sighed letting him be.

Neelo:phone yeo e tla go jesa(that phone will feed you)

He looked at her and placed the phone in her hand, all wet from his saliva.

Neelo rubbed his soft curly hair and he pursed his lips to kiss her cheek.

Neelo:You are forgiven baby.

She stood up and he did so too so he can follow her. She shook her head walking to the bedroom.

Fours hours later Neelo kissed Nate goodbye and left him his nanny's care as she walked to the car.

At Prison

Rhys placed his cuffed hands on the table. They had to chain his legs as well. Great.

Alex:How have you been?

Rhys:I'm still going to say what I've been saying the past two years man..

Alex blew out a breath. Three more years to go and he was sure it was still torture on his brother's side.

Rhys:I will survive. What's happening in the outside world?

Alex:I just started the construction company and we will see..

Rhys:And that girl you once mentioned gatwe ke ene mang? One?

Alex:Neo..she is good. I love her and I've been

thinking of expanding my family but wa gana..

Rhys:Why? Did you cheat on this one?

Alex:I stopped cheating. That's for small boys. I'm actually being serious, thoughts to marry her have crossed my mind these past two months. She is everything I need in a woman..

Rhys:Glad you are happy bro..

Alex:You look stressed..

Rhys:I-I just wish I can hold Nate..

Alex sadly looked at his brother.

Rhys:I fucked up big time..

Alex:It will soon pass.

Rhys:I hope so...

Alex:Neelo didn't want to come here...I don't remember the last time she told me she is coming to visit.

Rhys:Let her be. Just make sure she and Nate are taken care of and safe..

Alex:You don't want to see her?

Rhys:Alex let's just drop the topic..

Alex nodded as they proceeded to talk about other things.

At the lawyer's office

Neelo sat down with Rhysand's lawyer as they waited for the other lawyer to join them.

Neelo:I don't want anything jinxing this..

Laywer:I assure you he doesn't even know.

Neelo:Good.

She leaned back and her hand moved to her flat stomach. The lawyer looked at her and she quickly let her hands drop to her sides. At that moment the door opened and Neelo faced in that direction.

Laywer:Mrs Sokhulo welcome..

Camilla>Hello. Okay you must be Mrs McKnight.

Neelo:Yes, pleasure to meet you.

Camilla:The pleasure is all mine..

She sat down next to Neelo. Let's see if they had a shot at changing the future.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#106

At the lawyer's office

Neelo:So we have a shot at this?

Camilla:We do..

Lawyer:We are going to draft the letters and see how far it goes.

Neelo:I'm paying big bucks for this, I hope it doesn't flop...

Camilla:Mrs McKnight I assure you, we got this under control.

Neelo:Good to hear. Let me go and thank you so much. I have a toddler to attend to.

Everyone laughed as she stood up and got her bag.

Neelo:You'll call and thanks a million.

She walked out and both of the lawyers looked at each other.

Camilla:She is serious isn't she?

Lawyer:Like a heart attack..

Camilla:Well she had the best working on it..

Lawyer:Money talks everywhere and she has it in plenty.

Camilla:Yes she does...we can start working on the draft.

Lawyer:Sure...

With absolute professionalism they started working.

In the parking lot Neelo stood by the car as she checked her phone. It means everything was smooth sailing at the office. Her father was at the farm so no

network there. Her mom called once or twice a week to check up on Nate. Rhysand's mother did call once or twice a week as well to know if she was okay along with Nate. She looked at the two rings on her finger. She took them off and looked at them. She should get them cleaned, they didn't look shiny anymore. Just as she was about to wear her rings she felt a presence behind.

She turned as her hair moved to the side as well. The guy smiled.

Him:Hi.

Neelo:Oh hello. Can I help you?

She asked as she put her rings on and the guy looked at her.

Him:uhm you're beautiful.

Neelo:thank you..

She smiled and unlocked the door. The guy rubbed the back of his neck. He wasn't her type and she was married. He stepped back and walked away as the car started.

At Bobonong

Ma Neelo walked out of the store holding the plastics with the baking ingredients. She covered her face with her hand to block her view of the scorching sun.

She walked to where the taxis were and she sighed. She found a taxi and got inside. She greeted the people in the taxi as she told the taxi driver where she was going.

Fifteen minutes later, she was by her gate and she opened the gate and a sudden feeling of melancholy engulfed the inner depths of her old heart.

What happened to that simple life? That young love she had? The one where she had met the boy first and all of a sudden he meets another and marries her first. Making her the side chick but because she loved him she allowed that. She walked to the house and she paused to unlock the door.

Maybe her wanting to see him was to get closure from the past. Maybe her resentment for his son would lessen because she was still very angry with the father and she didn't want the same to happen to her own daughter. Because usually the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo giggled as she held the phone.

Wawa:okay this feels so wrong yet so right.

The person at the other end of the line chuckled with

a deep voice and she blushed.

Voice:I'll be there in a few minutes.

Wawa:Wait what? Siiir....

Voice:I love it when you call me sir..

Wawa:Mxm!

She sat on the high chair as she drew imaginary stuff on the table with her finger.

At Neelo's house

Neelo rubbed her flat stomach. It was slowly sinking in that she was pregnant. The how part was going to be difficult to explain to people. She was supposedly celibate till her husband comes out of jail and shs definitely isn't mother Mary is she? No angel Gabriel appeared to tell her she conceived because of the holy ghost and she would birth a child.

She laughed at herself. She was dumb. On a normal day she would have never agreed to that. Never. She was usually rational and she never thought about self-gratification or her most basic primal needs but yoh ha.a.

Neelo:What are we gonna name you? If you are a girl definitely Aurora or something. That. If you are a boy maybe bo Pule. Something setswana yah.

Her phone rang and she wanted to drop the call cause the person who got her in this situation was speechless yesterday. She answered it.

Neelo:Hello...

Voice:Hey. Still angry?

Neelo:I'm calm now...

Voice:Akere you're not thinking of an abortion or anything?

Neelo:No. I would never..

Voice: Good. I thought about it..

Neelo: And?

Voice: I take all the blame and responsibility for this.

Neelo: Thank you...

Voice: O kae RJ?

Neelo smiled as she sat down.

Neelo: He's asleep. You do know gore rraagwe RJ has a gun and he is gonna shoot you once he gets out?

He laughed and it warmed her heart.

Voice: He taught you how to shoot too.

Neelo: And you do know you cannot do outdo the doer.

Voice: Glad you're smiling at the end of the line. What are you wearing?

Neelo: Still in my dress from earlier on.

Voice: I can't wait to get out.

Neelo:I love you autwe? Call me marshmallow I'm no longer angry tlherra(laughing)

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#107

At Neelo's house

Rhys:Neelo wa lapisa wa itse..

Neelo:Hng. Me? Who made who pregnant?

Rhys:Yoh..morning sickness?

Neelo:I skipped work because of it..

Rhys:I'm sorry. I hate that you're going to be alone without me through it. Fuck! I'm so sorry baby.

Neelo kept quiet. It was going to be one lonely pregnancy yay. She exactly can't disclose the father as well if things go south in court. People were also going to be in trouble as well.

Rhys:Now looking at where we are, it was selfish of me to ask you to do this..

Neelo:I wasn't really vocal about saying no was I?(smiling regrettably)

Rhys:Still. I should've known better. Been the bigger person..

Neelo:you were thinking with your dick..

He shook his head.

Rhys:O mpuisa jaaka o rata knowing I won't do shit!(you talk to me however you please)

She shrugged as they both went silent.

Neelo:There is only so much your hand can do.

This time he laughed and she laughed as well.

Rhys:O tla swaba Neelo.

Neelo:I love you okay? Please be safe in there, you're still behaving akere? Good. Bye!

Rhys:Are you coming tomorrow?

Neelo:I really don't know.

Rhys:Please love.

Neelo:I'll see. Bye!

He sighed and nodded.

Rhys:Bye sweetheart.

She hung up and placed the phone by the night stand. How was she going to hide a whole pregnancy? How?

At Prison

In the cell

Rhysand chucked the cellphone under the mattress and he looked up. He knew his cell mate wasn't asleep and he waited for his comment. The cellphone thing was something his cell mate knew, the people he bribed so he can have a cellphone in here and his wife.

Him:You love her don't you?

Rhys chuckled as he placed his hands behind his head.

Rhys:I do..

Him:At least you have a family to get to and at least she is still loyal to you even if you are here. Not a lot women would be loyal to a man in jail..

Rhys:Not a lot of them..

He sighed.

Him:the mother of my child cheated on me. It had been just three months of me in prison and I heard from my sister that she had a new man. I would've understood if she said she won't be able to wait for me...

Rhys:some women are not worth it.

Him:You got that right. I'm just surviving for my daughter..

Rhys:Focus on the end game.

Him:mmhm..

There was silence and Rhys closed his eyes. He last held his boy when he was just born and now RJ was 2 years. The fact that his boy hasn't seen him and now he had another on the way who was going to see him as a stranger. A lone tear escaped his eye and he quickly wiped it away and opened his eyes in the dark cell room.

Five years was a very light sentence. He knew that but he would always carry the guilt of missing the first few years of his kids' lives. From thereon it was going to take time for the kids to get used to him. What if they hate him? He knew Neelo didn't but she wasn't able to be the father as well while he was in prison. If his past self knew this would happen, he would've stopped doing shit years ago and put his degree to use. He turned on the side and finally closed his eyes.

The following morning

At Neelo's house

Neelo sat on the toilet seat and started shaving. Okay she made her decision. She was going to "see" him today. When she was done she showered and got ready for work.

At T&M Publications

Ruby sat in her new office. She got a raise and a promotion last night. So far so good in her life. Her father was well and her parents were happy.

The past quickly forgotten. She tapped her pen on the glass table and she smiled. She made it and leaving the police force was the best decision she has ever made even if at that time it was all for the wrong reasons she mused. The more she walked thia journey of self discovery, she realized that she

never really loved Rhysand. You don't do what she did to a person you claim to love. Hers wasn't love, just an obsession that he took his love away and showered it on someone who truly deserved it.

She saw Neelo two weeks ago at the store with her son. The child looked so much like Rhysand so she could imagine how Neelo was feeling. With the love of her life in jail and having to take care of his photocopy without him. She did say hi though and Neelo greeted back with a sunny smile. How did she ever think she could hurt her because of Rhys? She had lost her mind that's for sure.

Her phone beeped with a message and she grinned. Now her life now looked like it was out of a Harlequin romance novel. Would anyone believe her if she said she met a blue eyed Englishman at Maun while she was working and he swept her off her feet? They wouldn't and this private relationship of hers was going so good she always woke up midnight

and practiced her wedding dances because wow! Mjolo was nice with the right person at the right time.

"Hey there little human being "

She laughed as she texted back. He should come back and check on her. She was still saving up for plane tickets to and from England so since he could afford the travel he should come check on her.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo rubbed her eyes as she looked at the hunk laying next to her. She checked the time and she jumped out of bed. She was late. Oh so late.

She walked into the bathroom and started with brushing her teeth. After she was done she walked to the shower where she turned it on.

Wawa waited for a minute before she got inside as the ist filled the shower. She got her loofah and started scrubbing her arms. She felt a presence behind her and she turned to find him behind her.

Wawa:Good morning..

He kissed her lips and she dropped it as she wrapped her hands around his neck.

She broke the kiss and laughed.

Wawa:Ke late..

Him:So am I...

Wawa:I don't feel any better..

He chuckled and bent down to pick the loofah to scrub her clean.

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#108

At Prison

Neelo sat on the chair in the room waiting for Rhysand. This was why she was pregnant but then she knew that she would always ruin herself for him. The door opened and he walked in that orange jumpsuit. He had tied it around his waist and the vest was tight around his body. Him being in prison made him more buffer but as long as his weight doesn't crush her she was okay.

Rhys:Hey sweetheart.

Neelo:Hi..

Rhys:I didn't think you would come..

She shrugged with a little smile as he turned the

chair and pushed it towards him. He bent down and captured her lips, his hands on both cheeks and Neelo broke it looking at him.

Neelo:How long do we have? I wanted us to talk...

Rhys:Thirty minutes..

She sighed.

Rhys:We can still talk. What's on your mind?

Neelo:Baby ka go raya batho ke reng?(What am I going to tell people?)

He placed his hands on her smooth thighs. She wore a skirt, makes things easier.

Rhys:I don't know..

Neelo:I can't exactly hide a whole pregnancy can I? It's going to show kana..

Rhys:Don't stress..

Neelo:I will be facing judgement babe. Do you know

how brutal the world is to women whom they believe cheated but if it's a man gatwe monna ke selepe wa adimanwa kana bo monna ke poo o agelwa lesakana kana ba reng gone moo...

He held her hands and kissed them.

Neelo:I can't be excited hela sentle gape. Other than people, if I reveal that you are the dad people are going to get it trouble kana.

Rhys:Sorry I put you in this situation.

Neelo:On top of that, who is going to be there to hold my hand throughout the whole pregnancy because it definitely won't be family except my parents and maybe Marang after she lectures me about fidelity. Baby wa bona gore go messy jang? Pregnancy isn't just that fun knowing gore you are in jail. You don't attend the appointments and all..

He let go of her hands and stood up on her feet. Yet again, he was the one tarnishing his wife's reputation.

Neelo stood up as well. She didn't want to worry but these were things she had to consider. He turned and faced her.

Rhys:I feel so helpless right now.

Neelo placed her hands on the table. She can deal with the rejection and all right? She will be strong.

Neelo:I guess I'll be fine...might go home till the dust settles if possible.

Rhys walked to her and covered her face with his hands.

Rhys:A baby is a blessing, we both know that but under these circumstances it just feels more like it's going to be hard. I'm sorry.

Neelo:You said that. It's okay.

He pecked her lips.

Rhys:I love you marshmallow.

Neelo:I love you too..

Rhys lifted her head and initiated the french kiss. She responded by wrapping her hands around his torso.

Rhys and placed her on the table as they fervently kissed. Neelo tugged his vest and he broke the kiss for a few seconds to removed it. He went back to kissing her and he stood between her thighs while she lifted her hands for him to take off the t-shirt. When the tee was gone, he pulled down the skirt. He was glad that there were no cameras in here. What he did with his wife wasn't meant for public viewing.

He moved back a bit and pulled her skirt down. His fingers traced her thighs and she looked up at him. He slid between her legs and he #EXPLICIT

At Alex's Office

Alex had his secretary type up the documents they

had to submit for the tender. Hopefully they win the tender. Hopefully.

He looked at Kgosi's framed picture on his desk. It would be nice to expand his family and settle down. If Neo thought about it thoroughly and they can start trying for kids. He hoped she agrees, it would be nice to have a complete family and for Kgosi to have siblings as well. He knew he failed to give Kgosi the family he deserved way before he was conceived but now he can.

At Prison

Neelo got dressed as she watched him. She was flushed, she was sure and she didn't know if she was going to walk properly out of the prison facilities. Rhysand held her flat stomach and back at her. He kissed her lips softly before he broke the kiss.

Neelo:I don't know when I'll see you again.

She said as she hugged him tightly. He rubbed her back and kissed the top of her head. He will survive a few months of not seeing her if it comes to that, he was grown man. She broke it and she hoped the hickeys were just on her chest and not on her neck.

Rhys:We'll find a way okay?

Neelo:Okay.

When she was sure she looked decent, hair pushed back and him just like a normal inmate she looked at her rings. She hoped everything was going to go well. Rhysand was about to speak when the door opened and Neelo looked at her nails. It was time for him to go. It always hurt worse than the last time but she forced a smile as he was escorted out and she straightened her t-shirt. Minutes later she walked out and was led out of the prison facilities and buildings.

By the time she reached her car she placed her head

on the steering wheel and shed a few tears.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#109

At Neelo's house

She reverse parked inside the yard. She frowned seeing Marang's car. Was there something wrong? She wore her hoodie even though it was 40°c outside. She stepped out of the car and closed the door. She looked at her face, did it show that she had sex thirty minutes ago? She looked at her neck and luckily he didn't leave any hickeys. She was burning inside these sweatpants and hoodie but a girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do.

She locked the car and slipped her hands in the pockets as she walked to the house. The door was already open and she smiled seeing Marang with Nate. Nate kept on touching Marang's six month

belly.

Marang:Hey sis...I came here ten minute a-(frowning)
are you cold? It's burning outside..

Neelo:Hey..yeah uhm..I was cold and-

Marang:maybe you are sick or something. Did you
get yourself checked?

Neelo:Not yet..

Marang suspiciously looked at her younger sister.
She seemed uneasy as well.

Marang:you should. You really should.

Neelo:Yeah..

She blew Nate kisses as she walked to her room. A
shower and a change of clothes. She placed her
phone down as she stripped out of her clothes. She
wrapped a towel around her body. The bedroom
door opened as Marang spoke.

Marang:I think you should go see a doc-(pausing as she looked at Neelo,noticing the hickeys on her collarbone)

Neelo:uhm..

Marang:Are those hickeys?

Neelo:What hickeys? Ntle ke ye go tlhapa.

Neelo said as she quickly walked into the bathroom and locked the door. She closed her eyes. Not this soon.

She stepped inside the shower and she took over thirty minutes in there. She was sure her sister was gone too.

She walked out and Marang was sitting on the bed cradling her stomach.

Neelo:You didn't leave?

Marang:Why would I?

Neelo:oh...

Marang:Ke di lovebite gone moo?

Neelo:Don't be silly, of course not.

Marang:I am not stupid Nene...

Neelo:I never said you were...

Marang:How do you explain hickeys? Are you seeing someone discreetly?

Marang was so calm as she quizzed her sister.

Neelo:Whu would I do that Rangz?

Marang:You tell me, you weren't cold were you? You have a side nigga?(squinting her eyes)

Neelo:Marang I am not.

Marang:Why are you defensive? I am right? How long has your affair been going on?

Neelo:Ga ke cheate Marang!

Marang:I see...Just hope you used protection in whatever shenanigans you got yourself involved in.

Go megare and STIs out there. There is also pregnancy to consider as well.

Neelo just stared at her sister as she shook her head.

Marang:Baby sis I am disappointed. If you were lonely you could've ordered a dildo online. You didn't have to cheat on the man you vowed the rest of your life to. I'll be in the lounge.

Marang walked out as she clapped her hands. The door closed and Neelo sighed. She sat down on the bed and rubbed her flat tummy.

Twenty minutes later she stepped out of her room in a long sleeved turtle neck. Marang was texting on her phone. Marang chuckled. She never saw that coming. Neelo was the last person on this planet to cheat. God!

Marang:koore go serious o cheatile nnaka?

Neelo:Rangz I didn't and I don't know how to convince you otherwise.

Marang:Okay.

Neelo:You do believe me right?

Marang:No sis...anyway I had wanted us to go out for lunch. Did you eat?

Neelo:I-I ate...

Her stomach chose to growl at that exact moment and Marang raised a perfectly done brow.

Marang:We can go eat while o njela dikgang ka affair yaago..

Neelo's mouth dropped.

Marang:We are taking my car, I'll wait for you in the car..

She stood up and walked out of the door and Neelo frowned. What was her sister playing at? She sighed and pushed her hair back. She hoped the lawyers will

be able to make this happen faster and get her husband out of there.

She walked to her helper's room and told her that she will be back.

Neelo:Ke dule..

Her:Alright.

Neelo:I'll be back int two hours or so.

She walked to the car and Marang was playing music. She increased the volume and Neelo looked at her sister. Why was she playing that song for?

Marang:Buckle up sis.

Neelo sighed and closed her eyes. This was going to be a long ride

Your secret has it's consequence and that's on

you babe

I break down everytime you call

We're a wreck you're the wrecking ball

We said no one else, how could you do this babe?

You really blew this babe

We ain't getting through this one babe

This is the last time I'll ever call you babe.

Marang looked at her sister as the gate slid open and she drove out of the yard.

At Katlego's house

Katlego had already given up on the chance to adopt. It has been more than two years of him waiting to be labelled as a suitable candidate. Was it because he wasn't married? Is that why he was snubbed everytime he wanted to adopt a little boy or little girl?

He sighed. If Neelo wasn't married maybe he would've asked her to marry him just so he can be able to adopt. He can't disrupt her life like that. She has been a good friend for the longest time and a great confidante as well.

He sighed. His hope fading with each passing day and he wasn't getting any younger too. So he was going to die alone. An old lonely man with nothing but a dog for companionship.

At the mall

Neelo sat down and waited for Marang to get settled.

Neelo:Are you excited about the baby?

Marang:Very. Kana mma wena sa le ke batla ngwnana Josh a gana(I've always wanted another child and Josh didn't want to have another)

Neelo:After so many years of peace and silence you're ready for the screams and sleepless nights?

Marang:If we dealt with four annoying baby screams a decade ago we can surely deal with only one little baby..

Neelo sighed. Nate gave her sleepless nights and it would've been nice to have the experience with Rhys. Now another was on the way and he wasn't there.

She didn't even notice she was crying till Marang touched her cheek.

Marang:Are you okay? O jewa ke dibe?

Neelo laughed as she wiped her tears.

Neelo:Themma Marang ae!

Her voice shook and she tightly closed her lips. She didn't know how long it was going to take for the appeal for parole to go through. Who was going to

hold her hand in the labour room? More tears rolled down her eyes and she looked down wiping them away.

Marang:Why are you crying Neelo?

Neelo:It's nothing(sniffing)can we order?

She forced a smile that didn't reach her eyes and Marang sighed.

Marang:Sis look, as much as I'm disappointed that you had an extra-marital affair, you can talk to me about anything.

Neelo:I know..uhm can we order?

She blinked and rubbed her cheeks.

In the same eatery Peter sat two tables away from the two ladies. He watched from a distance as Neelo talked to her sister and he thought Neelo was going

to come after him but she never did. He met her again a year ago and tried to apologise but instead she flashed a smile and told him oh how happy she was. He could see the pain in her eyes and she congratulated him on a job well done since he did his job to the fullest. She even wished him well and she walked away from him as she held Rhysand's child in her arms.

The guilt that ate at his conscience didn't subsidize. He couldn't even force himself to be happy about his promotion to partner at the law firm. That was all he ever wanted but victory just didn't taste as sweet now.

He was still single, no kids or wife to speak of. He was all about workn work, work. It seemed like everything was stagnant in his personal life while everyone was progressing.

.

.

TROUBLED

#110

At eatery

As they ate Neelo looked at her sister.

Neelo:Marang contrary to what you think, I didn't cheat.

Marang:okay.

Neelo:On God! Just this once can you believe me when I say I didn't cheat?

Marang sighed as she looked into Neelo's eyes. She breathed out before she took a sip of her juice.

Marang:Okay. I will trust you on this one.

Neelo:Thank you..

She said as she closed her eyes.

Neelo:Regardless of what you saw, just take my word for it.

Marang:Okay Nene.

Neelo:Thank you...

Marang:Why were you crying earlier on?

Neelo:I never got to experience those sleepless nights with Rhys so yah.

Marang:I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to rub it in your face like that..

Neelo:It's okay. We move right? That stage passed, I can't exactly turn back the hands of time can I?

Marang:Still...you miss him?

Neelo:So much but that's what usually happens when you're a gangster's wife right?

Marang:And he loves you regardless. Love comes once in a lifetime.

Neelo:I know that...

Neelo sipped on her juice and smiled as she changed the topic.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo smiled as she hung up the video call she was on with Kgosi. Her baby missed her but he was also happy at his dad's place. Tomorrow was Sunday so he was coming back and as much as she didn't want him to go to daycare at two years, she agreed with his father. Besides that way she wasn't going to let any woman inside the house. She got off the high chair and walked to the lounge to sit on the couch. She went through the channels as when a door knock disturbed her.

She walked to the door and opened it. A pleasant smile graced her features as he wrapped his free hand around her waist.

Wawa:Hii(blushing)

Tefo:Hello malady..

Wawa:This is a pleasant surprise..

Tefo:Thought i would say hi to the most beautiful woman I've ever met.

Wawa:Well your hi is appreciated good sir.

He kissed her lips and broke the kiss.

Tefo:Flowers, with dandelions included because I've been wishing on dandelions hoping you would be mine.

She blushed as he let go of her waist and handed her the bouquet of flowers.

She took the flowers and smelled them. Tefo took out his airpods and put them in her ear. He played the song and she didn't know she could smile this much.

Maybe it's the way you say my name
Maybe it's the way you play your game
But it's all good,I've never known anybody like you
But it's all good, I've never dreamed of nobody like
you
I've heard of a love that comes once in a lifetime
And I'm pretty sure you are that love of mine
Cause i'm at a field of dandelions wishing on every
one that you would be mine.
And i see forever in your eyes.
I feel okay when I see your smile

She maintained eye contact with him and he rubbed her chin while she held the flowers. He kissed her lips and let go as he walked back to his car. He came back with a box of chocolates and she giggled.

Tefo:Enjoy the rest of the day wa pelo yame...

The way he used her name in a sentence had her other heartbeat beating like crazy. He handed her the box and kissed her cheek walking away. He left her with the airpods and the song played till he reversed out of the yard and it cut. She will have to look up the song. This type of mjolo was new to her and she had a song he specifically chose for her?

She placed the box of chocolates on the table along with the flowers. She placed it down and went to look for a vase at the kitchen. She was definitely placing the flowers at the centre of the table.

She came back with a vase and as she removed the wrapping, a card fell through and she covered her face. She had his airpods on even though there was nothing playing. She felt all so giddy inside as she opened the card and read it. She picked a dandelion and placed it in her hair. She felt like a teenager all again who was doggedly pursued by her high school crush.

She took her phone out and snapped a few selfies with the dandelion in her hair and she couldn't help but smile seeing the happiness on her face.

She uploaded it on Facebook with the caption
*Wishing on dandelions all of the time *

She placed her phone down.

At Alex's place

Alex could see that Kgosi was missing his mother. He wasn't bubbly anymore after that video call. He scrolled through his Facebook and saw Wapelo's post. That smile, that was the exact one that made him ask her out. He didn't even react on the picture and he refreshed his newsfeed.

Alex:Babe, I'm going to drop Kgosi at his mom's place.

Neo:Okay love..

He walked to the room that was meant for Kgosi and he got his bags ready. Twenty minutes later he was done and was strapping Kgosi up in his baby seat.

He got inside the car and the gate slid open. He started the car as the engine warmed up. He finally reversed out of the yard.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo played the song over and over while smiling like a retard. She should get a hold of herself. When the song ended she screamed into the pillow. That was when she heard the door knock. She walked to the door and yet another surprise.

Wawa:Hey..

Kgosi hugged her legs and she laughed as she picked him up.

Alex:He looked like he missed you..can I put it his bags?

Wawa:Sure...

Kgosi started to talk to his mom and she just nodded to whatever he was saying. She didn't understand a thing.

Alex noticed the flowers and he swallowed. She moved on? He saw the box of chocolates and the card. Wasn't Kgosi still young for her to entertain men?

Wawa:You're hungry?

Kgosi:mmhmmm..

Wawa:Let's see what to make for you.Alex ka boa..

She walked to the kitchen and he picked the card to read what was written. So another man smashed her post pregnancy? A part of him had always thought she would stay single just because she was a mother and men didn't like women with children. He placed the card down. That was what gave him assurance..

.

.

.

*

*

*

*

Y'all never told me HIS. OWNED. ON LOCKDOWN is this nice. I am on insert 93 and wow guys I see why you all loved it. My apologies.

TROUBLED

#111

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo walked out of the kitchen and Alex stood up on his feet.

Alex:Noce flowers you got there.

Wawa:Thank you(smiling)

Alex:Uhm are they from a boyfriend?

Wapelo placed Kgosi down and frowned.

Wawa:Yes. Why?

Alex:You didn't tell me you're dating?

Wawa:Am I not supposed date Alexander?

Alex:I didn't say that. Kgosi is not even five..

Wawa: Yet you are in a committed relationship Alex. Is this a double standard I'm sensing?

Alex: I didn't say that.

Wawa: Good. I would hate for you to be a bitter baby daddy who wants to chase away any partner I would have at the time.

He rubbed his neck and breathed out. She didn't deny it and he probably fucked her good hence the glow.

Alex: My apologies if I offended you and if I came off as insecure and "too" into your business.

Wawa: Okay..

He bent down and held Kgosi's hand as he said goodbye then stood up.

Alex: I'll be leaving now. Bye.

Wawa: bye and thank you for dropping him off.

He nodded and walked out, closing the door. He

stood by the closed entrance as pain choked him. There was no chance here. Can't women forgive one last time and decide to give their children's father a chance for them to be a family? Did they move on just like that? No second thoughts on how it would be like to have a whole family with no step-parents or step-siblings?

That low sunken feeling in his stomach came back and he sighed walking to the car. He guessed this particular woman was built different.

At Neelo's house

Neelo sat on the rug in the bedroom as she planned what she would be doing with her life the next few months on some self imposed exile. Obviously no one was going to believe her if she said she didn't cheat. Leaving the country was an option too, she always wanted to travel and she didn't know how long it was going to take to appeal for her husband's

parole.

Going to Bobonong too was going to make rumours fly around. Her mother-in-law lived there, hell her own mother was going to give her hell because of her mysterious pregnancy. Her mother wasn't going to be angry for long. So she just needed to sort out travelling documents. Make a visa for Nate, get Rhysand's signature on the affidavit and work from wherever she would be. A nice holiday destination would be France. Maybe see the Eiffel tower with her baby and make memories. Come home in time to give birth if Rhys was not yet out. That sounded like a really good idea and she will tell him when he calls tonight.

She placed the notebook and pen down. Now she just hoped the family won't suspect a thing or that she was running away from the judgement she might face when her pregnancy shows.

At Alex's house

Alex placed the car keys on the table and sat next to Neo. He had given her long enough to think about expanding their family. He loved Wawa but she didn't want him and Neo loved him. He loved Neo though

Alex:Did you think about it?

Neo:Alex why are you pushing this baby issue?

Alex:Dingwaga di a tsamaya and eventually we need to settle.

Neo:Still...

Alex:You can stop taking contraception, it's not like I will walk out of you and the baby's life Neo.

Neo:I didn't say that.

Alex:Unless you feel like you aren't stable with me or you don't want kids.

Neo:Kgosi is still young..

Alex:I want our kids Neo. Our kids, yes wr have Kgos
Neo but wouldn't you love ti have the pregnancy
experience? Us going for doctor's appointments?

Neo faced the other way as she sighed. At one point
she had wanted that so bad but she gave it up.

Alex:What do you say love?

Neo:I would love that, I would really do...

Alex:I sense a but..

Neo:But I'm infertile...

Alex removed his hand from her thigh as she faced
him.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#112

At Alex's house

Neo knew this was going to happen. Yes she can't have kids and the way Alex had been so insistent on wanting kids he will most probably leave her.

Alex:What do you mean you're infertile?

Neo:I can't carry kids Alex. I can't birth a kid, I can't carry a child in my womb. That's what I mean by infertility.

Alex:Have you seen a doctor?

She stood up pushing her hair back.

Neo:Would I be saying this if I didn't see a doctor

and asking myself if I can't fall pregnant at all?

Alex:You never told me..

Neo:It's not something you just talk about. You want a family and I can't have kids Alex.

Alex:What did the doctor say?

Neo:I'm just going to tell you then sooner or later, you will long for kids and leave me for a woman who can have kids. That's how it usually happens. I get insulted for not being woman enough and the man walks out.

Alex looked at her. Of course he wanted to expand his family and now she was going to make him seem like the bad guy.

Neo:I have cervical stenosis but it's okay. If you want to leave you can. I won't make you the bad guy. Every guy wants kids and I have accepted my condition and learnt to live with that small inconvenience in my life.

She sighed and looked at him. She knew that look. The one where a man contemplates spending his life with an infertile woman. He wasn't going to stay. She knew that. Now that he had a child and he wanted more, a perfectly virile man won't stay. Another failed relationship.

She walked out of the lounge and left Alex in his thoughts. She knew she was never going to be good enough for any man, why she thought he was different was beyond her.

Alex sighed. She couldn't have kids? That was what rang in his head? He knew he wanted more kids and she can't have any? Wow! He surely knew how to pick them didn't he?

He leaned back on the sofa and looked to his sides thinking she would be here but she wasn't. If she had told him this two years ago, then he wouldn't be here. If only he knew. At some point Kgosì needed siblings

and he wanted to have two or three more kids. He shook his head. She will probably say he left her because of her infertility and he didn't quite catch what she said she suffered from too.

At Neelo's house

Neelo tucked in Nate and kissed his little forehead knowing very well that he will wake up on his own and make his way to her bed. She chuckled, she could imagine him doing that with Rhysand around. Imagine hearing footsteps to their door while they are still kind of busy?

She kissed his forehead again and walked out leaving his bedroom door slightly ajar. She walked to her room and waited for her husband to call. She had made up her mind. She was definitely applying for a visa to travel and making a passport for Nate. She was sure Rhys won't refuse.

Her phone rang and she picked up.

Neelo:babe..

Rhys:Hey there, how are you feeling?

Neelo:Okay(breathed in)I have an idea I want to run past you.

Rhys:Okay..

Neelo:I was thinking of leaving the country. I might come back in time to give birth.

There was silence at the end of the line.

Rhys:With RJ?

Neelo:Yes. I can't leave him here, other than you I'm his parent Rhys. It's not like I'm skipping the country. I just don't want to be stressed by people kana once the pregnancy shows. Stress and pregnancy never go together, plus they will judge me. I'm usually strong enough to ignore people's harsh whispers and all but as I said the society judges women who

cheat harshly. It's not like I will be able to say my husband made me pregnant..

Rhys:I hear you.

Neelo:I will always call besides I've always wanted to explore the world and everything in it.

Rhys chuckled sadly. He still had three more years inside, his wife should enjoy herself out there. He gave her the money and there is more that has set their family for life. Since everything is in her name they couldn't freeze a thing.

Neelo:Is it a yes?

Rhys:Ee mma. Please take care and update me.

Neelo:I will do so everyday. Thank you so much.

Rhys:I already miss you.

Neelo:I miss you so much. I love you..

Rhys:I love you.

They said their goodbyes and she hung up. She was doing this. She rubbed her flat tummy.

Neelo:Daddy loves you just that he can't be here.

On Monday she should start the process and hopefully after a week or two she will be able to travel to France. After France maybe Britain will follow next then Italy? That sounded like a plan. Spend a whole month in each country casually exploring with her children and taking photos while working from halfway across the world.

At Alex's house

Neo closed her eyes as Alex got inside the bed next to her. He didn't even pull her to him like he usually does. She held back her tears. The atmosphere felt cold and she tightly closed her eyes. It was over. She was sure about it. She should probably leave him first, before she is someone he leaves behind she should break his heart before he breaks hers. Even though she knew it was broken already.

.

.

.

*

*

*

A WEEK LATE

TROUBLED

#113

At Neo's office

Neo leaned back on her office chair. She didn't even have the guts to face Alex. This whole week they have been avoiding each other ever since she made the confession. She checked her watch and it was almost lunch time and he wasn't at the house. She should probably finish up with her packing and take her stuff to her house. She should be done in an hour or two and she will send him an email in regards to their breakup.

She stood up and tucked in her shirt neatly in her slim fit pants. She picked her blazer and handbag making sure to close her laptop and the documentation on her table.

She walked out of her office. She will be done very soon.

At Alex's office

As frustrated as he was about Neo's situation, he just didn't have the energy to want to discuss it with her. She should've told him earlier and maybe he wouldn't have developed feelings for her and opted to walk out. He admits that these past two weeks was when he raised the babh issue looking at their stability. She was already a great step-mom to Kgosi and the kid adored her. She didn't treat him like an outcast and if she wasn't busy she picked him up from school. Or was she over-compensating because she couldn't have kids of her own? This whole week was torture and they just got out of each other's way for the whole week. It was only yesterday he tried to research her condition and all. Hell he wanted to see a doctor today by lunch time

and pass by her office after seeing a doctor.

He sighed and glanced at his watch. The watch she gifted him a few months ago on his birthday, he had to admit that it felt good always getting random gifts from her just because he loved her and just two weeks ago he chided himself from buying her a new car and opted for a mini holiday in Bali to celebrate their anniversary which was next month. Now this?

He got up. It was almost time to see the doctor and hear what he has to say.

At Alex's house

Neo parked her car and held the steering wheel. Okay this was going to be the last time she set foot here and she will move. She always did. Maybe this time not date at all and look into the adoption process because she was not getting younger. She

had only two years before she hit her thirties so that was that.

She stepped out of the car in all her glory and used her manicured hands to shield her face from the burning sun. She walked to the house in her heels and she unlocked the door. The house has never looked so empty than it does now, she shook her head. No time for sentimentality. She had one job and one job only.

Neo:Neuuuza my baby you can do this. We are strong.

Just then her phone rang and she picked it up.

Neo:Hello.

Voice:Hello Neo, ga kena mashi a ngwana.

Neo:Bathong why can't you find a job to take care of your kids? It's not like you are handicapped Peo.

Peo:Just P100 for milk..

Neo:I sent P500 a week ago just cause my nephew will suffer..

Peo:It's not like you are going to be broke..

Neo:hng...mma take care of your kids, you can't keep on having kids every year ekete o foroma ditena.

Her sister let out a bitter laugh.

Peo:That's why you are a barren and your womb is closed. You are wicked. Helping out your sister is it a hard task?

Neo:Yoh! Still insulting me is not going to get you money for milk.

Peo:Keep your money. Mxm! Barren bitch!!

Her older sister cut the call and Neo closed her eyes. She wasn't going to react. She breathed in and out before walking to the bedroom to complete the task she came here for.

At Neo's office

Alex walked to her office and he knocked on the door. There was no response so he opened the door. It was empty and he couldn't see her bag. Her perfume lingered in the air though. He looked around. She usually worked through lunch and he was so sure he would find her here, working so that they can talk about this.

He closed the door and sighed. He wasn't sure if he should wait or not. He stepped away from the door. He will see her at home and they will see how they are going to move forward. He lost the first one and there was no way in hell he was losing this one over something a surgery he can pay for fix.

At Prison

Inside the visitors room

Neelo sat across him as the prison officer stood by the corner. She watched as he signed the affidavit and all the documentation necessary for Nate to travel.

When he was done he placed the pen down in the open and pushed the papers towards Neelo.

Neelo: Thank you so much.

Rhys: Anything to make you happy.

Neelo sighed. The lawyers said she should be patient about the whole process.

Rhys: I'll miss you.

Neelo smiled sadly as she leaned back on the chair.

Neelo: My thoughts will echo your name till I see you again my love.

Rhys: I want to hug you right now..

Neelo moved her hand and touched his for a few seconds before she placed it on the table.

Neelo:I can't wait for our kids to call you dad one day and we get to be together as a family.

Rhys:I also can't wait. Just stay safe okay? Is it safe to travel in your condition though?

Neelo:I'll see a doctor every two weeks just to make sure everything is okay. I love you.

Rhys:I love you marshmallow.

Tears filled her eyes and she forced herself to take deep breaths just so she doesn't break down here. Fate always has a funny way of separating loved ones.

She put the documents in the khakhi envelope before she looked at him and stole a brief kiss. Planting it on his cheek and nose.

Neelo:Till eternity baby.(smiling)

She stood up and looked at the officers. She walked out and Rhys held it together.

At Alex's house

Alex parked his car inside the yard after a long boring day at work. He couldn't spot his significant other's car. He got out of the car and he looked around. He sighed and walked to the house where he unlocked the door. He could still smell her perfume in the house. Was she here perhaps?

He threw his blazer on the couch and as he was about to walk to the bedroom he stopped in his tracks. She hated it when he did that. He picked up the blazer and walked to the bedroom. He frowned. He couldn't see her make-up things by the vanity table. Usually they were neatly arranged that side, in the morning her stuff was there. He threw the blazer

on the bed and walked to the wardrobe. He opened it and her clothes weren't in there as well. Did she move out? Without telling him? Why did she move out?

He slid his phone out and he was about to call her when an email reported. He opened it and it was from Neo.

"

h

h

h

.

'

h

.

.

h

h

h

.

h

h

h

h

, *h*

h

h

h

,

h

h

h

.

h

,

h

h

h

h

h

h

.

h

h

h

h

?

h

h.

h

h

.

h

h

h

h

h

,

h

h

h

.

h

h

h

..

."

.

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#114

At Alex's house

Alex read the email over and over again. Was she being serious right now? She thinks a mere email was going to be enough? She honestly thinks that? She had another thing coming if she thought that. He sent a reply email just saying okay and he placed his phone down. He covered his face with his hands. He had a lot to think about.

After two years was he still going to want Wapelo who clearly moved on? He had to check himself again and where he was heading especially with the way he has been thinking these past weeks. He sighed. He had a lot of growing up to do.

At Neo's house

She read his response and she placed her phone down. It was over and done with. Now she was going to need three months to heal or more. Hell a whole year but she will be fine.

Her phone rang and she flipped it to check the caller ID. She closed her eyes before she answered.

Peo: So o gana ka madi?

Neo: It's my money not yours. Call your brother to send money...

There was silence.

Neo: Because you know he isn't soft hearted like me to send you money. We tried to help you start a business but you spent the money with one of your dead beat baby daddies.

Peo: Still we are family and we should help each other.

Neo:I'm fucking tired of helping you Peo. We are all tired.

Peo:That won't make you have babies Neo.

Neo:I fucking don't care okay? I don't care, I can't have kids it's okay. No need to rub it in my face everytime you don't get your way. Go tswa hoo ga re re le toxic gatwe re phoso. Waitse ke eng go hang yourself Peo. I don't care. I am sick and tired of my inability to have children being used against me, sinced wena you can have kids take care of your own damn kids and don't ever call me. Mxm!

She hung up and proceeded to block her sister. Tears filled her eyes and she brought her knees to her face as she placed her head down. She knew that. She knew that. Having kids was not some sort of achievement was it? She got good grades, she has a degree, she built a house and she has a good job.

She achieved her goals. Her therapist told her she

was okay, her vision may not be the same as other people's vision right? She was different and it wasn't her fault. Such defects happen and she happened to be one of those with problems. It was okay. She was still human.

She wasn't half a woman, she was normal and she accepted that every man wants children. Just like the one she broke up with. He wants children and they broke up in a civilised manner without him hurling insults at her like her previous lovers. Hell her ex before Alex even got his mother to hurl insults at her condoning his cheating and how he got the side chick pregnant. This relationship thing was not for her. She let out a broken cry and that let opened the floodgates as she cried.

Minutes later she lifted her head and wiped her tears as she sniffed. She forced herself to get up and walked to the kitchen. She took out the glass and went through her cabinets to look for the only bottle

she left there. Her therapist won't know and it will be just once. She found the bottle of whiskey and she looked at the bottle for a few seconds before she opened it and poured the bitter liquid in the glass. She drank it in one go and refilled the glass. Then once more before she walked out. She will be alright. She lifted her whiskey filled glass up high and laughed tearfully.

Neo:You'll make it through this one again. You are a strong one baby girl. What do people say? God wouldn't put you through trials if you weren't strong enough.

She gulped that one and placed the glass down.

At Neelo's house

Neelo:Well I'll call every once in a while sis.

Marang:Do what makes you happy..

Neelo:Plus I have never travelled out of the country

before.

Marang:It's beautiful, snow is so cool even though cold as hell but stilla beautiful sight to see.

Neelo:If you loved seeing it, I don't know how Nate is going to react bathong..

Marang:Kids are always fascinated by little stuff. The world out there is beautiful.

Neelo:Yes mam. Let me not keep you. Bye.

Marang:Bye.

She hung up and she looked at the brochures she collected. So she had to see her parents before she leaves. She wanted to see her husband one last time again. She wasn't going to get enough of him. Just one more time after she gets back from Bobonong then see him and say her final goodbyes. She will most probably see him once the parole is approved. If they will approve it but Camilla said she should be hopeful. Hope for the best because hope has never killed anyone. She didn't know why she trusted

Camilla but she just did.

At Ruby's house

Ruby got undercovers and picked her phone from the night stand. She texted her boyfriend back before she went through pictures of clothes and lingerie she can buy before he gets here. Who knew life could be this good? She smiled as his message reported and she texted back. They didn't have much of a timw difference so he was probably home drinking a hot cup of coffee. The man always worked and she was sure he never took breaks. He admitted that it was his family that forced him to take a holiday but he was thankful for that because he met her. Her blue eyed god. She giggled. Yah no, mjolo was nice..

*

A MONTH LATER

TROUBLED

#115

At Paris, France

Neelo sat by a coffee shop with Nate opposite her as she snapped pictures of him trying to drink the tea.

Neelo:tshu tshu nana(laughing)

He looked at her and held the cup. The tea wasn't even hot just warm enough for a toddler his age. Neelo bit into the slice of cake she asked for and Nate put the cup down spilling tea on the table and she shook her head with a smile. He looked at his plate and his mother's plate..

Nate:mama..

Neelo:hmm?

He pointed at her plate and she pointed at his. He just looked at her plate and she sighed as she fed him a piece of her cake. They had the same cake though. She didn't know what was wrong with kids not wanting to eat their own food. He gave his mother a toothy grin and clapped his little hands. She was glad her little man was enjoying their holiday and accompanied her everywhere when he wasn't tired. They still had a lot to see and more photos to take. She was sure Christmas will find them abroad on their expedition. Nate finally used his hand to hold the cake and she laughed taking photos of him. When the camera shuttered he grinned at his mother again.

Neelo:What do the Parisians say? Je't aime bèbè...

He just nodded as if he understood and then got busy with the cake eat. Neelo placed her phone down and she ate hers drinking the hot cocoa she was served with. The peace that surrounded her was

one she was eternally grateful for. Her husband was a sweetheart to even allow her to travel the world with his precious cargo. She rubbed her growing baby bump. She was four and a half months pregnant. Her baby girl was healthy and she was happy. A boy then a girl. Maybe five years later they will try for another child too.

Nate:Mama?

She looked at her first born with a smile.

Neelo:Hmm?

He showed her his empty plate and his hands full of cream. His mouth as well.

Neelo:Good boy, now mommy won't sleep today but it's okay..

She opened her bag and took out his wipes. She walked to his side and started to wipe his hands then face.

Neelo:Now all clean. Full?

She touched his tummy and he nodded but wanted

to pick the tea cup.

Neelo:Then I guess we should get going my love.

She walked to her side and since she had already paid for this, she picked her bag and helped him off the chair. She held his hand as they started to walk away. She didn't think she had the energy to pick him up. Most probably when they get to Britain, they could rent out a small cottage and cozy up inside just the both of them. The world was their oyster.

At Francistown

At Wapelo's house

This past month with Tefo has been wonderful. She got to meet his ten year old son and the boy was his father's son that's for sure. The boy got along with Kgosi so well they might've been brothers. It's been a month and she saw a very stable future with Tefo.

Right now the boys was outside with Tefo playing ball, she was sure her poor baby didn't even have the chance to kick that ball larger than him.

She chuckled. She wondered when Neo and Alex were going to have kids of their own. As much as Neo was a good woman and she treated Kgosi like her own, it got to her how Kgosi used to call her mama as well. She got Kgosi gifts too and even though this past month she hasn't heard Kgosi blubber in his baby language about Neo, woman should have her own kids.

Two years was too long not to have kids with the man you love. She shook her head as she stood up and walked outside to where the boys were. A part of her was glad that Tefo didn't come with baby mama drama because his son's mother died a few years ago.

Wawa:Juice?

Tefo:Yes mam..

Kgosi:Mama..

Her tired baby half ran to her and she laughed.

Wawa:Lona le lapisa ngwana..

Tefo laughed and Kagiso said something that made all of them laugh and Kgosi changed direction running to the guys.

She shook her head and walked inside the house heading to the kitchen to pour juice and also hand them water. Neelo was happy spending money abroad and she was glad. Woman was miserable without Rhys so she needed to relax even though her sudded glow had her suspecting that Neelo did something she shouldn't have done. But it wasn't her place to ask questions. Neelo will talk once she is ready.

At Alex's house

He thought about what his brother said. It's been a month since they have been apart. He just needed to get himself together. Think real hard about what happened and what he wanted in his life. In passing he mentioned something about finally meeting their sister and Rhys brushed it off.

He knew what he had to do or what he should've done a long time ago.

At Neo's house

Neo settled on the couch as she placed her wine glass down. She has been drinking moderately these days and she wasn't drinking in excess. A glass or two a day was okay and today being a Saturday she had nothing better to do. She played the song she spent the whole month playing. It was her comfort song and life has been peaceful ever since she

blocked Peo. She knew her older sister was prideful and wasn't going to ask for forgiveness. She let out a low chuckle as well, she had gotten so used to Kgosi too that she missed the little boy though she knew he represented something she would never have.

She took a sip and she sung along, replacing the it's been a year with it's been a month in her head. Their anniversary had passed and she laughed with tears in her eyes. This was going to be a process. Hell she didn't have the strength to move onto another relationship.

I tried to imagine, your reaction

It didn't scare me when the earthquake happened
but it really got me thinking

The night we went drinking, stumbled in the house
and didn't make it past the kitchen

Oh it's been a year now, think I figured out how, how

to think about you without it ripping my heart out
And I know, you know, we know, you weren't down
for forever and it's fine

And I know, you know, we know, we weren't meant
for each other and it's fine

She placed the glass down as she wiped her tears
when it got to the part where it said "Would you love
me for the hell of it? All our fears would be
irrelevant"

She sobbed into her hands as the song played. She
knows she wasn't meant for forever with someone
but she will be okay. It was her fault that she didn't
speak up earlier and now she fell for him so bad that
it still hurt when she was the one who ended things.

The music was so loud that she didn't even hear the
door knock. Once the song ended, she lifted her
head as the knock persisted. She was an absolute

utter mess. She kept quiet hoping the person would go away. The person knocked again and she kept quiet. She was in no mood nor state for guests. The person stopped knocking and she closed her eyes as the next song played, she picked her glass and gulped the rest of her wine and listened to the lyrics. Julia Michaels was her fighter today because she found herself near sobbing again.

I think of the night in the park it was getting dark
And we would stay there for hours
What a lie, what a lie, what a lie
You'd cling to my body, like you wanted it forever
What a lie, what a lie, what a lie for you and I

She cried till she had hiccups. Her phone rang and she ignored it as she placed her head on her knees. She was getting everything out of her system. Cry it out, drink it out just get it out of her system. Like she has been doing every weekend this past month.

.

.

*

*

Next one to follow shortly.

TROUBLED

#116

At Neo's house

Alex stood silently by the door, he could hear her sobs regardless of the loud music and how she purposefully ignored the door knock. Why didn't she open the damned door. His woman was dramatic alright. He stepped away from the door and walked back to his car. He checked the compartments for the extra key he had made after he returned hers to her a few weeks ago.

He walked back to the door and another sad song. What was it with women and making themselves intentionally sad with music so that they cry more? He didn't understand that logic really. He used his key to unlock the door and he heard the click so he

was sure it was unlocked. He opened the door and he stood there as he watched her sob in between her legs. She had lost a bit of weight too. He sucked in a deep breath and closed his eyes for a few seconds before walking to her.

Neo lifted her head upon hearing footsteps and she gasped seeing him. In the flesh. She used her hands to wipe her tears. He shouldn't see her this weak.

Neo:uhm h-hey I didn't hear you.

Alex looked at her. She looked hollow. Was this what happened to her if she was stressed and hurting? Her voice had a shaky edge to it as well and he hated that she was hurting.

Neo swallowed dryly as silence engulfed them. What was he doing here? She set him free to find a woman whom he can have kids with, she didn't want to see him because she knew what she lost behind. She wanted him to be happier than he has ever been. Him being here was about to complicate things

including her own healing.

Alex sat next to her without saying a word and pulled her to him and he started to rub her back. She held back her tears as she cradled into his large frame like a child. Why was he doing this? To both of them but most especially her? He rubbed her back without saying a word and minutes later she found herself crying and wetting his tee with her tears. Alex kissed the top of her head as he looked around. Why was there wine? Neo didn't drink, she told him that she had gone to therapy for her drinking. She had been open about every aspect of her life except this one detail about her infertility. Stupid of her not to tell him but he was sure he would've run for the hills had she told him this two years ago.

She stopped crying while in his warm embrace. She looked up at him with her swollen red eyes and he rubbed her pink cheek.

Alex: We'll talk about the alcohol later..

She swallowed laying her heavy head back down on his chest. She could feel the familiar headache coming as she closed her heavy eyes. Alex watched her silently as she closed her eyes. She was light and they would talk about this but not now. Minutes passed and he looked at her. Did she know how pretty she looked when she was asleep? Reminded him of that Disney movie she forced him to watch because she had missed Disney princess movies at her big age. He sat on the couch with her peaceful by his side. He wanted to be sure she was asleep before he took her to bed. He finally stood up and picked her up. Too light for his liking. He found his way to her bedroom and used his foot to push open the door. He placed her on the bed and he covered her with the fleece while he looked for something for her to change in. He found her sleeping shirt and walked to the bed to get rid of her sweats. She didn't even wake up in the process. He sat by the corner and watched her sleep. He smiled softly and his thoughts were interrupted by a phone call. Wapelo's

name flashed on the screen and he answered.

Alex:Hi..

Wawa:Hello..Kgosi here is your dad..

She handed him the phone and Alex chuckled as Kgosi spoke in syllables. He was always amused by his little boy. Ten minutes later Kgosi yawned and he heard rustling.

Alex:Thank you. Goodnight.

Wawa:Wait...uhm I have a question..

Alex:Okay..

Wawa:When are you and Neo having kids? I mean it's been two years and we hadn't even had two years when you got me pregnant..

Alex:Wapelo I think it's best we stay out of each other's personal lives unless it involves Kgosi.(calmly)

Wawa:I'm sorry I just thought th-

Alex:Don't thought next time. Have a good night.

He hung up and looked at Neo as he placed his phone by her bedside. He stood up and walked out of the room.

At Neelo's parents

Ma N:Did you notice something different about Nene when she was here?

Ra N:No..

Ma N:I think Nene is pregnant..

Ra Neelo looked at his wife, he really wanted to say she wasn't right but from the last time Neelo was pregnant and how she had gained weight, he would give his wife's suspicions the benefit of the doubt.

Ra N:But how?

Ma N:These kids, they have a lot of technology..

Ra N:What do you mean?

Ma N:Maloba in the newspaper I read that there was a woman who did gatweng gone moo? They made her pregnant at the hospital.

Ra N:Uhu!

Ma N:Kao bolella...

Ra N:We'll hear from Nene.

Ma N:She says she is enjoying Paris le Nate..

Ra N:And some of us have never travelled.

Ma N:We are too old to travel..

Ra N:Better we stay here and tend to the farm.

Ma N:Exactly.

He smiled as he got out of bed to go switch off the light.

At Paris

Inside the rented apartment

Neelo put Nate to sleep after she had locked the doors. She sat down and took her laptop out to check her emails. Any updates on her husband's case and of course update her album. She had saved all of Nate's milestones so that Rhys can see everything once he was out.

She read her email from the lawyer. The judge was willing to hear their case and it was scheduled a week before Christmas. She started counting. Two months away. She would be six months. It wouldn't be wise to even attend. The lawyers will give her the verdict. It would be so nice to have her husband home for Christmas. She rubbed her tummy. She will have to trust her lawyers.

.

TROUBLED

#117

The following morning

At Neo's house

She woke up with her face against hard muscle. She closed her eyes again. He spent the night? She thought he would be gone once she wakes up. His hands wound up around her as would bands of steel. Who told him she was running? Okay she knew they didn't stand a chance.

His hold over her eased and she opened her eyes to look up at him. He looked down at her and smiled. Alex kissed the top of her head and then allowed himself the opportunity to thoroughly assess her

with his shrewd eye.

Alex:How are you feeling?

Neo:Better..uhm..

She tried to sit upright so he could let her go but he wasn't moving.

Alex:Relax...

She sighed. He didn't have to do this. He was here to stay and for good. Her stubbornness wasn't going to keep him away in anyway. He gave her enough time and he had enough time himself to work through his own feelings and he knew he had loved her and he still does but this time Wapelo was completely and truly in the past.

Alex:I'm willing to listen, talk to me about anything love..

She didn't know what to say. They weren't a couple

or anything of that sort no more, this was just going to delay her healing.

Neo:This is not the right time and besides we broke up.

Alex:Are we really going to talk about timing in times like these?

She sucked in a breath and managed to escape his hold. Well he let her.

Neo:It doesn't matter, we are no longer together. You need a woman who gives you children and I am not that woman.

Alex:You broke up with me. I didn't agree..

Neo:You sent an email back.

Alex:Who breaks up with their partner via email kante Neo?

Neo:That's besides the point but we are over.

Alex:No we are not..

Neo:We are...

Alex:Not.

Neo:Are..

Alex:Not..

She ended laughing and she hit him with a pillow.

Neo:Tlherra tswa mo dikobong tsame(get out of my blankets)

Alex:Ka gana..

He pulled her to him and he angled his head down to touch her forehead so he was looking into her eyes.

Alex:Ka go rata and I won't let this come between us. We will talk and see what to do..

Neo:Ale-

He silenced her with a soft kiss.

Alex:As foolish as you are for not telling me this earlier I love you my drama queen autwe? I just needed time to digest this and everything. Don't let

your anxiety push me and us away autwe?

He kissed her forehead then her nose bridge followed by her cheeks then her puckered lips. He used his hand to lightly hold her neck and smiled as he kissed her chin.

Alex:I love you and don't forget that angel..

She nodded and he smiled. They still had more to talk about but this was the first step.

At Paris, France

In the apartment

Neelo worked away as she sent her approvals for everything that needed approval. She would be home

exactly a week before Christmas so if her husband was coming home she would be able to welcome him with open arms. She couldn't wait for Nate to meet his dad and for his dad to hold him.

Naturally as a mother she showed Nate his dad's pictures so he can know that he was called papa. She just wanted to make it easy for the two to connect once Rhys comes out of jail by the time he will come out. Nate walked towards her holding his ball and she placed the laptop aside.

Neelo:Hey boy...

She said as she opened her arms up to him. Instead Nate sat next to her and placed his hands on her growing tummy.

Nate:Baabyy..

Neelo:Yes. Your little sister..

Nate:Uhm baby..

Neelo:Yes you are baby but another baby...

He frowned and looked at his mother again. He wanted to cry and Neelo chuckled.

Neelo:I love you and you are baby..

She reassured her first born that he was the only baby. He hated sharing didn't he?

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo was the first person to wake up and she looked at her phone. She shouldn't have asked Alex that. Ever since she started dating Tefo like she told him a month ago, which was the only time he asked he never asked about her life. He did congratulate her on finding new love. He trusted her to know if Tefo was good for Kgosi or not and he never complained. Her question was unnecessary.

She picked her phone and typed a quick text apologising to him before she placed it down. She got out of bed and looked at Tefo who was sleeping. Yesterday had been long and tiring, she was going to let all the boys sleep through morning.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#118

At Ma Rhysand's house

A few days later, Neo and Alex were at Ma Rhys' house. Alex had mustered the courage to finally meet his little sister. Neo squeezed his hand. The past few days were just them talking things through and facing their demons head on just before they left for the States. She hoped this was going to work but the man next to her had assured her that even if it doesn't work, he will stand by her side.

Ma Rhys looked at Neo. She had loved Wawa for Alex but he saw how Alex could relax around Neo. He saw how his eyes shined when he looked at Neo and it seemed as if Neo couldn't see that. She saw love in his eyes and she smiled. She offered Neo tea

and she accepted it kind heartedly. Alex better marry this one and Rhys better marry Neelo when he is released from prison. The house would be nice with her daughter-in-laws helping around.

Ma Rhys talked with Neo who let Alex's hand go. She was sweet. She didn't talk much but she was sweet. The door knock sounded and Ma Rhys stood up to go get. Her house it seemed, was neutral ground and the fact that their father was willing to work out his relationship with his sons even though it was two decades later made all the difference.

Ma Rhys:Come in. He's inside.

He nodded and Lebopo smiled.

Ma Rhys:Hello Lebo how are?

Lebopo:Good. Daddy says I have two brothers..

Ma Rhys:Yes you do baby..come inside..

The duo walked inside and McKnight looked at his youngest son. He was seated next to a beautiful young woman who held his hand lovingly. Both his sons found love and if he wasn't mistaken she was the mother of his child yes?

He sat down on the opposite couch and he looked at them as Ma Rhys and Lebopo headed to the kitchen.

Neo:Dumelang..

McKnight:Hello..

Neo looked at the two men and saw the resemblance. Shd whispered something in Alex's ear before she stood up and excused herself leaving the two gentlemen to their own devices.

Silence engulfed the room and suddenly the tiles looked so interesting as Alex kept his eyes on the floor. He never noticed the details on the tiles.

Meanwhile in the kitchen Lebopo curiously looked at Neo who said hi to her.

Lebopo:Hello..

Neo:She has Alex's eyes..

Ma Rhys looked at the little girl. She was her father's daughter that's for sure.

Lebopo:Alex is my brother?

Ma Rhys:Yes sweetie..

Lebopo:She is nice..

Ma Rhys chuckled as Neo sat down and took a sweet from the jar.

Neo:Thank you...

Lebopo:What's your name?

Neo:Neo..

Lebopo:I have a friend at school her name is Neo. Ga a na meno a two hapele..

The ladies laughed and Lebopo kept a straight face.

Lebopo:Daddy said that her teeth will grow like mine.

Neo:They will for now let Neo be..

Lebopo:I like your hair..

Ma Rhys:Bathong Lebopo!(laughing)

In the sitting room McKnight broke the silence by clearing his throat. Alex's eyes quickly met his and he was embarrassed by what he did yeara ago.

McKnight:I would like to apologise first for my behaviour years ago..

Alex:Okay..

McKnight:It's been years since I saw. You have grown..

Alex:Everyone grows..

His father sighed. He knew his first born was in prison and he didn't want to bring that up.

McKnight:How have you been these past years?

Alex:Good. With Rhys' help I'm good.

McKnight:That's good. When will he be released?

Alex:In a few years..

He replied sharply and then silence engulfed them once again. They heard the soft laughs coming from the kitchen and Alex didn't know what to say next. This man hasn't been there. This man hurt his mother beyond repair and he wasn't around for most of his life. He didn't know what to say in all honesty. Neo said something before she left. She said he shouldn't force it and if they have nothing to talk about and he still has that pent up anger he should tell him that. Just to get to talk about that and set himself free from the clutches of his ugly past.

Alex:why?

McKnight looked at him. He wasn't sure how to answer that question.

McKnight:I don't know..

He answered honestly. He didn't know why he did what he did but he got the wake up call just a few years ago after Sesame's suicide.

Alex breathed in and looked at him. If eyes could kill then for sure McKnight would be dead in this instant. He saw the anger, hurt and regret flash in Alex's eyes. He was thw one who broke the family and years later the damage was hard to undo.

Their moment was disturbed by the ladies walking inside the room and Alex forced a smiile on bis face as Lebopo looked at him. He was here to know his sister or at least know how she is and say bye to his mother before they left for the States. Neo squeezed his hand and he kissed it with a smile lingering on his lips.

Alex:I love you(mouthing the words to her)

She nodded and smiled at him.

McKnight:Lebopo?

Lebopo:Rra?

McKnight:I did tell you you have brothers right?

She nodded and looked at Alex who smiled. Neo looked at Alex. He was trying and that was a step in the right direction.

McKnight:His name is Alex..

Lebopo walked to him and gave him her hand and he took it with a smile.

Lebopo:I'm Lebopo..nice to meet you Alex.

Alex:Hello Lebopo. Nice to meet you pumpkin.

Lebopo:I hate pumpkins...

He pretended to gasp in shock.

Lebopo:They are orange and I'm not.

Alex:Ee mma(smiling)

Ma Rhys looked at Alex as he interacted with his 8

year old half sister. She smiled. They had a long way to go but in due time.

At the Airport

Neelo watched as her luggage was taken away. Next stop was Britain and she couldn't wait for their next adventure. She held her son's hand as they walked to the aircraft.

Nate:Flyy!

Neelo:Yea baby. We are flying and going to have fun. Just you and me. When we arrive we are going to call grandma..

He let go of her hand and clapped his.

Neelo:And your uncle too..and auntie..just the whole family to say hii.

Nate:Hiii mommy..

Neelo:Hello my baby(smiling)

He lifted his hands and she shook his head. He was heavy and she wasn't going to carry this heavy boy. Besides they had almost arrived to the aircraft.

.

.

.

*

*

*

TWO MONTHS LATER

TROUBLED

#119

At Neelo's house

Neelo unlocked the door and Nate followed behind. She waited for him to get inside the house before she walked to the car to get their luggage. They had accumulated a lot of luggage from their travel around the world that's for sure.

Nate walked around the house as his mother walked with his bags heading to the bedroom.

Nate: baby tired...

Neelo: Ee rra. I'm tired and the baby is tired.

She said as she looked at her almost seven month

belly.

Nate:Sleep.

Neelo:Ema pele baby. I'm getting more bags from the car and we sleep.

She said. Half an hour later she was perusing through the kitchen and she placed her head on the counter. No groceries and food was important.

She walked to the bedroom and found RJ sprawled on her bed. He was tired wasn't he? She needed to buy food and shw can't exactly leave him all alone in this house, no matter how safe her husband's house.

She covered him with the blankets and she walked out. She should just order takeout for now and she will do grocery shopping tomorrow to take her mind off the court hearing which was tomorrow. Her phone rang and she answered it.

Neelo:Hello?

Alex:Hi, did you guys arrive safely?

Neelo:We just arrived thank you.

Alex:And I wish you told me sooner about your plans to ask for parole because I would've been in court tomorrow.

Neelo:I didn't want to jinx anything and I'm sure Rhys was surprised as well when his lawyer told him.

Kana I didn't want to get everyone's hopes high for no reason at all. Ga ba ka gana go mo ha appeal gone go a go nna jang?(If they refuse to give him a parole, how is it going to look like?)

Alex:And you are being negative. Glad you are safe and at home. Lock the gate and the doors.

Neelo:Sure bro. Say to Neo for me.

Alex:Will do. Bye.

She said bye and hung up. She looked for fast food restaurant numbers and called.

At Bobonong

At Ruby's parents

Ruby parked her car inside the yard and looked at her 5-carat diamond ring. She was so excited and her fiance was so sweet to ask if he had to acknowledge her culture and pay her magadi. That was so sweet and she was going to ask her parents if they would accept magadi from a white man whose culture is so different from theirs.

She opened the car door and stepped out, picking her overnight bag from the passenger seat . She closed the door and headed to the open door, was she going to spend her holidays with her parents? She wasn't sure. Maybe Mason was going to whisk her away to London or he was going to come here. She will hear what he has to say in regards to Christmas. Their first Christmas together.

She walked inside the house and greeted both parents who were sitting on the couch watching Skeem Saam on tv. Her mother was the first person who saw her hand and she smiled.

Ma Ruby:And you didn't tell us?

Ruby:Ma?

Ma Ruby:Ring..

She looked at her hand and she smiled.

Ruby:Well I am engaged to be married...

Her father looked up and smiled softly. As long as their only daughter was happy they were happy.

Ma Ruby:I am happy for you ngwanaka and you have been glowing too.

Ruby:Thank you mama. I am happy. But there is an issue..let me go put the bags in the bedroom.

She headed to her room and placed her bags down before going to join her parents in the lounge.

Ruby:mama ke nyala lekgoa...(I'm marrying a white man)

Ma Ruby:Okay. That's still fine. I think..

Ruby:He was asking if you guys would accept his magadi ga a ka ntsha..

Ra Ruby:We would Ruby. You don't have to worry.

Ruby:Then I will introduce him to you. Ke ene Mason and o nale matlho a blue. Do you guys think our kids will have blue eyes?

Her parents laughed.

Ma Ruby:Ruby ya go ira se se jewang(Ruby go make something to eat)

Ruby:Tota mama...hmm..Mason won't be happy you are overworking his wife.

Ma Ruby:Ga rena sepe..

She pouted and her parents laughed before shifting their attention back to Skeem Saam. She shook her head and headed to the kitchen. She should get groceries for them first thing in the morning plus Christmas was fast approaching.

In the USA

At the apartment

Alex cuddled Neo as she closed her eyes. She was still healing from the operation and she had physio as well.

Alex:It hurts..

Neo:I'll be fine...I just need to sleep.

Alex kissed her forehead and she opened her eyes.

Neo:You know you didn't have to do this, I would've been fine and you can go see if your brother will be

out.

Alex:Rhys will be fine. It's you I'm worried about.

Neo:Your self control in regards to sex though my love..

Alex chuckled and kissed her jawline softly as she let out a soft sigh.

Alex:As long as my hands work I'll be fine..

She shook her head with a smile.

Neo:I love you.

Alex:I love you more.

Neo:Don't forget to videocall Kgosi, bathong the boy hasn't seen you in two months.

Alex:Once the doctor gives us the green light we'll go back to Botswana. Right now relax my love...

He rubbed her arms and kissed her nose bridge followed by her nose then her cheeks and she giggled placing her hands on his stubbled jaw.

Neo:I get it love. Don't make yourself horny..

Alex:O buile late..

She slowly moved away from him and removed the fleece to see the tent in his pants and she laughed placing her head back on his chest.

Neo:Sorry autwe baby?(in a baby voice)

Alex:mxm(laughing)

He held his phone and connected his headsets since he didn't know where Neo placed his airpods. He put one headset in her ear and he gauged her reaction as she sung along to one of her favourites that she made his favourite as well.

She grinned at him as he chuckled seeing the way her eyes lit up as she sung, partially ignoring her aching body. She was a strong one wasn't she?

The song ended and she smiled and placed her hand

on her pelvic area.

Alex:It hurts?

Neo:I'll be fine babe? Don't stress..

He smiled and his phone rang as he held it. It was Wapelo and it was a video call. Most probably Kgosi was about to sleep. He answered the call and Kgosi's chubby face flashed on the screen. Kgosi's smile grew wider when he saw Neo.

Kgosi:Papa..

Alex:hey champ..

Kgosi clapped his hands and instead of talking to his dad like he usually did his attention shifted to Neo who was delighted to speak to him. Alex shook his head as he watched his two favourite people interacting with each other. Towards the end of the call Kgosi talked to him before he yawned and said he was sleeping. He said bye and the call ended.

Neo yawned as well.

Alex:And let's get you to bed as well baby.

Neo:I'm not sleepy.

He placed his phone down and picked her up carrying her to the bedroom where he placed her on the bed. He took out her clothes in the wardrobe and placed the clothes next to her. First month after the surgery was a bit rough on the both of them and Neo being such an independent woman, she struggled with letting him take control but now they were fine.

He kissed her forehead and walked out of the room as his phone rang in the lounge. He put one headset in his ear and answered the call.

Alex:Hello..

Wawa:Kgosi misses you and he hasn't seen you in two months.

Alex:I know. It's not as if I'm gone forever. My woman and I are still sorting stuff here..

Wawa humphed. Sorting stuff for two months? It

looked like the two were on a honeymoon or something.

Alex:I haven't abandoned my son Wapelo. I know he hasn't seen me in two months and I do video call him almost everyday without fail. Is there another problem?

Wawa:No.

Alex:Great. Tell him I said good night and bye.

He hung up and opened the pantry.

Alex:Baaabee?(shouting)

Neo:Rra?

Alex:Do you want bedtime snacks?

Neo:Ke batla di hug le di cuddles Mr McKnight...

Alex:Hugs and cuddlea coming right up my love(laughing)

He took the biscuits and the chocolate bar. Knowing

her, she will eat this even though she didn't want snacks.

He made sure the door was locked and he switched off the lights on his way to the bedroom.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#120

The following morning

At Neelo's house

Neelo was woken up by hands on her face. She opened her eyes and looked at her husband's photocopy.

Neelo:Go eng?

Nate:Morning mama...

She smiled and kissed his cheek.

Neelo:Morning RJ..

He grinned showing off his baby teeth and started touching her belly.

Nate:mama teeth. Brush...

Neelo:Yes papa. Re tla brusher ee...

Nate:Baby..

Neelo:We are having a baby Nate...

Nate:big..

She chuckled and looked at her little king. He was getting used to the idea that he will be having a younger sibling soon.

Neelo:Very big. But she will be small..

Nate:Shi?

Neelo:We are having a girl baby. You see you, uncle, grandpa and your dad are boys and me, aunty Ray, grandma are girls. Baby will be a girl..

Nate:I'm Nate..baby?

Neelo:Baby does not have a name yet. We'll call her

baby till she comes okay?

He just nodded not quite understanding his mother and he got out of bed.

Nate:Brush.

He headed to the bathroom and she shook her head. This little girl was pressing her bladder. She got up and walked out of the room heading to the main bathroom to relieve herself. Minutes later she walked to her bathroom and she found the toothpaste all over the sink and the stuff on the floor.

Neelo:Why didn't you call me?(sighing)

She didn't have the energy to scold him when he was trying to be a responsible little kid. She shook her head. His father was going to adore him, shower him with all the love he never got from his father growing up.

She picked the stuff up and placed it back as Nate looked at his mother.

Nate:Sollly...

Neelo:Just call me okay?

He nodded and she got her toothbrush as they both faced the mirror to brush their teeth. Neelo figured she was going to push time by going grocery shopping with her toddler. By lunchtime she was sure the lawyer will give her the verdict about her husband's case.

An hour later she was done getting Nate ready for the mall. They will eat breakfast in town. She breathed in and out. People were going to see her pregnant and she had already steeled her her heart against any comments. This angel in her tummy was a blessing and her husband said so during their phone calls.

Neelo:Baby let's go..

Nate ran to the car and she unlocked it as she picked her handbag and stepped outside the house. She locked the house and walked to the car where she picked him up and secured him in his car seat.

Neelo:Done.

At the mall

Neelo held his little hand as they navigated their way through the crowds. She shouldn't have been pressured by this toddler to order a cake after he ate the breakfast served. Now he had more energy and she jusy wanted to get the trolley and start shopping. It was alread noon and she wanted to go home as soon as possible to hear from the lawyer. As heavily pregnant as she was, she managed to pick him up and put him in the trolley. That way she was not going to lose him.

She slowly pushed the trolley as she started her mini grocery shopping. She ignored his little tantrums as she walked past the sweet confection aisle.

Neelo:Nate Reece Junior tla ga o ntena!

His little mouth wobbled and she rolled her eyes as she pushed the trolley. She was pregnant for crying out loud and she didn't want to deal with a two year old misbehaving.

A man stopped behind her and the hairs on her neck stood, a cold shiver travelled down her spine and it was so similar to the day she met Rhys for the first time at the salon. Nate cried even more and she was annoyed with him but she hated seeing her baby cry. Her heart skipped a beat, she didn't want to turn to look at the man who was behind her.

Man:O ska omanyana ngwana tlhemma wa lela...(softly)

.

TROUBLED

#121

At the store

Neelo's little heart beat out of her chest as she placed her hand over her overly sensitive and full left breast as the man passed her and went on to pick her son.

Neelo:Uhm...oh God!

She placed both hands on the trolley handles as Nate quieted down. She breathed in and out before she lifted her eyes. The resemblance hit her straight in the face and she took deep breathes as she heard her toddler starting to utter total utter rubbish.

Neelo:uhm when? How? I can't breathe(breathing deeply)

He placed RJ down since he was calm now and he stood behind his mother as her head lowered down. She tried to breath and he guessed this was because he arrived unexpectedly. He should have passed when he saw them and went home as his lawyer asked but he had wanted to buy something decent to eat in the store courtesy of his lawyer of course.

Rhys:Babe...breathe for me. It's okay. Breath my love.

He held her from behind as she breathed in and out. In and out. Her mind was focused solely on the breathing and not the way, his strong arms held her body.

Rhys:You're doing great..

A minute passed and she lifted her head. She was sure she caused a scene in the store.

Rhys:Better?

Neelo nodded with tears in her eyes.

Rhys:Good.(kissed the top of her head)

She looked healthy and pregnancy always looked good on her.

Rhys:I'll be back. Let me talk to the lawyer for a few minutes.

He rubbed her chin and kissed her forehead as he walked away. Neelo looked at her toddler who was all smiles. He hasn't even met his father and it was his first time and he is smiling? Little traitor.

Nate:mommy okay?

Neelo:No. Mommy is not okay.

His eyes looked at her all concerned and he touched her face with his small hand.

Nate:So lllly mommy..

Neelo sighed and placed her hands on the trolley. Her feet felt like lead and she was still processing

the fact that he was out. It went through? She needed to sit down to process everything. She sucked in a breath and stood as upright as her pregnant body could allow.

She slowly pushed the trolley and surprisingly Nate was behaving now. She stopped by the shelf and her mind was blank. She couldn't even remember the rest of the grocery list she had made mentally. She just pushed the trolley with a blank face and all she could think about was that it finally went through and he was back.

Minutes passed. She thought. But it felt like hours to her.

At the parking lot

Rhys: Thank you and I will call as soon as I have settled in.

Lawyer:Alright. Do remember to stay out of trouble.

He chuckled. With everything that has happened? He will be a good citizen from now onwards. His family came first and they were his number one priority.

Rhys:I will.

Lawyer:Your parole officer will pop in once in a while and you are also subjected to be as honest as possible.

Rhys:I heard what was said in court and thank you once again.

Lawyer:Thank your wife, she wanted to see you out and she didn't even hesitate even if she wasn't sure they will agree.

Rhys thoughtfully looked at the lawyer. His wife was everything and he was grateful for her existence each and every passing day.

Rhys:Yes. Thank you. Let me go.

Laywer:Alright.

Rhys straightened up and he used his two fingers to salute as his lawyer reversed out of the parking spot. He watched the car go and he breathed in before he walked back to the store. After 2 years of not seeing the real world, he was glad he can breath and even do stuff like walking to the shops on a normal day.

Inside the store Neelo paused and forced herself to remember the list. She didn't want to come back to town and maybe Rhys wasn't back, that was a figment of her imagination. She was just projecting her wishes in an unhealthy manner.

Rhysand walked along the aisles and when he saw them, walked towards them. He stopped behind her and she turned to face him.

Rhys:Are you done?

She extended her hand to touch his bearded jaw. He was real. He was out and standing in front of her.

Rhys:I'm here okay marshmallow? (Kissed her forehead)

She nodded and turned to face Nate who was looking at them with child like curiosity. She was sure the child was making his own realisations. She did show him his father's pictures so he won't struggle with accepting him.

Rhys:Should we get out of here?

Neelo:uhm yeah...(swallowing) I forgot what I needed to buy.

Rhys:You still have a mental grocery list?

She nodded. He needed a trim, he didn't look bad with a beard too. Well she knew that but that was when he was in prison and now he was here.

She turned to look at her child and she had to get him out of the trolley. She extended her hands to Nate and Rhys held her hands.

Rhys:Let me do it. You're heavily pregnant..

He picked Nate up and with his other hand he placed it behind her back as they made their way out of the store. It felt good to hold his son, something he has longed for these past few years.

Neelo looked at him holding his son and tears gleamed in her eyes. This was all she had been hoping for. She blinked and kept walking till they got to the car. She unlocked the car and opened the door so Rhys can secure Nate in his car seat. She got in the driver's seat and he opened the passenger seat. Once they were settled, she looked at him. Her phone rang and she let a lone tear roll down her cheek before quickly wiping it away. This song still had precious memories, their engagement 3 years

ago under the moonlight and that he dedicated it for her. Specially for her. The phone stopped ringing and he held her hand to look at her rings.

Rhys:I'm here to stay love. Daddy's home for good.

His deep voice resonated in the car and she frantically nodded.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#122

At Neelo's house

Rhys got out of the car and walked to the passenger seats to get RJ out of his seat. It felt good doing this and to think that he missed out on all of this. Neelo got out of the car holding her bag and walked to the house as RJ followed her like he usually did. She will have to explain to him what was happening and why this man was here, he knew his dad from pictures and the little guy must be shocked from seeing him physically.

She unlocked the door and her boys followed. She still didn't have food around because she forgot what she was supposed to buy for the house. Rhys watched as RJ walked to the rooms and he looked

at Neelo.

He zipped up his jacket and looked at Neelo who sat down. Neelo looked at him and smiled softly. Her heart was starting to accept that this was real and that he was here to stay.

Rhys sat next to her and placed his hand on her soft cheek.

Rhys:I'm happy that I'm here with you.

She let out a shallow breath and looked into his eyes. He placed his other hand on her tummy and a smile tugged at his sexy lips, finally lighting his eyes that have been dim these past two years. He rubbed her tummy and in that moment, her little girl decided to kick and she gasped.

Rhys:Does it hurt?

Neelo:She kicked too hard...

He rubbed it more and she placed her hand on top of his.

Neelo:We missed you here..

Rhys:I did so too...

At this point they didn't know what to say to each other. Rhys just pulled her to him and she laid her head on his chest. Her tears started to wet his t-shirt and he rubbed her arm. He was here for good and he was going to stay on the right side of the law. His family way way too precious to jinx everything up.

Neelo sniffed and he kissed her head as she cried in his arms. How long has been waiting for this moment? She was praying for this exact moment where she knew she was going to see him at the end of the day, he would hold her and he would be there to watch the kids or even help with the baby when she arrived. Spending sleepless nights with her as well. This was everything she hoped for.

At Bobonong

At Ruby's parents

Ruby looked at her ring and went through her photos with her fiance. She couldn't believe it was a little over 3 years ago when she was heart broken over a man who wasn't even her soulmate.

She smiled as she started typing out on Facebook after posting her joint hand with her fiance. Love was perfect with the right person. It was beautiful and everything more.

She read her post and she couldn't stop the way her heart burst when she thought of Mason. That man was everything she had prayed for and more.

"Love. Love is no longer a word. Love is action and daily reminders through the little things like bringing me my favourite tea or my favourite massage oil. Love is constant, it does not waver in the face of obstacles. It remains steady on the foundation it was built on. Love is what each and everyone deserves.

I found someone I want to spend the rest of my life with and doesn't make loving me feel like a chore. Everyday he constantly shows me how to love him and myself. If that's not blessed then I don't know. He knows that i love him like I love my love songs and sweet like mh favourite tea. No one compares, he stands alone to every record I own. To the man who is going to make me a wife, a mother and his partner thank you baby and I love you to the moon and beyond.

And that is what i had to say today. May the universe love you enough to give you a significant other"

She smiled and posted the picture. She was a happy girl and a happy girl was a gorgeous woman.

At Wapelo's place

Wawa went through her Facebook as Tefo massaged her feet. She saw Ruby's post and went through the comments. Her distant cousin was happy and so in love. She smiled and left a heart reaction on the post.

She went back to her timeline and she saw that the post was shared by a lot of people. One of those people being Neo. Tefo stopped massaging her seeing the frown on her face.

Tefo:Anything wrong?

Wawa:nothing at all babe, just some Facebook post..

Tefo:Okay...

He continued massaging her feet with a smile and she smiled back before she stared at her phone screen. She read the caption Neo wrote as she shared Ruby's post with.

"Love to see this

One day I will talk about the man I have, how we both changed to make our love work for us. Hell I wasn't even looking for love but it found us

You deserve love Queen. Congratulations ma'am

"

Wapelo wanted to roll her eyes. Alex wasn't the loving type, it was only a matter of time before Neo was going to cry on social media about being

cheated on by him. He was a serial cheater and never in his life has he ever considered how he hurts women. She placed her phone down and focused on what Tefo was doing.

Tefo was the perfect guy for her. He was loving, loyal and he put her first. Everything in a guy that should be considered. He was the kind you would be happy to go home to.

Wawa:Just right there..

Tefo:here?

Wawa nodded and she closed her eyes. He knew her favourite oils as well. What more could she ask for? Oh did she forget romantic? She certainly did not.

In the USA

Alex punched the air. Finally! Neo smiled seeing the

smile on his face. Must be good news then. Alex placed the phone on the table and crouched in front of her and kissed her all over her face.

Neo: Stop it! What's up?

Alex: Rhys is out! Finally!

Neo: whaaat? That's awesome man, now you can stop looking all sad babe..

Alex: I'm not sad..but man oh man. Fuck! Big bro is out cuteness..

The warmth in his voice and the way his eyes gleamed with unshed tears. Alex sat next to her and placed his head on her chest.

Neo moved her fingers on his cheek and kissed his head.

Alex: Babe you have no idea how this makes me happy..

Neo:You did tell me he raised you..

Alex:He a brother and is like a father at the same time, that man did his best to make sure I was good.

Neo:I'm sure he can't wait to see you too.

Alex:Yes. I told him about you..

Neo:You did?(surprised)

Alex:Mmmh...I love you autwe?

Neo:I love you more...

He closed his eyes as she rubbed his cheek with her soft hands. He definitely knew. He loved her and she was the woman he couldn't lose. Even if they never had kids, je wasn't letting her go. Not by a long shot.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#123

At Neelo's house

She placed the phone down after she talked to her parents about Rhysand's return. Rhys shortly headed to the shops after he spoke to his brother. He had her write the grocery list and he said he was going to get a hair cut as well. She sat on the carpet as Nate placed his head on her tummy.

Nate: Mommy baby when?

Neelo: Soon...

He nodded and looked at his mother and placed his small hands over her tummy. She didn't know what she was going to name her but she was going to allow Rhys the honours to give their baby her first

name since she named their first born.

She played with Nate till he was exhausted enough to sleep. She forced herself to carry him to his room as heavy as he was for her, she wasn't going to have another kid in four years or so. She will have to deal with a toddler and a newborn at the same time. She could already see herself exhausted to the bone.

She covered him up as her phone rang in the lounge. She walked as slow as possible hoping the person would hang up but no they didn't. She picked it up seeing her sister's name flash on the screen. It was a video call and she answered.

Neelo:Hey sis..

Marang:Hey. I saw your text o re o back in town.

Neelo:And o motsetsi...

Marang waved her off as she smiled.

Marang:It's not as if my in-laws are too traditional and dad isn't too. She was born early and o motona gore. Eketete she is not a month old.

Neelo:So I can come over in a week or so? Ke lapile gore..

Marang:I can see and mma you're glowing. Ntse ke tshaba go botsa mme..(I've been scared of asking)

Neelo:yes Ray. Ke ithwele gape..(I'm pregnant again)

Marang frowned as she sat upright to talk to her sister.

Marang:Is that why you decided to tour the world?

Neelo:Yes and no.

Marang:Which is which sis? How will your husband feel about it? Should I come up with a lie to protect you? Hmmm?

Neelo chuckled and placed the phone on her tummy before she picked it up.

Neelo:Ke mpa yaagwe...(it's his pregnancy)

Marang:huh?

Neelo:He is the dad. Just that he was in prison and people were going to talk and a bo go tlhakatlhakana..

Marang:I don't understand...

Neelo:Sis it's his pregnancy...

There was silence and Neelo saw the wheel turn in her sister's head. Marang was slow at grasping some things so she was patient. She watched her different expressions before her face fell and she scrunched her nose. Her sister pushed her messy hair back and looked at Neelo with her face marred with confusion.

Marang:nna ga ke tshware Nene(I don't understand Nene)

Neelo smiled. If you didn't know you would've never guessed that her sister doctor had ADHD but she has been living with it for years so she controlled it well..

Neelo:we did the nasty in prison..

Marang gasped with shock before she laughed and controlled herself because yoh the stitches were taking their precious time healing.

Marang:Ah. I don't want details but yoh ha.a sisi.

Neelo:Those stolen moments were precious though now I look fat and ugly.

Marang:I'm sorry for assuming you cheated.

Neelo:People are going to think so too so it was a normal reaction.

Marang:Still, you're my sister and I should know you better...wait that love bite was from him?

She nodded and Marang laughed.

Marang:Yoh..if you can visit him just for sex then he gives it to you good sis. O happy?

Neelo:Very.

Marang:I am really sorry autwe?

Neelo:Waitse Ray ne o sa bone pelo yame ha ne o letsa pina yele(you didn't see my heart when you

played that song)

Marang:Sorry Nene..

Neelo:Ka re ah, gatwe I ruined it..and when I cried re ja and a bo o re ke ledisiwa ke bofhebe(laughing)

Marang:askies baby sis..haish(laughing)

Neelo:It's okay. All in the past. When I'm not tired ke tla go bona nnananyana...

Marang:And as usual mma Josh ruined my kids, she has his ears(shaking her head)

Neelo:Bathong!

Marang:Mma ditsebe tsa Josh ga di kgatlhe(Josh's ears are not nice)

Josh:I can hear you(in the background)

Marang:Love ga di nkgatlhe ke reng?

She heard Joshua laughing in the background and she chuckled.

Neelo:Uhm so you didn't hear this from me...

Marang:Okay. Tswa ka tsone..

Neelo:Baby daddy is out..

Marang:Oh God! For good akere? Bathong you have been so miserable mme o hiwa sex gone ha mme o happy?

Neelo:Marang mpuisse sentle..

Marang:Sorry..Be happy all the time sis and I'm glad my brother-in-law is out of prison. He has to take care of his mini family now.

Neelo:Yes yes...

She heard the engine and she looked at her phone screen.

Neelo:I love you and bye.

Marang:I love y-

And Neelo cut the call and placed the phone on the couch as the door opened. Her jaw dropped as she looked at the fresh haircut. Fuck!

Was that daddy? His beard was neatly trimmed and she licked her suddenly dry lips. She placed her hands on her lap as he walked inside with the plastics.

Rhys:I'll get more and start cooking..

Neelo:Mmhmm...

She watched him as he made several trips to and from the car. Then he was in the kitchen for 30 minutes packing the food in the shelves. She breathed in and out. That was him? Well three months without getting anything was bound to make anyone horny especially him and she closed her eyes. She had to remind herself. She was pregnant and tired. Nate was sleeping. She was pregnant and tired. Pregnant and tired. She chanted as she walked to the kitchen and she was swallowing her words when she saw him. He looked at her and smiled. That damn smile. That damn smile...

Rhys:Are you okay?

Neelo:ng ng...

He washed his hands and looked at her. As heavy as she thought she was, he picked her up and placed her on the kitchen counter before he placed his strong hands on her thighs. She involuntarily shivered as he stared deep into her eyes. He was talking but she saw the way his lips moved and how his beard looked so good on him.

Rhys:Neelo? Mrs McKnight?

She snapped out of just as she was about to touch his beard.

Neelo:Huh? Hmm?

Her eyes were wide. What was he saying?

Rhys:O sharpo?

Neelo:Yeah..uhm..no what?

Rhys:baby I'm not following...

Neelo:Akere nobody hit on you after your visit to the salon?

Rhys:Ma?

Neelo:Rhysand ga wa dumela ngwanyana ope?
Hee?(you didn't agree to date any girl?)

Rhys:Why would I?

Neelo:I don't know...legale...

He was honestly confused by her behaviour. She looked up at him. He wasn't seeing the signs? Men!! Typical.

Neelo:I'll be in the bedroom.

He kissed her cheek and nodded.

Rhys:Okay love. Just rest.

She nodded as he helped her get down. She walked

out expecting him to follow her. She sighed yet again.
Men!

.

.

*

TROUBLED

#124

At Neelo's house

Neelo was restless as she laid down on the bed. He seriously didn't see the signs? She groaned in frustration as she pushed her hair back. She got up from bed and headed to RJ's room. He was still fast asleep and looked so peaceful in his sleep. She walked out and made her way to the kitchen where she found her husband busy cooking.

Neelo:What are you making?

Rhys:This and that, it's been a while since I've made anything. Hope it turns out good.

Neelo:I'm sure it will..it smells nice(sighing)

Rhys:Anything wrong?

Neelo:I'll survive..

Rhys:Ma? Talk to me...

Neelo:It's nothing really. When will you be done?

Rhys:After thirty minutes..

She nodded.

Neelo:I missed you so much.

Rhys:I missed you more and I can't wait. Thank you for raising my son.

Neelo:We had family behind us and thank you for giving me a baby.

He laughed as he used the spatula to mix what was in the pan.

Rhys:And I knocked you up again.

Neelo shrugged.

Neelo:This time after this baby we are going to wait for four more years..

Rhys:Ee mma.

Neelo:Kana Nate wa lapisa tlherra o tlo bona..

Rhys:He can't be that difficult..

Neelo:Hng..kana when he wakes up at night in his room, he makes his way to ours and then sleeps there all comfortable as if it's his bed.

Rhys:He does what?

Neelo:ka mma. Nxwii!

Rhys:Shit! So if I want you to myself all night then...

Neelo:not possible..

He moved away from the stove and wiped his hands before he held her bulging waist.

Rhys:So the only chance I have is this one?

She nodded with a big smile. Finally!

Rhys:and that smile babe..(shaking his head)

He kissed her lips and she responded. Enthusiastically. Too enthusiastic. He broke the kiss and held her cheek.

Rhys:Let me get back to cooking.

Her face fell and she blinked. What? Rhys smiled as she carefully observed him as if he was an alien.

Neelo:Cook?

Rhys:Ee mma...

He let go of her and walked back to the stove. Neelo held onto the kitchen counter. He went back to cooking? Wasn't the main idea to have sex before Nate wakes up? Kante Rhysand o mo leka tumelo?

Neelo:Naare wa re cook?(are you saying cook?)

Rhys:Ee mma. I'll be done in a few, I'm sure you are hungry.

She rolled her eyes. Fuck him and his food. He will eat alone. She looked at him, her eyes moving up and down and she humphed as she gathered the strength to walk away to leave him to his "cooking".

The minute she walked out she heard him laugh and that really ticked her off.

Neelo:Rhysand o tla swaba kana.

Rhys:I'll service you in a few babe..(laughing)

Neelo:tlogela ga ke sa e batla.(Forget it, I don't want it)

Rhys:Sure?

Neelo:Yes...

Rhys:Okay.

Neelo:Just okay? Aren't you going to convince me or something because I'm the love of your life, your other half, your kids' mother and your wife?

Rhys:You said you don't want it..(laughing)

He missed such moments with his wife, knowing he can get under her skin, figuratively and literally.

Neelo:Mxm! I can't do this anymore..

Rhys:Uhu!

Neelo:You will eat your food alone, cooking is given more attention empa nna? Food over me?

Rhys:oh dear! Akere wa re ga o batle...

Neelo:You are supposed to convince me that I want to fucked like a whore but nooo..you gave up. Just like that! I mean-aren't I the love of your life? Hmm?

Rhys:Wa lela Neelo?(are you crying)

Neelo:Uhm no..

Rhys:So you want to be fucked by daddy?

Neelo:Yes(softly)

He shook his head as finished what he was doing. His wife was something else and he had forgotten how the hormones got to her, she could say just anything that came to mind.

He wiped his hands on as he covered all the pots. He didn't even know how long his son slept during these naps of his but he was sure Neelo was going to tell him after he was done. Not even 24 hours and she wants to be sexed when he wanted to calm his libido because she was pregnant and she looked tired earlier today.

He found her in the sitting room pretending to page through a magazine. She didn't look at him and he smiled. He took the magazine from her and forced her to stand on her feet to look at him.

Rhys:And I wanted you to rest but wena o nna o akantse diodisile..

Neelo:I-

He shut her up with a kiss, his strong hands holding her neck as she adjusted her height by standing on her tip toes. Rhys moved his other hand to her full

breast, squeezing the sensitive globe gently and she opened her eyes. It hurt a bit..

He broke the kiss and rubbed her chin. She was everything he wanted and needed in a wife, pity he can't make her suck because the thought of his wife gagging while heavily pregnant didn't sit well with him. But fcking her like a little whore? That he can do...

He kissed her neck and with the corner of his eye, watched how her eyelids fluttered closed and he walked to the kitchen with her. He closed the kitchen door with his foot and smiled looking at her full face. He couldn't help but laugh at her expression. Gosh she looked like kid who has just been given candy, it wasn't hard to miss..

He had her place her hands against the kitchen counter as he untied the straps on her dress. He could only hear her breathing in the kitchen as the dress fell at her feet and he saw her smooth back

and round bottom. Slowly he hooked his hands on the panties and they pooled at her feet. Neelo didn't know when he got rid of his jeans but she felt his erection pressed against her back. She wanted this right? But now that it was happening she wasn't even sure she would take him in.

Rhys:I love you okay?

She nodded as he hooked an arm around her neck from behind.

Rhys:Relax babe..(kissing her head)

Neelo:I'm relaxed.

Rhys:I know you, you are asking yourself if you are going to take it all in..

Neelo:Akere wena kana..ah gape this position makes it go in deeper, e nna ekete o shifter popelo yame kana Rhys, already o nna o tsenya koteng but this position baby ae...

He laughed...

Rhys:You just have to touch the counter since you

can't reach for your toes because you're pregnant sweetheart..

Neelo:Still...

Rhys:Relax my love..

He started kissing her back as his hand went in between her legs and he #EXPLICIT

Neelo held back tears as he came while holding her waist. She closed her eyes till she felt his lips on her neck.

Rhys:o itlhela o le monate gore, especially since you are pregnant..

Neelo:Baby ntsha..(softly)

She held her breath as he gently slid his whole length out of her and she found herself catching her breath. Her knees were failing her and yah neh, he just had to do her like that. Her sweaty palms where still against the counter and his cum dripped down her leg. She didn't know how long her weak knees

were going to allow her to stand like this. She felt his hands on her as he fixed her dress before he moved her legs so he can pick her panties. He picked her up and finally opened the kitchen door. He carried her to the bedroom and just as he was about to place her on the bed, in walked RJ.

Nate:mama okay?

Rhys:Yes mommy is fine champ...

He gave his father a skeptical look and looked at his mother. He watched for about 10 seconds before he was satisfied with that and sunnily walked out of the room.

Rhys:You okay love?

Neelo:Nothing a warm bath with salts can't fix right?

He wanted to laugh. So badly but she didn't look like she was in a laughing mood.

He placed her down and kissed her forehead.

Rhys:I'll run you a bath and then go sort out something to eat for RJ..

She nodded as he walked to the bathroom and she closed her eyes. Stupid stupid Neelo! Now look at her all weak because of d!ck. This was the first and last time. The next time she is going to have sex is when her daughter is four months old. He came back and he picked her up. Once she was settled in the water he walked out leaving her inside.

In the sitting room, Rhys found RJ pushing his toy car. He looked at him with eyes that were exactly his and it felt like looking at his younger self from 34 years ago.

Rhys:Hey champ!

Nate:Hi...

Nate looked at Rhys again and he stopped pushing

his toy car.

Nate:You daddy?

Rhysand's heart warmed. He recognized him..

He nodded and Nate looked at him strangely as he sat on his small butt on the carpet. For a 2 and a half year old child, his dialogue made a lot of sense.

Nate:where you been?

Rhys sat next to him and smiled.

Rhys:Away but I'm back. To stay.

Nate:with mama? A-and me and baby?

Rhys:Yes Nate..

Nate:Okay. You are nice.

Rhys:Thank you champ, you are smart...

Nate:mommy says a lot...

Rhys:She is right(smiling)

Nate looked at his father and in his child like mind he was happy.

Nate:baby and mama and me...Flance...

Rhys:You went to France?

He smiled and nodded his head.

Nate:Nice nice...mama gave me cake, ice cream uh...food. nice.. park..

Rhys:And you had the time of your life....

Rhys listened to his son in child like glee narrate their trip around the world. After his animated description of everything he looked at him and told him he was hungry. And he wasn't even done cooking, his mother had shifted his attention and now him.

In the bathroom Neelo waited for Rhys and to come take her out of the water, she wanted to sleep now.

She had refilled the tub with warm water twice now and he wasn't here.

Neelo:Babe?

Rhys heard her faint voice coming from the room.

Rhys:I'll be back...

Nate nodded nonchalantly and walked to go get one of his many toys to keep him busy.

Rhys walked away and when he got to the bathroom she was just waiting for him.

Neelo:I'm done.

Rhys:Ee mma...

He got a towel before he picked up his pregnant wife and headed to the bedroom to place her on the bed.

He looked at her.

Rhys:Panties?

She shook her head. He took out her gown and once she was comfortable in it he tucked her undercover.

Rhys:Rest now, I love you.

Neelo:I love you too...

He kissed her forehead and walked out. He wasn't going to eff up this chance to be with his family ever again.

.

.

*

*

*

A WEEK LATER

TROUBLED

#125

At Francistown Airport

Neo sat in the car as Alex made his way to his side. He opened the door and kissed her as he set toed down on the driver's seat.

Alex:How are we feeling?

Neo:Tired but okay..

Alex:You heard the doctor, physio for the next two months this side..

Neo:So I can still go to work akere?

Alex:Are you up for it?

He held her cheek.

Alex:You're always so tired after sessions...

She leaned back as he fastened her seatbelt and reversed from the parking spot.

Neo:I'll try it for a week and see, if I can't go to the office I'll have to continue with workin v from home.

Alex:Whatever you're comfortable with and we'll work our way round it baby.

Neo:Ee rra..

He drove slowly out of the airport parking area till he was out of the airport and on thw main road.

Neo:And if if it doesn't work?

Alex:we tried and we move on..

She blinked. He was serious?

Alex:Don't look at me like that..

Neo:O serious?

Alex:Yeah, Neo I love you and besides before we did

this surgery the doctor explained that there are other ways to have children even if the natural way may not be the most convenient way. I hope it works just because the gods favour us but we'll see how it goes akere my love? Don't stress about it. Focus on healing and getting better. We still have a long way to go.

Neo:You're right.

He took her hand and kissed it while driving with the other.

Alex:I'm always right, don't you know?

She smiled as he squeezed her hand a little tighter. She found the guy who loves her for her, her heart swelled in her chest and almost bursted with happiness.

At Neelo's house

Neelo sat down on the couch waiting for lunch. Rhys

said he will do the cooking along with RJ and honestly? She was happy her two boys got along just fine. They were basically one and the same person in different bodies and at different ages.

Her husband came with the tray and placed it on the table for her.

Neelo: Thank you.

Rhys: I couldn't have done it all alone..

Neelo rolled her eyes laughing as RJ came holding his own plate. He placed it down on the table and held onto the sofa as he climbed it to sit next to his mother. He started by touching her belly and he placed his mouth there like he saw his dad do.

Neelo: What are you doing?

Nate: Baby fine?

Neelo: She is more than fine because she has a big brother who loves her.

Nate:baby loves me?

Neelo:Of course she does, she loves everyone..

He giggled and placed his small hands around her tummy. He liked doing that and if this made her kids bond then Nate will touch her tummy if he wanted to.

Rhys:How did your parents react?

Neelo:Hmm?

Rhys:The pregnancy...

Neelo:Ah mama kana ene o bua di IVF wara wara and dad didn't say anything. Tota ga ke itse but even if they are shocked it won't be for long. The baby is almost due anyways..

Rhys handed Nate his plate then handed Neelo hers as well.

Rhys:How do you feel about that?

Neelo:nervous and excited..but mostly nervous..

Nate:mama eat. Baby.

Neelo chuckled.

Neelo:Okay love..

She started eating with Rhysand throwing in a word or two in between her chews. This week has been bliss and she couldn't ask for more nor want more.

Nate looked at both of his parents and smiled. His papa was really nice.

.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#126

At Alex's house

Alex opened the door for Neo as she walked inside and he walked back to the car for their bags.

Alex:Babe I was thinking we check on Kgosi unless you aren't up to moving up and down..

Neo:You can go so I can rest..

Alex:Sure? He misses you kana..

Neo:Ee rra. I want to sleep.

She headed to the bedroom and looked at the bed. She yawned as he walked in behind her.

Alex:Rest my baby..

Neo smiled as she sat down on the soft mattress and removed her turtleneck. Alex gawked as she placed it down and she removed her bra releasing those luscious babies.

Alex:Fuck! Gaywe how long kante?

She laughed and threw her turtleneck at him.

Neo:o ko tsamye tlherra.(just go)

Alex:Yes mam. What food should I bring on the way back?

Neo:Bring icecream ya cookies&cream, a burger le juice. Le pizza, extra cheese my love..

Alex:Yes mam..

He kissed her forehead and walked out. Alex took out the rest of the bags and placed them in the lounge before he closed the door and dialed Wapelo. She answered immediately.

Wawa:Hello?

Alex:Hi, can I see Kgosi? For an hour or so if it's okay with you..

Wapelo smiled as she looked at Kgosi who was playing on the mat.

Wawa:Sure..

Alex:Thanks. I'm on my way.

Alex walked to the car.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo walked back into her bedroom and sprayed her body mist and fixed her top. She looked at her fresh thighs in the mirror and smiled.

Wawa:Kgosi?

Kgosi:ma?

Wawa:Daddy is coming to see you...

He smiled and clapped his hands.

Kgosi:With aunty Neo?

Wapelo's smile faltered.

Wawa:No. He didn't say that

Kgosi:Okay. I missed daddy.

She just nodded and headed to the kitchen. Twenty minutes later there was a door knock and she went to get the door. She opened it and his cologne met her. She smiled.

Wawa:Hey, he is the lounge..

Alex:Thank you...

She moved from the door and Kgosi ran to his dad who picked him up before spinning him around.

Alex:hey there big boy. Look how much you've grown.

Kgosi:I'm big.

Alex:Really big...

Alex turned to face Wapelo.

Alex:Is it okay if i spend next week with him?

Wawa:It's okay.

Alex:Yay! So next week we are spending the week with each other.

Kgosi:Will Aunty Neo be there?

Alex:You bet..

Kgosi:o k-kae?

Alex:She is resting buddy..

Kgosi nodded and Wapelo sighed as she left them together in the lounge. He didn't even glance at her. She sat on the kitchen chair as she listened. Kgosi gave his father an animated description of his life ever since his father left. She stood up and stood by

the door as she fold her arms. She wasted the chance she had didn't she? He begged her to give him one last chance and she refused. She gave the two a longing look. This was a whole family now he had another woman and she had a man. Tefo gave her pure undiluted love without holding back. He did the little things that made it all matter.

She walked away once again waiting for Alex to tell her his visit was over. A part of her hoped that Neo would be Alex's karma for hurting her and he will come back to her, one day. She hoped Neo would hurt Alex or vice versa and he will come to her, for now she will love Tefo. Not like how she loved Alex but she will give him love.

An hour later Alex bid Kgosi goodbye and thanked Wapelo.

Wawa:Let me see you out.

Alex:There is no need. Thank you.

Wawa:No need.

He paused and looked at her. For the second time in a span of three months he only saw her as his son's mother. He was glad to have that feeling.

Alex:You're a great mother to Kgosi. Thank you.

Wawa:No need to thank me..

He nodded and walked out heading to the gate. His car was parked outside and she stood by the door as she watched him get inside and start the car. A minute later he drove off.

Inside Alex's car

He connected his phone to the car bluetooth and dialed his brother's number.

Rhys:Hello?

Alex:Hey..Did you think about it?

Rhys kept quiet.

Alex:Trust me I hate hin as much as you do but Lebopo is so innocent in all of this. She is the sweetest child I've ever met.

Alex:Please. She is our sister and she will have no one if he dies. Rhys...

Rhys:Okay.

Alex:Okay?

Rhys:I'll see her. Most probably after Neelo gives birth. I need to spend time with my family. It still feels surreal that I'm out and I know mother will come here..

Alex:Okay. Thank you bro and I think I'll see you in a week or so. Mmaabo o sa ntse a le weak.

Rhys:what you said about wanting to marry her where you serious?

Alex:You know I hated commitment and I would never joke like that. I want her for worse or for better.

Rhys:I'm proud.

Alex smiled as he turned. He was happy. His brother was happy. Everything was turning out to be so good for them.

Rhys:You have grown so much..

Alex:Thank you. It feels so good hearing my own big brother say it to me.

Rhys>Welcome and bye. I have to see to everything in this house.

Alex laughed.

Alex:I owe Neelo a thousand for domesticating you.

Rhys:Wa swaba yaanong..

Alex:Shap big bro.

He hung up and smiled. He started thinking as he drove. Neo asked him to get her stuff from the shops. He almost forgot. He turned and he tried to remember what is it that she wanted exactly.

.

A YEAR LATER:

TROUBLED

#127

At Neelo's house

Neelo watched her baby take baby steps towards her.

Neelo:that's a good baby..come to mommy(in a baby voice)

Rylie fell down and she laughed looking at her mother.

Neelo:Ry wa bora tlhemma(laughing)

The baby laughed even more and Neelo chuckled as Nate came in with his dad.

Rhys put Nate down and bent down to give Rylie his

hand.

Rhys:hey buttercup..

She gave him a one tooth smile and he picked her up as she giggled some more. He had a happy family. Neelo, Nate and Rylie were his source of joy and happiness. This time his wife was taking no risks, she decided to take insert an IUD, a three year one because she didn't want a baby in the next three years.

His baby touched his beard and giggled. She looked like her mother and now he understood why her maternal grandma loved adored her. His maternal grandfather was no different. Both of them gave to the whims of Nate who was proving to be loved by everyone.

Neelo:Great job partner?

Rhys:You bet..I love you.

Neelo:I love you more.

Rhys sat down and let Rylie stand as he held her hands.

Rhys:Good job..

She made her baby sounds.

Rylie:mmhmmmm...

Neelo:Say mama baby(encouraging her)mmmmama say it baby.

Rhys:Sweetheart don't be pressurised by your mother..

Nate:Rylie talks?

Neelo:Not yet baby..

Nate:I want her to say Nate kana Reece mama..mama Rylie is going to talk when?

Neelo:When she is ready..

Nate:Papa is she ready now?

Rhys:She needs a lot of encouragement to speak..

Nate:Okay..

He smiled as his wife kept mouthing syllables and Rylie giggled.

Rhys:o tsenya ngwana pressure.

Neelo:She has to say mama first..

Rhys:She just might surprise you.

Neelo:She wouldn't try..babg say mmmamaa..o re mama sweet thing.

Rhys shook his head laughing. He had to do this one favour for his brother for him to return the favour.

And his kids loved playing with their aunt. Lebopo was a smart kid. Talkative but smart for her age, just because he moved past his differences with his father didn't mean he forgave him. He did that for Lebopo's sake and speaking of Lebopo his wife agreed for her to spend the holidays with them. She equally loved the kids, Neelo even played high tea with Lebopo. Weird too.

He didn't know what to expect when Rylie was older because he was sure she was going to be Neelo's Ctrl+C, he could already see it from the way she smiled with her single tooth and the way she wanted attention but didn't want it at the same time. He had his hands full that's for sure.

Rhys:When are we having another baby?

Nate looked at them.

Nate:mama how did Rylie be in your tummy?

Rhys:How?

He fuelled and she glared at his fine ass.

Neelo:I-uhm..I swallowed a watermelon seed.

Nate squinted his eyes then looked at his mother.

Nate:if you eat seeds you have another baby?

Neelo coughed. This was uncomfortable.

Neelo:Yes.

Nate:we can have more babies..yay mommy.

Neelo's eyes widened. What the hell?

Neelo:We can't..

Nate:you eat seeds and we can have lots of babies. I
I-love Rylie. She laughs when we play..

Neelo:aaw, your sister loves you too.

Nate:I can play with more babilies.

Neelo:not yet..it's just you and Rylie for now.

Nate:mama?

Neelo:hmm?

Nate:Rylie o-o she bites me..

Neelo:She is a baby.

Nate:It's not nice.

Rhys:I'll tell her to stop biting you..

Neelo:Yes..

Nate:thank you..

At Neo's office

Neo pushed her hair back. She hated that she had to come to the office on a freakin Saturday when she could've enjoyed just some serious back massages with her boyfriend. She closed the laptop and stood up walking to the wall which had their vacation picture framed. They have been trying for the past ten months and still nothing. She stopped trying to have sex to conceive and now? Now she was happier. Alex assured her time and time again that if it fails then they tried their level best but the doctor had given them the all clear.

Her phone rang and she went to answer it.

Neo:Hello...

Peo:Hi, it's me.

Neo:oh..

She moved the phone from her ear with the intention

to hang up.

Peo:Please don't. I am really sorry for what I always said about your infertility.

Neo:Well okay. It hurt me but you didn't care so it's good. Bye Peo, I don't know why my brother gave you my other number. Please don't call me ever again.

Peo:I'm sorry.

Neo:Shap.

She hung up and sighed as she sat on the desk. She drank water after that churn in her stomach. She hated the bloating she had after eating. Sue even felt bloated right now but she didn't eat anything this morning.

She sighed and finished drinking her water.

At Neo's house

Alex looked around to make sure everything was okay. She rarely came here since she is a full time tenant at his house and he wouldn't have it any other way. He was ready but how was he going to convince her to come here? He had no idea but either way she had to come here.

He took out his phone and smiled reading her texts. She did this when she was bored out of her mind with work and needed a break. He replied as he walked out of the house.

At London

Ruby held Mason's hand as they walked around the stores. So they were doing baby shopping and she was so excited, she got married and three months into the marriage she found out she was expecting. Twins for that matter.

Ruby:Are they going to have blue eyes baby?

Mason:They would look cute but as long as our babies are healthy then I am happy.

Ruby:I know that love. Anyway...

Mason:I don't know how I managed to convince you to relocate..

Ruby:As long as we visit my parents every six months babe..

Mason:I love them. They would say mogggweee..

Ruby laughed. He was bad at Setswana. He didn't pronounce that right.

Ruby:Babe I love you but Setswana is not your strongest fort..

Mason:I try..

Ruby:And I'm glad..

Mason:Are you going ti make that mashed up meat? It's so nice..

Ruby:Seswaa?

He nodded as he held her bulging waist. He saw a restaurant nearby and he knew his wife was always hungry so he held her as they walked towards it.

Ruby:I will try with the pressure cooker for the meat to be soft and tender before pounding it..

He let out a deep chuckle before he kissed her neck.

Mason:I know a place where I can pound..

Ruby laughed slightly pushing him back.

Ruby:Oh God! Mason!(laughing)

He just smiled and when they got to the restaurant he pulled a chair back for her to sit on. She was glowing and he was happy that his wife was as happy as she could be.

Mason:What are we ordering?

Ruby:I don't even have the menu..(whining)

He shook his head as he called a waiter to assist.

.

.

*

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#128

At Neelo's house

Rhys walked out after he made sure Rylie was asleep. Her brother was sleeping as well for his afternoon nap.

He headed to the bedroom where he found his wife laying on her tummy while reading a novel. He got in between her legs and she laughed as she put the book down.

Rhys:What are you doing?

Neelo:You're disturbing my reading baby..

Rhys:Were you really reading or waiting for me?

Neelo:Reading.

He smiled and kissed her stomach that showed. His children came from there and he was eternally grateful to her.

Rhys: You're beautiful and I love you.

Neelo: I love you more.

She rubbed his head and picked up the novel. The silence that engulfed them was relaxing. That was the silence that came when two people understood each other and knew each other.

At Alex's house

Alex sent Rhys and a message as he waited for Neo to come. He hoped it didn't show on his face that he was excited about it all. The door opened and she walked in. Those jeans fit her perfectly and pity he was asleep when she left for the office.

Neo:Hello baby. The emergency is sorted out and I'm yours for the weekend.

Alex:I like the sound of that.

He took her hand and pulled her to him to kiss her.

Neo:Somebody missed me..

Alex:mxm..

She chuckled.

Neo:Have you talked to Kgosi today? Akere he is spending next week le rona?

Alex:Yes mother bear..

She laughed.

Neo:Kgosi is going to be a fine young man...

Alex:Kgosi over me?

Neo:Any day Mr..

Alex:That's not fair.

Neo:Is it?

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo relaxed on the couch as the boys watched tv. This past year she allowed herself to fully accept that Alex doesn't want her. If course she broke it all off for her sanity but seeing him happy with Neo just wasn't the karma she wanted for him.

A little part of her prayed that Alex breaka up with Neo eventually. It's not like they looked good together and there was no child keeping them together. Just that Neo was starting to look like a mother figure to Kgosi and she didn't like that. Not ine bit especially for someone who might break up with Alex.

The door opened and Tefo walked in. He flashed his

magnificent smile and she smiled back as he sat next to her on the couch. She had met his family and they were good people. She loved them and his older sister had really quizzed her about her intentions with her brother. Too overprotective and that was unsettling but she started to understand the sibling dynamics.

Tefo looked at Wapelo. Who knew that he would be able to move on? He hasn't regretted the day he decided to use the company where Wapelo works because he would have never met the love of his life. Love could find one the second time and this time he was going to hold on for dear life.

Wawa:What are you thinking about?

Tefo:Just that I love you.

Wapelo:I love you more..

He softly kissed her lips and looked at her. Wapelo

smiled back and pecked his lips. Life was okau for her this side and she will settle for this. Stability, loyalty and contentment. She didn't know where she heard it from or even read from but one should always choose a man who loves you more than you love him. He is the man who will love you right and for who you are

That evening

At Alex's house

He stood by the car as he talked to his brother.

Rhys:monna ka re ke etla(I said I am coming)

Alex:park your car houses aways. I need everything to be perfect.

Rhys:How fid I agree to doing this?

Alex:You just did and I'm going there with her in an hour or so. Plus you also asked for a favour..

Rhys groaned and Alex laughed. He was starting to regret it now that's for sure.

.

*

*

*

TROUBLED

#129

At Neo's house

Neo got out of the car as she talked to Alex who was walking behind her.

Neo:Kante why that specific t-shirt? You have your own key ka bo o tile o le one.

Alex:Akere I said I can't find the key.

She rolled her eyes as she stood by the door. She checked her pockets but the key was probably in her car.

Neo:The key is in the car. Tota Alex nna wa ntena(honestly Alex, you annoy me)

Alex:Sorry tlhemma..

She shook her head as she walked to the car. Alex's heart pounded in his chest as he waited for her. He hoped it wasn't showing on his face that he was nervous. Rhys said everything was okay and who would've thought Rhys would be the camera man?

She came back a minute later and she looked at him. She could be resting right now.

She put the key in the lock and turned it. She opened the door and she walked inside as she switched on the lights. She frowned seeing the decorations around and she looked at the wall as the words "Will you marry me?" Were written on the wall. She didn't even notice that there was someone in the room. She saw the flash and she ignored it.

She walked further inside the house as her erratic heartbeat started. Her keya dropped as she read the words over and over again. Tears filled her eyes and she covered her mouth with her well manicured

hands. He wanted to marry her? She turned to face him and he was on one knee with a ring box in his hand.

Alex:Hey my love

She covered her mouth as the tears rolled down her eyes. Justin Beiber and Khalid's As I Am played in the background and she looked around. Her knees got weak and she placed her hands on her chest to calm her beating heart. This must be a dream. She faced him again and he smiled.

Alex:here I am. Asking you to take me as I am, all the broken parts of me. I want you to make me the happiest man alive and do me the honours of being my partner for life..Will you marry me?

She nodded with tears in her eyes as she gave him her hand and he slipped the intricately designed ring. The piece of jewellery felt heavy on her finger as he stood up to pull her to him.

Alex:I love you more than life itself.

Neo:Alex I-

He rubbed her back and kissed the top of her head. Alex saw the flashes and he smiled as he hugged her. Another song played and gave his brother the thumbs up. The rest of the night was theirs. Rhys smiled, seeing his brother this happy made him so happy and he felt like a proud father. He walked out to give the newly engaged couple space.

Alex broke the hug and he held her cheek. He wiped her tears and she smiled with more tears in her eyes.

Neo:I love you..

Alex:Forever till eternity.

Neo gave him her pinky as they did their usual pinky swears.

Neo:Forever.

They pinky promised and he laughed and kissed her tears away.

Neo:You had this planned?

Alex:Yes mam(smiling)

She smiled and closed her eyes for a few seconds before she opened her eyes.

Alex:are you okay?

Neo:yeah, I just feel strange..

He held her waist.

Alex:Strange how?

Neo:maybe it's nothing cause this has never happened before.

At this point Alex didn't care if the moment was ruined.

Alex:What happened?

Neo:There was movement in my stomach. Like there was something there

Alex:Movement?

Neo:Strange right?

She shook her head and smiled.

Neo:so...

Alex:Maybe something is wrong..

Neo:Maybe it's nothing and you are worrying over nothing.

Alex:It won't hurt to check..

Neo:It's our engagement night..

Alex:That's it...

He picked her up as she squealed and walked out the door with her.

Neo:Babe...

He walked to the car and put her inside before he went to lock the door.

Neo sighed. This was honestly nothing and Alex was being a worry wart. He opened the car and she was sulking.

Alex:we'll see at the hospital baby..

She folded her arms and then unfolded them to look at her ring. She was engaged to be married and she was so excited.

At the hospital

Neo sat on the hospital bed and it had been two hours since she was here. She looked at Alex who was pressing his phone while his other hand was holding hers. Neo had to explain to the doctor and it was honestly nothing to her. Just weird and now here they were. In a hospital room. Waiting.

Neo:Babe tota we could've bee-

The door opened and the doctor walked in. Neo sat upright as he was followed by a nurse who was pushing in the sonogram machine. Okay. She wasn't following.

Neo:Doctor I am not sure I'm following.

Alex:Me too.

Dr:Just to be sure. Your blood sample was sent to the lab and you can only get the results tomorrow afternoon.

Neo:But the machine??

Alex had the same question as well, he knew what that machine was for but what was it for in this case?

Dr:Can you lift your shirt so we can apply the gel..

She did as the doctor said and the nurse started applying the gel on her tummy. It was cold. The

machine was connected and the doctor moved the wand over her stomach. When she described what she felt well they had to rule out the possibility, this happened rarely but still.

As he moved the wand, they heard it and everything stopped for Neo while Alex widened his eyes. What the fuck?

.

.

*

*

TROUBLED

#130

At the hospital

Alex:Doctor?

Dr:And we have a heartbeat.

Neo looked at her stomach and then at the screen then the doctor. A what? He said a what?

Neo:How?

Dr:there is a the baby..

They both looked at the screen and the doctor started speaking but the two were too shocked. A child? Neo was asking herself a lot of questions as the doctor stopped moving the wand.

Dr:The monitor shows that you are 30 weeks

pregnant.

Neo:What?

Alex:Come again?

Dr:She is 30 weeks pregnant.

Neo kept quiet. How is that possible? She didn't know? She took a damn pregnancy test 3 months ago and it was negative and she had her routine checkups there was nothing.

Neo:How is that possible?

The nurse handed Neo the tissue paper and Alex took it from her to wipe her tummy. She has been pregnant all along? Wild! Really wild.

Once Alex was done wiping her stomach she sat upright and touched her stomach. This just didn't make sense. She didn't have any cravings and she got her periods every other month. She had felt bloated and that was just.

The nurse pushed the machine out as the doctor walked out. Alex looked at her. He could see that she had questions and he had questions as well. How? When? He didn't even understand what was happening. 30 weeks?

The doctor walked in minutes later while the parents to be were absorbing the newly revealed information. The doctor looked at them as he held his notepad.

Dr:If you guys would be as kind to follow me to my office..

Neo slowly got off the bed and Alex held her hand as they followed the doctor out of their room. They arrived at the office and sat down while the doctor went to close the door. Neo held her husband's hand as they waited to hear what the doctor had to say.

The doctor sat down and he sighed.

Dr:What Ms Neo has is a very rare case of cryptic pregnancy.

Alex:Cryptic?

Dr:Yes. It usually goes undetected till one is close to giving birth. Everything always seems normal.

Neo:I-(looking at Alex)

Dr:You get your period as always, no morning sickness and nothing makes you suspect.

Neo:I took a pregnancy test 3 months ago..

Dr:As I said it is usually undetected. Your HCG levels went undetected. Your placenta didn't produce it as it should in a normal pregnancy.

Alex:What could be the cause?

Dr:Birth control, stress, PCOS and even though in some it may be unknown what the reason could be.

Alex sighed.

Dr:How did you feel these past months?

Neo:Bloated and passed out gas a little bit too much. I have irregular periods so I got them every other

month.

Dr:Usually that bloating may be foetal movement, the reason the pregnancy doesn't show is that it is pushed back to the spine and it is usually detected late in most case.

Neo sighed next. She was pregnant and they should be happy because they wanted this but there was something that didn't sit well with her.

Dr:We will have to get you checked, surprisingly the baby is okay. Usually babies born from this type of pregnancy tend to be underweight.

Alex:She had surgery a year ago..

Dr:Okay..

Neo:uhm to treat cervical stenosis. We weren't even sure it worked.

Dr:Usually it depends. Surgery can lead to further infertility or it can work. Chances of it working are usually low but turns out you are one of the lucky few. Maybe hence the cryptic pregnancy.

Neo:Okay. So what now?

Dr:After a check up we will take it from there.

Neo nodded and Alex kissed her hand before squeezing it. This was good news but they were anxious. They will have to do their own research as well.

At Neelo's house

Neelo watched Rylie lick her small lips. It was precious to see and Rhys was feeding her icecream for the first time ever.

Neelo:Look at how happy she is..

Rhys:She is isn't she?

Neelo:Hey Nani..

She giggled and clapped her hands before looking at her dad. Rhys feed her another spoonful of icecream and she closed her eyes.

Neelo:Baby careful, brain freeze!

Nate:I can eat icecream. Rylie is being a baby.

Neelo:That's because she is a baby..

Nate smiled as he ate his icecream unassisted. Shortly after Rhys returned, he shared the good news with Neelo who was pretty excited for Neo and Alex. Then they prepared snacks for their weekly family movie night.

Rhys:These two won't sleep.

Neelo:I know.

Rhys handed their baby girl the small cup with icecream and Nani dropped the spoon. Nate shook his little head and used his spoon to feed his baby sister his icecream. She giggled every spoonful. Icecream was going to be her favourite dessert that's for sure.

Rhys:We made beautiful kids.

Neelo:And we used our initials for both their names.

Rhys fist bumped with his wife and laughed as she snuggled into him. Watching Nate feed his sister and feeling like a very big older brother.

.

.

*

*

I always apologise but life has been showing me flames this past week. Ha go bonolo mo lefatsheng le le ka kwano And for those who are worried,I'm still alive and that's all that matters.

Next insert to follow.

TROUBLED

#131

The following morning

At Neelo's house

Rhys was the first person to wake up in the house and he looked at his sleeping wife. He traced a gentle finger along her spine. She shifted and faced the other way while he smiled alone. He held her waist while she murmured something in her sleep.

Rhys:Babe?

Neelo:Hmm..

Rhys:marshmallow?

Neelo:mmh..

He kissed her cheek then her neck before his hand moved down to her pyjama shorts. She turned and her eyelids fluttered open.

Rhys:Morning.

She closed her eyes, yawned then opened them again to look at her husband.

Neelo:Morning baby..

Rhys:Wake up now sweetheart.

Neelo:It's still early.

Rhys:We have a lot to do today.

She frowned as he rubbed her thigh.

Rhys:We have to be done packing by noon.

Neelo:Where are we going? Are we taking the kids?

Rhys:Consider this a pre-anniversary trip and no, the kids are staying.

Neelo:But the k-

Rhys:There is no room for argument. The kids will stay with their uncle for a week and I didn't tell you because I don't want you to negotiate..

Neelo:ba-

Rhys:It's decided.

He pulled her to him and she sighed agreeing. Pre-anniversary he said? This was going to mark almost four years of marriage. Wasn't she lucky to have a loving husband like this one? He kissed the top of her head while she picked her phone. She checked her WhatsApp and she saw Neo's statuses. She screenshoted and uploaded them to her status with a congratulatory message.

At Wapelo's house

She finally sat down after cleaning. Tefo, Kagiso and Kgosi went to the shops. Apparently it was the boys time and they spent it all alone without her. She

shook her head and picked her phone. She saw Neelo's status congratulating Neo and Alex on their engagement and a part of her was crushed. Alex hurt her and he got his happily ever after? Guess there was no such thing as karma. She saw Alex's statuses. He had uploaded a video of him and her singing along to a catchy love song in the car. Damn! He really loved her. She saw pictures of their engagement on the next statuses and she smiled with a heavy heart. It really is a man's world.

Wawa:Congratulations on your engagement

She sent the message and placed the phone down. She was sure Neo had posted a long paragraph on her Facebook. She picked her phone and she went to Facebook. Neo didn't write a paragraph just that she was in love and a picture of Alex proposing to her. He was really in love. She smiled. It was more like a hurt kind of smile. She can finally and fully move on knowing he would never beg her one last time for a

second chance. She laughed tearfully. She knew they were good together and her hurt blinded her but now the chapter was closed and done. As Selena Gomez said in Lose You To Love Me, she had seen the signs and ignored them and when she finally woke up from that trance she had fallen too deep for him. She had needed to lose him to love herself more. She sighed.

At Alex's house

Just as they arrived from the hospital, his brother's car parked outside the walled yard.

Alex looked at Neo with a sheepish grin.

Neo:What did you do?

Alex:Kind of agreed to babysitting..

She laughed.

Neo:Okay RJ and Rylie are good kids. Akere Kgosi is

coming here ka Monday?

Alex:Yep..

Neo:A full house we got here..

Alex laughed and kissed her cheek as they got out of their car as Neelo and her mini family walked inside the yard. Rhys was carrying Rylie in his arms and she was comfortable. She wasn't sure is Rylie will be okay without her for the whole week.

Rhys:I know that look. Don't even think about it.

Neelo:I'll try not to.

They caught up to Neo and Alex.

Neelo:Congratulations you two.

Neo:Thank you. We are so excited about the next chapter in our lives..hey there RJ

She said as she bent down to him and RJ smiled.

Neo got along with the kids and as fussy as Rylie was, Rylie liked his uncle's fiancée.

Rhys handed Neelo Rylie and walked back to the car to get the kids' bags. They walked to the house and sat down.

Minutes later after Rhys had gotten all the essentials he talked to his brother who assured him the kids would be fine. Just for this week.

Alex: I told mom about the engagement as well and she will get bo uncle to start the negotiations process.

Rhys: Did I tell you that I'm proud of you?

Alex: It means a lot coming from you bro. A whole lot.

Rhys smiled.

Alex: We are also expecting.

Rhys laughed and hugged his brother.

Rhys:Congrats dude. If you are happy then I'm happy bro.

Alex:I wouldn't be here living like this if it wasn't for you.

Rhys:And at that time you and mother were my only concern.

Alex:We both have families bro...

They both turned to look at the women in their lives.

Rhys:Women we would kill for...

Alex:Would legit die for...

Neelo and Neo turned to the brothers.

Neelo:and then?

Neo:Don't mind them. If anything happens I will call you and Marang can help if it's a medical emergency. Go sharpo akere?

Neelo:Yes.

Neo:Will video call later so they see you guys..

Neelo looked at her kids.

Neelo:Nate will you guys be okay with Aunty Neo and Uncle Alex?

Nate:They are cool mama..

She smiled and hugged her kids as Rhys walked to her. He fist bumped with Nate and picked Rylie up whispering in her little ear. He put her down and smiled straightening up.

Rhys:We should probably go before Rylie starts crying.

Neelo:Okay. I'm going to miss them.

Rhys:They are safe and okay. If there is a problem we'll be here in a heartbeat.

Neelo nodded as they walked out. Rylie watched her parents leave without her and her little mouth wobbled before she started crying. Nate sat next to

his little sister and tried to distract her. He didn't like it when she cried. As the door closed Neelo wanted to go back inside but Rhys held her hand.

Rhys:She is calming down. She will be okay
marshmallow..

Neelo:Okay.

In the house Neo picked up Rylie and smiled. She wiped away her tears, her brother was a godsent.

Neo:RJ baby what do you guys want to eat?

Nate:where is Kgosi aunty?

Neo:He will be here tomorrow buddy.

He smiled and followed Neo to the kitchen.

Nate:Chick-chicken..

Neo:Okay..

She looked at Rylie who was assessing the kitchen. She had even forgot her parents left her here. Kids!

At the Airport

Neelo held her husband's hand as he checked if the flight was booked. She didn't know where he was taking her but she was blindly following him to wherever.

Rhys:And we can go board our flat.

Neelo:Tell me where we are going...Ke tla go zamela zamela baby.

He laughed and kissed her cheek.

Rhys:You know I can still get it without telling you.

She rolled her eyes as she rested her head on his arm.

Neelo:What if I don't like it?

Rhys:I'm sure you will love.

Neelo:I jusy want to know. I don't know how I was supposed to pack and stuff.

Rhys:Relax love and enjoy.

They walked to the aircraft as their luggage was being carried behind them.

.

TROUBLED

#132

At Maun International Airport

As they got out of the three hour long flight Neelo smiled as she saw the sign.

Rhys: Surprise..

Neelo hugged him as they walked inside. She knew it was going to be after years till her husband could travel outside the country and this impulsive trip was perfect. He did everything in his power to shower her with love each and everyday. She was grateful for his mere existence.

It seemed as if he had everything planned out because there was a rented car. He opened the door for her when they reached the parking lot. She

smiled as she got inside while he put their bags in the back. He opened the driver's door and got inside the car.

Neelo: Thank you for this..

Rhys: We have a week love and don't thank me, I should be thanking you for sticking with me through it all.

He kissed her hand and squeezed it as he started the car.

At London

At the house

Ruby sat down on the couch. She patted her big tummy with a knowing smile on her face. Everything tends to work out in the end if you are patient enough.

She wasn't looking for love but it found her, she was a happy girl, wife and soon to be mama. If that wasn't God's perfect timing she didn't know what was. She went through her socials and she smiled seeing Neelo's cover photo. They were such a happy family and it seemed as if everyone got their happy ending. The universe indeed listens.

At Neelo's parents

Ma Neelo was content that a few months ago she had the chance to say what's been on her chest the last three decades. It was a way to let go of the past and be happy with the present.

She had a loving husband, a daughter and her husband's daughter, grandkids and her daughter was happy.

What more could she have been looking for? The door opened and Ra Neelo walked inside.

Ra N:Nene said she is in Maun.

Ma N:That's nice. She should send us pictures of their trip there.

Ra N:I said the same thing. I am going to the farm tomorrow.

Ma N:Alone?

Ra N:I usually go there alone..

Ma N:Can I join you?

Ra N:You never really liked going to the farm.

Ma N:It's boring all alone. Re ka tsamaya rotlhe?(can we go together?)

Ra Neelo smiled and nodded.

Ma N:I haven't been there in a long while. Ke tseye eng?

He laughed as he followed her to the bedroom.

Ra N:It's really hot gone kwa..

Ma N:Okay..

At McKnight's house

He sat on the carpet as he helped Lebopo with her homework.

Lebopo:papa o sure?

McKnight:I'm sure..

She looked at her father and shook her head.

Lebopo:The homework I submitted maloba at school I got four wrong papa, the ones you helped me with.

He shrugged and Lebopo took her maths book.

Lebopo:I'll do it alone and with your phone we can call Neo. She is really good with maths and I'm sure I

will get everything correct.

He laughed and raised his hands in surrender.

Lebopo:Papa I just want to get everything correct.

McKnight:Okay Lebopo.

She smiled as she stood up heading to her room to do her homework all alone. She will ask Neo later if the answers are correct or not.

At Wapelo's house

Wapelo laughed when Kagiso walked inside holding the tray of food and her little Kgosi was holding the basin with water. These three gentlemen were taking care of her. Tefo made lunch with the boys and she had been instructed not to touch a thing. Apparently the boys had this.

Kagiso:there..is it okay mama?

This was the first time Kagiso called her mama and she smiled. This was her family now. Complete and full of love. Time to fully open her heart because the son and father's intentions were so pure and they deserved the same reciprocation.

Wawa:More than perfect my love.

Kgosi:mama water for hands.

Wawa laughed as Tefo walked inside.

Tefo:I told you we'll take care of you.

Wawa:I love it. Thank you boys.

Tefo:As long as you are happy baby.

Wawa:Is the food good?

Tefo:You doubt my culinary skills waitse Wapelo.

She giggled as she took the fork and took a bite off the meat. It was so good. And she looked at them as

they watched her.

Wawa:This is so good, what did you put in there ke tle ke apeye? Ga le je?

Kagiso:I'm going to take my plate.

Tefo:Bring your brother's plate as well.

Kagiso:Ee rra.

Tefo saw her son as his and his son was hers. This has been in front of her.

She mouthed an "I love you" and he mouthed it back as Kgosi sat next to her and took a potato off her plate.

Tefo laughed and Wapelo shook her head as she watched Kgosi eat it.

Wawa:Bathong!

At a coffee shop

Peter sat down as he ordered his mocha and chocolate muffins. At this exact moment he was content with his life. His line of work had affected other people's livelihoods but it always will and just because he wanted his ex back didn't make it any different.

Meanwhile a young lady walked in. She looked around and she saw the gentleman who was sitting there alone. She had seen him before and a part of her was tempted to go sit next to him. What if he chases her off because he was well known and she was just a third year law student who came to check on her parents?

She breathed in and gained the courage to go sit opposite him. She walked towards his table and he looked up. There was something in his eyes that drew out her compassion. She sat down meekly and smiled.

Her:Hey. Uhm is it okay if I sit here?

Peter:Of course.

She looked at him and he looked at her as his order came. She sent the waiter back for her order and she looked at the table.

Her:Uhm I'm Tuduetso..

Peter:Nice to meet you Tuduetso. I'm Peter..

She placed her hands on her lap and smiled. He looked so sad that it was sad.

Tuduetso:Why are you sad?

Peter:Adult problems kiddo..

She shook her head.

Tuduetso:I'm 21 so no, I'm not a kid..

Peter chuckled.

Peter:If you say so.

Minutes later Tuduetso's order arrived and she was the one who asked questions which he answered till he was comfortable with her. So there it was, On a Sunday in a café it began again for the villain in the heroine's story.

At Alex's house

Alex kissed Neo's shoulder as he held her in his arms. She had put the two kids to sleep and now he had her all to himself.

Alex:You changed me.

Neo:No you showed me how to love myself.

Alex:I love you..

Neo:I love you more.

Alex led her out of the room his niece and nephew were using as they walked to their bedroom.

He was one lucky bastard. A second chance at love

and a lifetime of showing this wonderful woman how much he cherished her.

At Maun

That quiet night, under the starry blanket of darkness, Neelo sat on the log as the fire burned bright with a huge flame. Two twin flames meant for each other, the flames didn't burn them but they brought them closer. Bringing out the best in each other.

Neelo: I can't believe you learned all of this for me.

Rhys smiled. That smile. The one that would always have her blushing like a teenage kid. He strung the guitar chords playing that one song he had dedicated to her and only for her.

Rhys: Look at the stars, look how they shine for

you

And everything you do. Yeah they were all yellow

I came along, I wrote a song for you and all the things you do

And it was called yellow

So then I took my turn, oh what a thing to have done

And it was all yellow

Your skin, oh yeah your skin and bones

Turn into something beautiful

You know, you know I love you so

You know I love you so

She moved her head with a huge smile and teary eyes as he sang the song for her under the moonlight. When he was done he placed the guitar down. He just had lessons to sing that song for her and it was the gesture that counted.

She wiped her tears. If someone had told her that the man who had troubled plastered on his forehead would be the same man who could make her heart skip eight beats at once, she would've said the person was lying. She had a bad past and one she didn't want to hold onto and so did he. He was the man of her wildest dreams. Been through a lot too but here they were. Still in love two kids later.

She found herself laughing as he sat next to her.

Neelo:I've never been so grateful for getting pregnant on our first night together.

He nuzzled her neck and she placed her hands on his back.

Rhys:kana it was supposed to be a hit and run..

She moved his head and laughed.

Neelo:I suspected it, you were out of a bad relationship too and you didn't want anything permanent.

Rhys:But damn lady I wanted more and in wanting

more I had a chance to get into your heart and know you more as a person.

Neelo:Geez! Okay Mr McKnight..

Rhys:Ke go rata ke sa ikhutse..

Neelo:Till eternity. Till death does us apart but still in death we will be one. Till infinity my love.

Rhys:Till infinity..

He kissed her lips and she kissed him back. She broke it and held his hands. This was love. All love and even though it looked rosy it was far from it, they went through a lot and she was sure they will be more obstacles as long as they were going to go through the hard times together as one. He was her one.

He kissed her hands and she started to go off about her novels and Rhys couldn't stop smiling. Infinity with her seemed like heaven to him. His soulmate. A troubled young man and now she made him a

grounded man, a husband and a father to their two bundles of joy whom he was sure she had forgotten at this exact moment. This wasn't the end of the chapter because they had more pages to fill about their lives but it was the beginning of a love story.

.

.

.

*****THE END*****

TROUBLED

EPILOGUE

At Neelo's house

Neelo couldn't believe five years had passed already. The years flew by so fast and now Rylie was already in standard 1 while Nate was in standard four as young as he was. This working thing also wasn't working out for her so she let her husband work and she was a stay at home mother with two kids and another one on the way. Her phone rang and she knew it might be her sister or fellow sister in law.

She picked the phone up and she saw the caller ID. She shook her head and laughed. Neo literally asked about everything though she was no longer a first time mother.

Neelo:Hello?

Neo:Nene hello...nsendele recipe yela ya cake.

Neelo:Bathong..

Neo:I saw the pictures on your status and ke ha ke tswa pelo gore..

Neelo laughed as she stood up heading to the kitchen.

Neo:Can you send the recipe? I want to make it before Alex comes back from work and before the twins wake up.

Neelo:They aren't giving you a chance to rest neh?

Neo:I want to bury myself everytime they cry. I thank God Sebaga ene goes to school and she was such an unproblematic baby mma. Always observing with those big eyes of hers.

Neelo:I noticed. Let me find the recipe and I will send it.

Neo:O star sis. Thank you and when did you guys say we are meeting again?

Neelo:Uhm month end..

Neo:You will be uhm, six months akere?

Neelo:Yes.

Neo:All the best with that one and month end it is.

Neelo:I hope Alex won't mind baby sitting.

Neo:He adores his boys mma. He picks Sebage everyday from school and mma itlhela Sebage wa teng a re "daddy took me out on an icecream date mommy"

Neelo laughed. Girls always had their fathers wrapped around their little fingers. She saw how her brother in law was with her nieces and how Rhys was with Rylie.

Neo:Anyway thanks friend. I'll send a picture of the end product.

Neelo:Bye hun.

Neelo hung up and she placed the phone on the

counter. She thoughtfully looked at the fridge. She was too lazy to even cook a decent meal. She picked her phone and texted Rhys to get takeout on his way to pick up their kids.

At Rhysand's office

Rhys sat on the chair as he talked to his brother over lunch.

Alex:Kana the old man o pallwa ke a teenager..

Rhys laughed. He tends to forget that Lebopo is fourteen since all he sees is a child.

Rhys:Lebopo is too opinionated for her own good.

Alex:He doesn't know what to do cause a re when he talks she says the opposite.

Rhys:I told him to let Lebopo stay with mom cause she is a woman and she will teach her about womanhood and stuff.

Alex:Stuff?

The brothers laughed.

Rhys:Between us where can Lebopo stay?

Alex:Neo has her hands full with the twins and a raging hormonal teenager is going to get on her last nerve. Trust me you don't want to see that sweet angel angry.

Rhys:Neelo is pregnant and she is also hormonal as well..

They shook their heads.

Rhys:at the same time she can't exactly talk to her mother because according to Lebopo she is "old fashioned"

Alex:Exactly.

Rhys:But she gets along with both women so we have to see how to go about it.

Alex:By the end of this week we will see what to do...

Rhys:So this is what will happen when Rylie and

Sebaga are teenagers?

Alex:an early death. I wish they don't grow up.

Rhys:Look at Lebopo...

They laughed and continued making small talk.

At Wapelo's office

Wapelo looked at the framed picture from her wedding day. Her youngest was no more than 5 months when she married her now husband Tefo. He was elated when he found out they were expecting and now they were a happy family. She was glad that Neo was easy to co-parent with so Kgosi was in good hands and Alex didn't have a problem with her husband and Kgosi understood.

She opened her laptop. Time to get back to work. Her distant cousin Ruby was happy where she was with her white husband. Their twin boys looked cute and they had blue eyes. It was weird to her in a way

but Ruby was happy and that was just that.

At Peter's office

Peter laughed as his wife walked behind him. She was still a junior lawyer and she had decided out of the blue to work for the firm he works out.

Peter:Tuduetso bathong.

Tuduetso:I know we are at work but nna ke tshwere ke tlala.

He laughed.

Peter:Go buy food. I have cases to go over.

Tuduetso:You're no fun.

She punched his arms and turned on her heels heading to her small office. He shook his head with a smile walking to his office. He opened the door and he looked around. Lofe had been kind to him. Kind in one of the best ways ever and he was happy.

These past five years were just happiness on his side. It seemed as everyone he had knew from his past got their happily ever after.

At London

At the house

Ruby laughed as her twins touched her dress with their hands that were dipped in paint. These kids were her joy and their father was just an added bonus. The door opened and Mason smiled as he walked inside. He placed his briefcase down and the kids ran to him and ruined his suit.

Ruby:Guys no!(laughing)

Mason:I'm going to get you guys..

They started running as giggles filled the air and she laughed as Mason picked up Jason who further

ruined his dad's white shirt.

Mason:gotcha!

Jason pretended to be scared before he laughed out loud when his dad tickled him. Mason put him down and bent down to kiss his wife's cheek.

Mason:Hey love.

Ruby:Hi and you're early.

Mason:I missed you guys.

Ruby:We missed you too..

She looked at his ruined clothes. He might as well stop wearing the clothes because it was going to take a miracle to get those paint stains off. She looked at her complete family and that usual peace surrounded her. She was at peace with the universe and herself.

At Neelo's house

She played Taylor Swift's Willow as she paged her novel. Indeed life was a willow and it bent right to his wind. Speaking of the devil the door opened and Rylie rushed in. She threw herself on the couch and kissed her cheek.

Rylie:Hey mommy. Well today at school-

Nate:Rylie you always do the same thing at school.

He said walking in and placing his bag down before he kissed his mother on the cheek.

Nate:Mom we got dinner? Is the baby craving it too?

She raised an eyebrow and Rylie looked at her mom's stomach. She was excited that she was going to have another sibling but the fact that she wasn't going to be the last born unsettled her.

Rhys walked in last with the food.

Rhys:Go change so we can get started guys and you do your homework.

Rylie:I don't have homework daddy.

Rhys:Well your brother has homework.

Nate:But it's not anything much dad.

Neelo looled at her husband and her kids.

Neelo:how about this...do yout school work before you come down to eat. Your dad and I will fix the food and we will have games for two hours before you sleep. Deal?

The siblings looked at each other with knowing smiles and nodded. They went to their rooms and Rhys looked at his wife.

Rhys:They knew you were going to let them off the hook.

Neelo:Theu are kids baby..

Rhys:They know how to work your buttons.

He pecked her lips and headed to the kitchen. When he came back he sat next to her and rubbed her tummy.

Rhys:Buddy how are up in there? Hmm...

Neelo:He is good baby..

Rhys kissed her tummy before he kissed her lips softly. He placed his hand on her thigh as he deepened the kiss. She moaned softly in his mouth before she broke the kiss and placed her hand on his cheek.

Neelo:I love you.

Rhys:Till infinity.

Neelo:Till infinity...

.

.

*

*

*

This has been TROUBLED by Tshepi M and thank you for reading and critiquing the book. I will forever be grateful.