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## **Prologue**

That Tshireletso Molise is so annoying! He only beat me by two marks! Just maths! I didn't make noise last term when I beat him! Now he wants the whole school to know he has the higher average blah blah blah. Ugly ass idiot!

We're not even doing the same subjects but the idiot is competing with me. It's been like this since primary school. The greatest rivalry of my life came early and it was in the form of an ugly skinny little boy! Okay that was harsh but he annoys me! He always wants to do better than me for his ego rather than for himself. Idiot! I can't even believe he got a ninety-eight in maths when I got ninety-six. How is that even possible? Statistically I've always done better in maths! Can I just get home and wind myself up some more? Thank God I don't have any friends. I can wind myself up till I'm tired and think petty thoughts to myself about Tshireletso's final exam marks being swapped with the dumbest person in matric's marks. They share a name so it's not that long a shot.

My heart almost stops when a car screeches behind me and the deafening hoot is all I hear ringing in my ears. When I can hear something else it's screams from the other learners who were walking behind me. I open my eyes and only inches away is a GTI. Oh gosh I almost died by the "General Thath' lyngane". The driver gets out. He looks concerned.

"Are you okay?"

I register the question from the stranger who almost killed me. Well I'm not in the wrong because I'm on the pavement at least, the RAF would've paid out. My heart is beating out of my chest and my palms are sweaty. I shake my head, settling on the final answer of no.

"Sorry. I don't know what happened. Come, I'll take you home."

I think about it. He looks like he wants to touch me, like a hug but he's nervous and standing awkwardly. I'm the school president and if I take this ride these kids will spin everything and I'll be said to have a boyfriend with a GTI and being fucked senselessly by him. Well he looks more nerdy than fuckboyish. Doesn't matter though does it? It's in the car.

"No, thank you. I'm almost home."

It's like two streets away now anyway.

"Okay, can I take your number at least? I need to know you're okay."

I give him an inquisitive look but he seems genuinely worried so I give him my number.

"Name? So I can save it."

"Just say girl you almost ran over."

I start walking again leaving the guy standing there. I hear his car door shut a few moments later and I take a turn. Careful not to look back. The learners from my school can twist anything. I don't want that. I have a reputation there. A very clean one. If only they knew my freaky mind.

Finally! I'm home. I need to call mama. I'm thinking this as I walk in through the gate. I see the car that almost hit me. The driver is on the phone and he seems lost. Maybe he's not from here. I can't wait to take off my uniform and be in my panties

only. My aunt doesn't mind so I do it all the time! It started when I was younger to now when I have a perky set of boobs. Quite small but hey, my ass makes up for it. Not that it's big but it's a good size for my body. My waist, is ridiculous! Not even there. I stop and let out a chuckle. If people knew what goes on in my head when I'm alone!

My teachers wouldn't love me this much I swear. I wouldn't be president at the school. I would actually have been suspended way back if I actually aired my opinions. Not me though. I'm too much of an overthinker for that. I'm very careful with my words.

I open the kitchen door to hear singing from the dining room. My aunt's church people are here? I thought the noise was from the neighbor. Gosh! I cannot handle Roman Catholics for the life of me! That's why I go to the whitest church in Matat. I put my bag on the counter and check the pots. My stomach growls. I wonder why auntie has so much food here ready. It smells like Sunday supper, amazeballs. The beef is just how mama taught us to make it. My mama is a maid or house help or however people refer to it now. She has no uniform though, just puts on an apron and she actually likes her job because she's "the boss".

Her employer has more than one house

all the houses are huge so she coordinates three others in cleaning the large houses with many kitchens, bathrooms, lounges, bedrooms that are hardly ever used! She sends us pictures and I can't lie, that's how I want to live. The designs are beautiful! They're spacious and it screams money! I will work till I live like her employer. I swear. After asking since forever mama said she'd take me with her to her workplace after my exams for a week. Something she hasn't discussed with her employer yet but I know he'll say yes. He loves her like a mother. To be honest, he's quite young for all that he has. I follow him, his wife and friends on Instagram and they're all ballers. Like big, big money. A part of me wishes I knew them personally. Just to breathe the air they breathe.

I dish up for myself and sit in the kitchen. Avoiding having to walk past the dining room. Isn't this Rosary stuff supposed to be on a Wednesday? Or is it Tuesday? Oh well.

I take out my phone and call mama.

Weird. I got voicemail. She must be busy.

I put away my phone.

The singing has stopped and I think my aunt is giving some sort of thank you speech. Hers are always hilarious so I listen in.

"Thank you for coming. It means a lot to me that you're here supporting us..."

Her voice is cracking and husky. My auntie has the loudest voice ever. What happened? It's not her husband's death anniversary is it? Anyway let me listen in, maybe I'll hear something.

"... We will tell you the details when we know everything, for now all we know is that she was shot and died on the spot... My sister would appreciate this. Don't stop please and do it to others. Thank you for the support. We will contact you about the plans for her funeral..."

My heart stops. My sight is lost. The room temperature increases and I cough out the food that's now choking me.

I am in motion and I don't know who picked me up. I can hear my aunt crying saying I shouldn't have found out like this.

I lost my mother? How? We spoke this morning. She was just fine. Who would shoot my mother? My head is spinning and I'm crying hysterically. I didn't even realize it but I'm crying. My mind has all these thoughts running all over and my body is acting on its own.

"You'll hurt yourself my child. Calm down."

One of the women from my aunt's church says. When I finally calm down my aunt is on the floor crying, I'm being held down by women and everyone looks scared around me.

I'm covered in a blanket and my eyes feel heavy so I close them. Tears still streaming down my face.



"Sipho, be strong dear."

Those are the last words I hear ringing in my ears as I fall into a deep sleep.

1

I'm tired of going home only to find more people there singing and praying and saying the same things about my mother. In fact I'm glad tonight will be the night vigil and I can listen to the last wave of lies about her before the funeral. I'm not looking forward to going home so I've been in my class even after school has been out. Some of my classmates wanted to come so I decided to wait for them in school while they go change.

I'm buried in Shakespeare when I hear footsteps at the door of my class.

"Smartest matriculant. Hello."

Tshireletso. Sigh. I look up at him at roll my eyes. Why is he here? To be mean? This isn't the time. I won't even talk. I go back to my book.

Instead of leaving he comes towards me and sits on my desk.

"I heard about your mom. I'm sorry."

I didn't expect this from him. I can't even believe it but just hearing those words cuts me up. I don't want pity. I hate it.

I say thanks with my voice cracking and tears streaming down my face. I don't want to talk about this. I don't want to cry. Not with this idiot here anyway. In a shocking turn of events he pulls me to his arms and I don't fight him off. I soak his white shirt in tears but he doesn't let me go.

I pull back after a while. Hopefully no one saw that. I don't want to be linked to this idiot. He looks at me and smiles briefly.

"Keep your head high and do it for your mom now."

I don't trust his words. Not Tshireletso Molise. He's too much of a snake but he's being nice so...

I nod and attempt to smile back.

"Thanks Tshireletso."

"I think your classmates are here."

I hear voices too. Who told him they're coming to the vigil? This boy is shady.

"How do you know it's them?"

He gets up and walks back a few steps.

"No class is as noisy as the art class."

I roll my eyes. Idiot. I knew it. Oh well.

"We're the Tech class. We just do art too."

It comes out as defence and I regret it immediately. I'm the school president. I need to be poised and calm at all times or idiots like him discredit me.

"Whatever. Still noisy, even with the school president here."

He's smirking and I remember why I dislike him now. He takes low blows. Nxa.

"Bye Tshireletso."

I don't want to be seen with him and he just insulted me. He must go already.

"Bye Miss Zondi."

He walks out meeting my classmates at the door. I get up and grab my school bag. Hopefully I bought enough time to arrive after the coffin.

When we get to my house I'm rushed inside by my uncle's wife. While my classmates go to the tent.

"Sipho! You should've been here hours ago. Come. You have to see your mother."

I don't have problems with June's mom but I'm not appreciating this have to stuff. I don't do anything I don't want to do.

"In a coffin? I'd rather not."

That will not be the last memory of my mother I have. I don't want to think of her and see her in a coffin. I want to see her happy and cooking in the kitchen.

I walk past the dining room. I don't even want to see the coffin. I go straight to my bedroom and lock the door.

All her things are in this room I've been sleeping here alone this whole week and smelling her clothes. Aunty said she doesn't trust the family so I will not be sharing my room even with the

whole of Zululand coming here. I hear a knock and I want to ignore it but the person knocks again.

I open the door and it's my favourite female cousin, June. She must've arrived now or a few hours ago I don't know.

She smiles faintly.

"Sipho!"

"June bug!"

I smile back and hug her. I've missed her crazy ass. Last time I saw her was two years back when her father, my uncle found out she was on birth control. She's probably the black sheep of the family but I really like her. Mostly because we're the same age and for a while we grew up together.

I invite her in and she sits next to me. She cut her hair and looks cute.

"Are you okay? Stupid question. Sorry cuz. Let's not make each other sadder than we are."

She does look like she's also been crying. She loved my mother that's for sure. Mostly because mama never made her feel like an outcast for having sex. My mama was the eldest child in her family but she was the most understanding. Aunty tries too but my uncle is the worst. Mama made sure I knew sex was a part of life and she gave me so much freedom to do it after I turned sixteen but I never did it. The honest truth is that I've had dreams and no guy who's ever approached me has fulfilled them. I mean I need patience, I need a romance novel perfect man. Not an Ardin Scott from After, not a Mqhele Zulu from Hlomu The Wife. A Qhawe Zulu from Naledi His Love. A Jarred Levine from The Harvard Wife. That's the man I want. Assholes aren't my thing. A wonder why I was able to cry in Tshireletso's arms. The fucker might just use it against me.

"So, how's matric?"

I had to ask her something else. She has no phone so I couldn't speak to her before.



"Fine. New man. Dad cut my hair but joke's on him

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I'm still hot."

I chuckle and shake my head.

"I thought you did that yourself."

We hear the singing start and look at each other. Oh gosh.

"We don't have to go."

"I'm not doing anything I don't want to do anyway. Let's just go help with the chopping."

"Okay. Let's go."

I'm definitely sharing my room with her. The others will just see what they do with the two other bedrooms in this house. Maybe they can use the floor. I don't care. We get out and I lock the door before going out to help chop the beef.

The following day, the last day my mother's body will be on this earth, a Saturday comes sooner than I wanted. The noise wakes me and June up before her mom can come knock on our door. We take our shower together and I notice a tattoo on her lower back just above her ass.

"When did you get that done?"

"My man is a tattoo artist so he did it for me, a week ago."

"You love being bad."

"Being bad loves me."

We laugh and I won't lie I envy her ability to just be without overthinking anything. I wish I could be the black sheep. It's less pressure.

I'm not looking forward to church and the actual burial but this I cannot run from. Worse, it's a Roman Catholic burial. I wish mama joined my church. For one, we would only serve refreshments and not spend all this money on a funeral. However instead we're using thousands for people who last hanged out with my mother before I was born. I don't know half the people claiming to be her friends. Yet they say they'll "Be there for me."

Can this day be over so everyone can leave me and my aunt to our lives? I'm in all black, a maxi black dress with a black coat. Bare face. Braids tied up. No heels but black gladiator sandals. I look at myself on the mirror. I'm motherless.

The tears come back and choke me up.

June's mother knocks on the door and we walk out. June holding my hand and me wiping my tears with tissue. There are

men led by my two male cousins, June's brothers who are carrying the coffin out. My aunt's eyes find mine and she signals for me to go to her. I don't want to do this. I don't want to say goodbye but I go because it's her. She holds my free hand and I lay my head on her shoulder as we walk slowly behind the coffin being carried out.

Mama is leaving me. She's gone. My heart shatters again and I cry. Loudly and unapologetically. I lost my mother. It's no time to be strong.

2

I'm not sure if it's numbness but I honestly have no tears left to cry. I cried by the burial site. I cried when I saw the beautiful tombstone. My aunt probably chose it and I cried when I imagined the rest of the year without her. Starting University without her support will be difficult. My aunt has always been here but you can't really compare it to a mother. I'm busy serving "important" people, AKA my uncle's work colleagues when Bhut' Siyanda calls me by my name. He was my mother's employer. I smile at him.

"Ninjani bhut' Siyanda?"

I hand the tray and plate of food I had in my hands over to June. She's looking at Siyanda like he's candy but luckily he seems to not notice. I smile as I walk to him leaving June to serve the men with big ass bellies acting important at a funeral.

"You know me?"

He seems genuinely surprised. My mama told me about him. She used to say she considers him her child because she has

been with him for so long. Not just him though, his entire squad too. Mama clearly loved them and her job.

"Yes. Mama told me all about you and how great you were to her. She said she felt like she's been your mother since you were twenty."

He chuckles a bit and shakes his head. I smile back.

"I'm sorry for keeping her away from you Siphosami, I genuinely only found out about you when my wife moved in."

"Call me Sami, and mama told me you didn't know I exist and that's why I couldn't stay with her."

It's true. My mother told me everything. She hid me so she may be considered for the job. I was about twelve if I'm not mistaken when she found her job. As for calling me Sami, only my mama did that. I think it's okay for him too.

He opens his arms for me and I walk into his embrace. I hope my uncle knows who he is and doesn't vex me for hugging a man at this time. He feels like a big brother to me. I feel short in this hug. I am short but he's too tall, honorable mention is his cologne. It smells "manly" if there's such.

"Come meet your family."

My face lights up. The others are here? This is a dream come true. Under terrible circumstances but I'm glad they came.

"I was hoping to meet her favourite problem children."

He laughs and I can tell he's reminiscing a bit as we walk to where they parked and the others were waiting by the corner of the street. Close to where I was almost hit by a car. I wonder if that guy texted me. I have been avoiding checking messages on WhatsApp. Too much pity and condolences.

"Guys this is Siphosami, MaZondi's miracle baby."

He introduces me and I feel a bit shy and on the spot so I look down at my feet. I know these people from stories and the Gram. Seeing them is making me so shy! I know the people here are Gugu, Mtho, Loyiso and Sihle who's one of the youngest. I know Siyanda's wife Chelsea is pregnant so maybe that's why she isn't here. I kind of like their girlfriends more but I'll settle for mostly the guys being here than nothing.

Also can I mention that the cars parked here cost millions!

I've seen people who walk by stare at them already. It's not the kind of cars we're used to here in Matat.

I feel my self get pulled in for a hug by sis Gugu I smell an amazing strong yet sweet perfume on her.

"Look, we're all your parents now. Come to any of us for anything you need. We'll give you our numbers, all of us are available." Gugu.



I hope she's ready for what she's asking for. At this point in time, I need a lot.

"Thank you sis Gugu"

I'm sobbing and I wipe my tears away. They really don't have to offer me anything but they are. They must've really loved mama.

"Give me your phone I'll save my number, you'll text me and I'll send the rest." Gugu.

I hand the phone over. Mama said she saw a lot of herself in sis Gugu. I can see it too. She's just very out there. Mama was too. She wasn't afraid of saying anything, anywhere.

"First order of business is a new phone." Sihle.

I laugh but honestly nothing is wrong with my Galaxy Grand Prime. It's no iPhone though so I won't say anything.

"Anything at all Sami. We're all here okay?" Loyiso.

I keep nodding as they all tell me similar words. After sharing a couple of laughs bhut' Siyanda walks me back to the house.

"Tell your aunt I meant what I said

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I'll put you through school and send money monthly for you guys to survive, and when you're done studying you'll get your mom's savings as per her wishes."

Wow. That's kind of him. I guess it also means they're leaving now.

"Thanks bhuti."

I hug him again. Man he smells nice.

"Bye Sami."

"Bye."

I walk back to the house and go straight to my bedroom. Still locked so I take out the key. Before I can even turn it, my uncle calls my name.

Sigh.

I walk over to him in the dining room. I haven't sat in here since I found out about mama. I sit on the couch where my uncle points me.

"Why did you hug a man in this yard?"

His other children are around us and they pretend to be focusing on the plates in their hands.

"If you're talking about Bhut' Siyanda he..."

"My sister died in his house! He's no brother of yours."

I would love to talk back but I'm the good one right? Miss obedient. So I sit and wait for my uncle to finish.

"That man is not welcome here. Where is the money my sister worked for? All these years and nothing?"

His eyes move to my aunt in front of the door. She's really angry.

"Hhay Mandlenkosi stop! That boy is very kind and he's doing exactly what my sister asked for. The money is there but it's all Siphosami's money. Not ours!!"

"Siphosami is a child Noma! What is she going to do with it?"

Okay so it no longer involves me but my uncle and aunt now.

"Study. Build herself a home. Buy a car. Live her life! The way our sister wanted it!"

"That's very idiotic. You know our home is crumbling down and..."

I stand after that. I will not stay here and listen to this. How is it any of my business what's happening to the house in Zululand? Doesn't my uncle have a job? Mxm. I walk away leaving the argument. They didn't even realize I walked out. Too busy fighting over my money.

I go to my room to sleep but a knock comes in and I try to ignore but then I hear June's voice and go open.

She's got two plates of food, one with cakes and a two litre of Coke.

We lock the door and laugh.

"You haven't properly eaten. Come dive in cuzzy."

I smile. She's such an angel.

"We should go to the same University."

"Awesome idea."

"I've already been provisionally accepted at NMU, DUT, UKZN, Fort Hare, UCT, Wits, Stellenbosch, Texas College, Howard University..."

She signals for me to stop. Shock all over her face.

"Sis! Whoah you're way too serious. America?!"

"Yeah I just applied. Didn't think I'd be accepted but I was."

"That's mad! I'm proud of you cuz! I can only go for the local ones."

"I don't wanna leave aunt and go far anymore either. Mama won't be here with her."

"Then let's do NMU."

It's first choice now anyway. For auntie mostly. I also just like their Interior Design course. Perhaps after that I can work with bhut' Sandile's girlfriend. I've seen some of her posts, she's an architect and a damn good one. I wonder why he wasn't here with her. Well people get busy. I know he cared for mama.

"Did you apply?"

Knowing June she might just be saying NMU but didn't care to apply.

"Yeah."

Whew!

"Okay awesome. I can't wait. We can get the same res if we're lucky."

She looks at me with disapproval.

"Let's not stay on campus please."

Right. Junebug wants ultimate freedom. Would be awesome. However things have the ability to not go according to plan.

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves first."

"Argh please don't overthink it. If I have confidence I'll pass, so will you. You're the smart one here."

I shake my head. I mean what if my marks drop? Anything could happen. This is matric. I just lost mama. Thinking about it alone makes me want to cry. Gosh I'd rather not think about this. June is already day dreaming about going to the hottest clubs looking sexy. I hope her carefree nature rubs off on me. Christ knows I need it. I check my phone and ignore the floods of condolence messages. I find sis Gugu's text and text her back. Then when I scroll futher I find a text from an unknown



number. It's the guy who almost ran me over. I text him back and he replies almost immediately about how worried he was I never texted him back blah blah blah. I just say I am dealing with a lot and archive all messages. I'll use my WhatsApp later. For now I'm joining my cousin in day dreaming. It might help me stop thinking.

The following Monday morning at school there's an assembly and I have to stand up there with Tshireletso because of course as luck would have it, he's the deputy. We're handing the Grade eight top achievers their certificates for last term. Fake smiling with Tshireletso for the pictures while trying to encourage the learners is proving to be taxing. I didn't want so many eyes on me. Not when I know they all know I lost my mother. I'm sure they're waiting for me to breakdown. I've always been good at keeping it together so I won't fail now.

After the assembly the Representative Council of Learners has a meeting. I almost roll my eyes. I know all meetings we ever have. I plan them. This has Tshirelesto written all over. I walk into the hall with him following behind. He last said good morning to me and that was it. Normally he's trying to get under my skin at this point so I'm irritable during a meeting. Luckily it never works.

I sit and he remains standing. I knew he called this meeting.

"As the RCL's and some of our educators we decided to support our president, Miss Zondi here."

He turns to me. I swear I won't slip up. I won't cry. What is he doing? I look straight at him.

"We got together and raised a thousand five hundred for your family during this time."

I smile and stand to take the envelope from him. Professional mode on.

"Thank you very much Mr Molise and everyone in this room and the educators who could chip in. I'll hand this over to my aunt today. Your support is appreciated."

They all clap and the meeting is adjourned. Tshireletso walks with me silently to class.

"Thanks for being thoughtful."

I finally say something. He was being weird just walking besides me.

"I'm always thoughtful Miss Zondi. Wanna study together on Saturday?"

Us? Together? Doesn't he wanna be number one again?

"Here?"

"Yeah. We can even teach some struggling matric's maths."

That's sweet of him.

"Okay."

He smiles and points at me.

"It's a date."

Huh? A what?

Before I can even say anything he's walking away. A date? Studying? Me and him? Ugh no. It's no date. I walk into class with thousands of questions popping into my head. The first one being why the hell did I say yes?

3

I will not lie I hate coming to school on a weekend. However if I can help other students it's all okay. I'm seeing Lethabo after school, he said he'll come by my house because I will not be seen with him here at school. Lethabo by the way is the GTI guy. There's a name to the face now. We flirt a bit, he thinks I'm beautiful. He's a smart guy, studying medicine. I like that I won't lie. I could've done medicine or anything I wanted really. My love for art just made me choose otherwise. I think I would be bored as a doctor or chartered accountant or lawyer any of those generally celebrated jobs in black families really. They're not creative enough for my ever buzzing brain.

"You made it."

Tshireletso sounds almost glad joining me as I walk to the hall where the others are going.

"It's a nice thing to do."

"Cool. You'll do maths, I'll do physics later, how's that?"

"Uh no. I thought we were going to do it together."

To tell the truth I just don't want to be up there alone. I'm drained. I tried calling mama yesterday. I knew nobody would answer as her phone was damaged when they shot her. I think about it often. How mama died. If she felt any pain. What if she tried to outsmart the robbers? I wouldn't put it past her. She thought she was a super hero. Well she was but her superpowers didn't include immortality. Tshireletso introduces us, though everyone knows who we are and says he'll teach them Algebra, I'll do Trigonometry. Fine by me.

While he teaches I go over the past year exam paper and look for which question I'll do with them.

However with the way they're not understanding the simple Algebra he's teaching I'll only teach after the break.

I hear comments from behind me about thinking I'm better than others. Hillarious coming from people who bring fruit baskets and energy drinks to study maths and still fail. I don't

even entertain them. The bell rings and they all rush out. Tshireletso sits next to me on the desk in front.

"They're making it harder than it should be, honestly."

"I don't blame them

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I just hate the comments they add instead of listening to you."

"Well we took initiative to help them, we didn't have to. So if they don't listen it's on them."

He takes out food. It's these yummy looking sandwiches and a litre of orange juice, my favourite. Tshireletso wouldn't know that though.

"Let's dig in."

I didn't bring anything because I know we'll be done early but since he has these here, I don't mind digging in.

He tells me about his annoying big brother who was bought a car for his 21st. I say he's just jealous but he denies it. I know his family has some money. They're not crazy rich but they afford some luxuries. I like how he's able to talk to me about stuff. For the first time in the twelve years I've known him since Grade One, he's being a friend. As if we've always been. We reminisce about Primary School and the craziness that occurred there with other kids.

"You know, I only came to this high school because of you. I was supposed to move to Durban and go to boarding school like my brother."

"What?"

This is the first I hear of this.

"I begged my parents so I could be where you were."

"You never liked me."



"Really now?"

He's looking at me like I'm lying. He never liked me!

"Yes! You were and still are always annoying me. Saying you're better."

"That's because I love you."

The bell rings at that point. I'm flabbergasted to say the least. Tshireletso?

I have to teach now so I stand and fix my uniform. I take a sip of the juice and go stand in front of a full hall. I look at Tshireletso and he smiles at me. I am reassured then I begin teaching.

After the class I pack my things and he waits for me. Could he really like me? I don't know but he seems far less annoying all of a sudden.

What exactly do I do? I kind of like Tshireletso and I kind of like Lethabo. Who do I let down?

I walk with Tshireletso to the gate and he says his brother is waiting for him. When we approach the car I realize I know it. It's Lethabo. He is Tshireletso's older brother.

Fuck. My. Life.

Do I get in or walk? I mean it's a GTI here at the gate but then again Tshirelesto is also here so

Tshireletso opens the door for me and I get in, he also gets in at the back with me.

"Thabo this is my friend Siphosami. Siphosami this is my brother Lethabo."

"I know her." Thabo.

Is Lethabo stupid or what?

"Yeah he almost ran me over with this car." I say quickly.

I don't even know what I'm doing. Protecting Tshireletso? I guess.

"Really? Small world." Tshireletso.

"Are we taking her home?" Thabo.

He sounds rather dismissive.

"No. I want to take her to get ice cream." Tshireletso.

That's cute. I smile to myself.

"No way. I have plans." Thabo.

I roll my eyes. This car ride will be awkward.

"Fine. Take her home." Tshireletso.

He sounds sad but he focuses back on me and we chat up a storm with Thabo checking us on the rearview mirror from time to time and interrupting us by asking about directions to my house. He is getting on my nerves. He better not say anything about our plans to Tshireletso.

I get off about a house or two away from mine then walk the rest of the way. I could tell Tshireletso wanted a hug but Thabo would've bursted had I done that.

I find my aunt chilling. She bought KFC so no cooking. I go kiss her cheek and greet.

"How did you do as a teacher my baby?"

"Pretty good."

"Go change. We'll rent a movie on this box office what what."

"Awwwn! Okay auntie I'm coming."

I go change and check my phone. Thabo called.

I call him back.

"Yes?"

"Really Sipho? Really? What was all that flirting with my brother?"

Is he my man now? Why is he vexing?

"Excuse me but I've known him way longer than you and it's none of your business."

"Look, I like you. I don't know about him but I like you."

I don't say anything. He decides to talk again.

"Are we still meeting up?"

"No."

"Because of Tshireletso?"

I roll my eyes. Why else?

"No. My aunt made plans."

"I see. Will I see you again?"

"I don't know."

"Don't cut me off Siphho. Please. Choose me."

It sounds like he's begging. God why me?

"You're unfair. He doesn't even know you're an option for me."

"He doesn't have to! Choose me."

"How did we even get here? How did we get to where I have to choose?"

He doesn't say anything and I drop the call. I'll see this phone later. I charge it and go to my aunt. We end up renting Crazy Rich Asians and I make microwave popcorn. I miss doing this with both my aunt and mom.

We have fun and even watch it twice. After that I go study and listen to music. The whole Tshireletso and Lethabo thing haunts me. What do I do? Is this even a decision? I hardly know Lethabo. I hardly liked Tshireletso before. I don't know what this is but Lord, see me through.

4

I'm left alone in my class as people are out to go buy God knows what and chill with their boyfriends and girlfriends. Well we only have four girls in my class, including me. They're sort of my friends because we can hang out, it's just not cool being seen around the school with me as a "goody two shoes".

Tshire walks in just as I was about to open my civil engineering text book.

"You're always alone."

I've been avoiding him and his brother since last Saturday. I roll my eyes at him.

"Tell me something new."

"Lethabo told me about you guys."

I raise a brow.



"What exactly did he say?"

I open my book and pay no attention to him but I'm very interested.

"That you kissed."

I shoot up at him.

"Excuse me? I have never kissed a boy in my life and for him to say that is just absurd! Where does he get the audacity to talk shit about me?!"

"Shuu calm down president. I thought he was lying but I had to be sure."

He walks to my desk. Why is he walking to me?

"Stop! Don't come near me."

He takes a step back and I see a flash of hurt in his eyes.

"You like him?"

"What?"

"You like my brother. Is that why I can't get close to you?"

"What? No! Tshireletso your brother and I were only texting. Then you showed interest and I didn't even know he was your brother now I'm caught in the middle and choosing to stay away from you both."

He frowns.

"You know. Since I was twelve years old I told my brother about the girl I want to marry. I showed him pictures when we'd win awards together and certificates. I always told him about you.

Then one day he randomly almost hits you with his car. Gets your number and starts demotivating me from making my move for the first time ever."

I'm shocked! Has he always really liked me?

"Tshire..."

"It hurts Siphoh. It's also unfair."

He walks away leaving me with inner turmoil.

Lethabo is stupid. Stupid for not telling me the truth and malicious for doing this to Tshire.

I know I always wished the worst for Tshire myself but that was before. Before I realized he was probably always annoying because he liked me. He didn't even look ugly anymore. Perhaps hate clouded my judgement. Now he was a lightskin cutie with popped ears that look red in the sun.

"And why are you smiling?" Nothando.

She's my classmate and I didn't even realize she was here, must've just got here. Heck I didn't realize I was smiling.

I bring my hand to my lip and look at her.

"Do you have a new crush or something?" Nothando.

"I think I do."

I reply back with a smile and she laughs. The bell rings and we get our bags for the next class.

"Tell me all about it." Nothando says as she grabs my hand and we walk together to the next class.

I take almost the whole day telling the story to her and the other girls from my class because of classes. By the time I finish telling it, it's time to go home.

"I can't believe you never realized Tshire was into you."  
Nothando.

"As if you knew."

They all look at me like I'm dumb.

"Everyone in this school knows he loves you." Gen.

"Really?"

Okay I might just be dumb after years of thinking I'm smart.

"Girl I thought you just liked acting like you don't see it."  
Bontle.

"What? Guys no. You all knew?"

"He has been smitten since we were kids. I used to share a desk with the guy remember? You were all he spoke about." Gen.

"Genevieve no! You never told me?"

"We thought you knew!" They all shout.

"He wrote a letter to you Grade Eight. Used your second name." Gen.

Well Gen is his neighbor. She should know more.

"No guys!"

"You never saw the way he looked at you?" Bontle.

"Never!"

"I thought you were just giving him the run around." Nothando.

"But now what about Lethabo?"

"I think he's just jealous that one." Gen.

"Honestly. Why else would he do that?" Bontle.

"What if he just actually liked me?"

"Possible but still. He should let his brother at least have a chance." Gen.

"Aren't these people your neighbors Gen? You can find out more." Nothando.

"They are but I don't really hang out with Thabo. Just Tshire."  
Gen.

I look at their faces and realize I've never had this before.

"Guys

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I know this isn't the time but I've never had girl chat like this  
before."

"Yeah because you detach yourself." Gen.

"How do I do that?"

"Everytime we ask you to come have lunch, you have an  
excuse." Bontle.

"Like all the time! We just stopped asking." Nothando.



"Really?"

"Yeah you have no people skills." Bontle.

I shake my head and grab my bag.

"Let's walk home together." Nothando.

"Okay." I reply with a smile. They stay close to my house. Her and Bontle.

"Dad's here to fetch me, he'll drop you guys off." Gen.

"Thanks girl." Bontle.

"I really thought you guys thought I wasn't cool enough to be seen with you."

I admit as we walk to the car.

"You been in your own head huh?" Gen.

"She really doesn't see us. We're not plastics." Bontle.

"Or mean girls." Nothando.

I laugh and they join me. Look at how many years I wasted without actual friends because I judged myself. I'm something aren't I?

The following day I don't see Tshire. Even during lunch because I actually went out and hanged with the girls and had lunch with them. I enjoyed it and well it felt good. Just as we walked out of the school premises waiting with Gen for her mom. I saw Thabo's car and Tshire walking towards it.

"Go to him!" Nothando pushes me and I find myself walking to Tshire.

I stop him before he reaches the car. He turns to me.

"Hey. You look good." Tshire.

Okay I didn't expect that so I smile and look away.

"Are we okay?"

"Yeah. We're okay."

He smiles at me and moves a loose braid from my face.

"You're hanging with Gen and them now?"

"Yeah since yesterday."

"You looked happy. I liked it."

"Thanks. Tshire look I'm sorry. I didn't know how you've felt."

"Don't sweat it. Look, I love you but I really must go."

Thabo was getting annoying with hooting his car. Tshire still pulled me in for a hug though.

I felt my entire body tingle and the butterflies! Oh the butterflies. I swear I could feel his hard on in my abdomen. He let me go and walked to the car. I felt like the oxygen was sucked out of my head. Nothando, Bontle and Gen come to me and scream around me.

"Guyyys!"

"Was that your first hug?" Bontle.

Actually, it was. I nod lightly and they scream.

"Giiiiirl!" Nothando.

"Mr and Mrs President!" Gen.

"Guys! Shush!"

I just remembered I'm the president and this wouldn't be appropriate for me to do.

"Oh please. You deserve to be a teen too. This stupid high school presidency ain't shit." Nothando.

I laugh and we walk to Gen's mom in the car. Didn't even see her arrive.

5

As we settle with our lunchboxes and snacks in our art class, Tshire enters. My heart beats fast and I don't know what to do.

"You guys are painting a lot this week huh?" Tshire.

He takes a chair and puts it right in front of me and sits opposite me watching me eat. Okay I cannot do that with him watching me. What if I don't chew properly? No! No way.

"Yeah. We're exhibiting soon." Nothando.

"Everyone else is done writing but we must draw." Gen.

Tshire nods then he focuses on me and smiles

"I've never seen your work." Tshire.

"Well, that's my self portrait..."

I point him to it and he doesn't stand to go see it. I thought he'd get up. He looks at it and smiles. Then he looks at me again.

"How have you been?" Tshire.

I spot the girls casually move from us to the other side of the class. Wow!

"I've been okay. You?"

"Same. You really are beautiful you know that?"

I look away and smile.

"It's true Siphosami."

I look at him and he's not with that goofy smile of his. He looks serious.

"Ugh my full name? Why?"

I divert attention and he chuckles.

"I like it. My gift right?"

"Yes. Well no... Not YOUR gift."

We both end up laughing.

"Ouch! You wound me Miss Zondi."

"Felt the need to explain..."

"No it's okay. I'll work towards being able to say you're my gift."

"Will you now?"

"Of course. I won't rest."

"Aren't you supposed to be a nerd?"

He chuckles. He sounds delightful when he does that.

"I am a nerd Miss Zondi, but so are you."

"That sounds boring to me."

"Sounds like common interests to me."

I smile and he smiles back too.

"The bell will ring in five."

I say after checking my watch.

"Yeah. You have to eat. I'll see you around, president."

He sounds so... Cordial and cute.

"Later."

He gets up and pushes the chair he was on aside before leaning down and kissing my forehead. His lips feel so soft on my skin. Then he walks away. Just like that. Leaving butterflies having a party in my belly and no breath for me to breathe.

The girls rush to me screaming.

"Okay what was that?! Our little girl was flirting!" Gen.

I shake my head and chuckle. What is going on?

"You guys have fire between the two of you! I witnessed it!" Bontle.

"You were so flirty! Who knew you had it in you?" Nothando.

"Guys! What is going on?"

"You're falling in love!" Bontle.

We all laugh and the bell rings.

Time to get back to drawing. I smile to myself the whole day. Even when I get home my aunt notices.



"You're happy today. Is it a boy?"

"Aunty! Why a boy of all things?"

"You have on a cute smile and your mind is wandering off more than normal."

"No such!" I defend and she laughs then leaves me in the kitchen to cook.

"Siyanda called. We're invited to his wedding in Lesotho."

I scream and run to her in the bedroom.

"Please tell me we're going!!"

"You are baby not me."

That's a bit dissapointing.

"Aw. Why not?"

"Lesotho is cold my baby. You know I'm sick. My bones would just ache." Right.

"Okay aunty. Thanks for allowing me to go."

I kiss her all over and she laughs.

"Leave me alone! Go cook!"

I hug her again before listening and going to finish up my cooking.

I find a text from Bhut Mtho telling me to not worry about a dress, sis Gugu will get me one, we'll shop together in Lesotho.

I squeal in excitement!

It'll be my first time out of the country!

Sis Gugu promised to take care of me and honestly I couldn't feel more blessed to have them in my life. They didn't lie when they said they'd be there for us.

I grab my phone and play some music while cooking.

After dinner I'm texting Tshire and the girls while doing my homework when I get a call from Thabo. I roll my eyes and ignore it. He can roll over and die. I am not doing a back and forth. I think I really am liking Tshire and Lethabo is just an unwanted distraction. Next week Friday I'm going to Lesotho and that gives me a week to spend time at school with Tshireletso given that school is out for the holidays. I'll go there to help with extra classes just to see him. I really, really just want to spend time with him. He's been texting non stop and I even stole a few of his pictures. Is that weird? Well I did it. I don't think I've liked a boy like this before. Well except for actors. I have a weird thing for Johnny Depp, and I know he's old but still. In another life... Anyway in this life, I think I really like Tshireletso Molise. What an interesting turn of events.

6

I have only had stolen moments with Tshire. Just talking though. He kisses my forehead as a goodbye if no one is around or it's just the girls. It feels like we're dating but we haven't had that talk yet. The other day he introduced me to his mother when she was picking him up and she said,

"Oh so this is my future daughter in law. You look very familiar baby."

I was blushing like mad. I wonder if I'm familiar because Tshire talks about me and shows pictures or what. Tshire's mother is a very beautiful woman. She was Miss Matatiele and her beauty is timeless. She's now Karen Booysen-Molise, somewhat a celebrity in these parts. I swear Mr Molise is a lucky man.

Tomorrow however I'm leaving for Durban then from Durban I'm flying to Lesotho with sis Gugu. Excited doesn't even begin to cover it.

I pack my stuff excitedly while texting the girls and June about what to bring considering how cold Lesotho is. Yes, June has a secret phone her dad doesn't know about.

They give me advice and Gen even bought me a fabulous coat that I just fell in love with. It's very dramatic faux fur in pink. At first I couldn't take it because I was thinking about the price but she insisted and it was honestly my first gift from a friend. My teachers always give me gifts because well I'm a good student but friends, we all know I just got my first set. I get a call from Tshire and do a little dance before composing myself and answering.

"Tshire."

"Miss Zondi. Hey."

"What did I do to get this call?"

"Nothing. I just miss you. How long are you in Lesotho?"

"About a week. Why?"

"Well since you told me I asked mom if we could visit and she said yes but we'll be at home."

"Yes...?"

"And we can hang out in Maseru, maybe you can come see my home too."

"Really? So you'll be there?"

"Yes."

"Awesome! I really can't wait. I don't know if sis Gugu will agree to it but I can ask."

"She can like call my mom if she doesn't trust us."

"That sounds doable. I can't wait to see you there."

"Same here. You'll enjoy it I promise. Bye Miss Zondi."

"Bye Mr Molise."

"Sipho wait..."

"Yes Tshireletso?"

"Can we take you to Durban?"

"I can't do that, I'm being fetched by a driver."

"Your sister is the bomb. Okay cool."

We get off the call and I almost scream in excitement but then I remember aunty is asleep. I do a little dance again rather and

zip up my bag. Okay I'm done. I can finally take my shower and go to bed.

The following day by 8am I've had breakfast and all waiting with aunty in the kitchen for the car that will pick me up. Sis Gugu sent aunty all the details of the car and driver so I don't get into the wrong car or anything.

"Be a good child there. Don't embarrass your mother."

"Aunty we've had this talk, I'll be good."

"Be clean! No leaving dirty dishes!"

"I'll be at a hotel aunty."

"Whatever, just be an obedient child. Whatever Gugu and Mtho say, goes. Okay?"

"Don't worry aunty."

"Okay my baby, when you get back we need to speak about your father."

"My father? Isn't he dead?"

"He was in jail, not dead. Your mother just said that cause that's what he told her to say."

"What?"

"He'll be out soon and his family knows nothing about you."

"Aunty!"

"It was very complicated. I'll explain everything though when you get back."

"I still have a father?"



"Yes you do."

I don't know how I feel about this. A black Dodge stops in front of the gate. I check the number plate and it matches. The driver gets out and looks like the guy in picture. He walks in through the gate and I watch him till he gets to the door.

"Miss Siphosami?" Lwazi.

"Yes, this is her."

He smiles.

"I'm your driver Lwazi." Lwazi.

Well I knew his name already but sis Gugu said be sure of everything so he had to confirm.

"Hello my child. Come in." Aunty.

Of course aunty wants to feed the poor guy.

"Sawbona Ma. Lovely home." Lwazi.

He says as he gets in. Okay I can go sleep in my room. He's just guaranteed himself at least an hour here. I go grab my suitcase and bag then place it in the kitchen where aunty already has a plate in front of the guy.

We hit the road thirty minutes later and Lwazi was kind enough to let me play my own music.

I spend the trip texting the girls and Tshire. Taking lots of snaps and posting. Those who know me are asking how I have a driver and where I'm going in such a nice car. Being who I am

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I ignore all questions. I mean really people must mind their own, right?

Lethabo sends fire emojis to a selfie I put up on my WhatsApp status. Gosh this guy. I have been ignoring him since that last call but he keeps sending texts. I hope he doesn't come to Lesotho with his family.

After about four hours and thirty-five minutes on the road we get to sis Gugu's house and it's damn beautiful. I've seen some of it's interior on her Instagram but the exterior!

Some people just live the dream without even flaunting it.

I walk out of the car and carry my handbag as Lwazi takes my suitcase.

"You look cute in sweats nana." Sis Gugu says welcoming me at the door. I hug her tightly then we walk inside.

Lwazi leaves my bag in the kitchen and waves at sis Gugu, she waves back and he leaves.

"Mtho is with the guys, come let's go see the room you'll use and meet my baby boy." Gugu.

"Whoa I've always wanted to see him but you don't show his face online."

"Yeah I felt he's still too young."

She picks up a baby from the couch. I didn't even realize. She walks with him to me.

"This is Mangi."

He's such a cutie! I spot a grey hair on him and shake my head. Bhut' Mtho has a couple of white hairs too.

"He's super adorable!"

"Thanks come with us."

I follow her lead.

She leads me to a door and opens it for me.

It's beautiful. It literally looks like it's in a beach house. Cool colours, blue bed covers and a wooden base that looks like sand.

My goodness!

"This will be your room, I hope you like."

"I love this!"

"Okay take those pics for the gram I know you want to take, join me downstairs when you're done. We'll eat."

I laugh nervously and she leaves me to my devices.

First I take in the scent. It smells expensive in this whole house. The bed is so soft! I cannot believe this is me here.

Someone knocks.

"Come in."

"Hey beautiful." Khethelo.

It's sis Khethelo. She's dating a friend of Bhut Siyanda's and she is a true "African Goddess". I can't even believe she's here. Also she's known because her boyfriend is white. People including me, love interracial relationships.

"Hey... I like you clothes... From Instagram. I see you there."

She laughs.

"Relax baby. What's your handle? I'll follow you back."

"What?! Shut the front door!! Really?"

She laughs loudly.

"It's just Instagram sweetie."

"It's a huge deal in high school. University too I think."

"Well I'm not a big deal."

"Are you kidding? You have twenty thousand followers!!"

"They've gotten to twenty thousand? Didn't realize."

"You're kidding!"

She laughs and asks me to come downstairs with her. Marco wants to meet me before they go.

As we turn the corner down the staircase I realize all the guys are here with their girlfriends.

Okay I'm fan-girling! My goodness they all look even better in person.

I'm introduced to Tumi, Sandy, Chelsea, Mbali and Nosipho.

Nosipho is the youngest and Sandy's sister. They're honestly super nice and they all can't stop saying I'm beautiful. That's a huge deal to me coming from them. Then lastly I meet Marco and Sandile, the only ones of the guys I hadn't met.

"Here you go Sami." Marco.

He hands me a box and everyone here looks at me.



"Open it!" Khethelo.

I slowly unwrap it and before I'm even done I know it's an iPhone. I start crying and by the time I've revealed the box I'm a crying mess. I unbox it and cry some more. He got me a new phone. He doesn't even know me.

"Well the rest of us had forgotten but Marco is hands down the most thoughtful and he remembered to get you a new phone." Siyanda.

"Thank you."

I get up and hug him. He hugs me back.

"Only a pleasure kid. I hardly knew your mom for long unlike these others but I can tell you she was awesome and fun to be around." Marco.

I nod and let him go.

"I remember when she first knew you were Chelsea's uncle Marco. She was so happy." Sihle.

"She couldn't stop hugging you." Mtho.

"MaZondi was awesome." Chelsea.

"You'd swear it was her long lost uncle." Loyiso.

We all laugh. Okay they're making me miss mama.

"Okay so, we'll see you in the jet baby girl." Chelsea.

She picks up her bag.

"JET?"

My mouth drops and they laugh. I'm already excited. They better not be joking with me!

I was in a jet. A private jet and no one can ever take that away from me. Forget the clean pictures I took for the Gram! My new phone is life I swear. I wanted champagne but being only seventeen sis Gugu said no but she said she'd keep a bottle for my twenty-first. I wonder if that was her low-key telling me I can only drink at that age.

Lesotho is really cold but being in my own hotel room, makes everything just that much sweeter. Tshire said he lands tonight so for today I am going to the food and cake tasting with the family. Well they said they're my family now so I call them that. I finish taking a hot shower and get out to look for what to wear. I undid my previous long braids and went for shorter braids. When you're in high school, your choices are limited. I go for jeans, a black turtle neck and long light brown coat sis Gugu bought for me at the airport.

I head to their room for breakfast. That was how sis Gugu wanted it so I had no choice but to oblige. I like it too tough. My room doesn't have as much as theirs. Mine is a bedroom and bathroom with a balcony basically.

When I get there it's only bhut Mtho and bhut Marco there. Okay... Isn't it odd that even though Marco is white I say bhuti? Well they all told me to drop the bhuti and sisi before their names because if I really consider them family, no need for formalities.

"Morning Sami. Gugu is at the guesthouse the girls. Come have breakfast. We'll pick them up after." Mtho.

"Good morning."

I sit awkwardly on the table and they just continue talking about some gibberish to me.

I have my breakfast in the middle of them and they ask me questions here and there but they make me nervous. I don't want to say the wrong thing to them.

"Where are you going to study after matric?" Mtho.

"NMU."

"Res?" Marco.

"My cousin said we should have private accommodation already."

" Nice. Okay." Marco.

After we finish they grab their jackets and we head out. Just us three. People are giving us weird looks. Maybe they think I'm dating one of them yet I'm young. Well people can't think someone is a brother or uncle or friend now, it's always the worst.

Did I mention the cars they're all using for this wedding? Only black Range Rovers!

We meet up with everyone at the beautiful guesthouse where the wedding will take place.

There's a large table and we all sit around it. It's honestly a very beautiful, elegant and clean set up. I'm sitting next to Nosipho, Sihle's girlfriend and she's nice enough to talk to me. Opposite me is Sandile. He also speaks to me here and there. Though he mentioned how I don't exactly look like my mother. I've always gotten that so I smile and tell him I look more like my father. Well that's what mama told me anyway. My dead father who apparently isn't dead. Well I didn't mention that part.

I kept texting my girls

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June and Tshire. Sending pictures of food and the decor. Tshire said he's been here before with his family for dinner. I swear they're goals that family. His parents are still in love and it shows. His mother recently got her first tattoo. In true mid-forties female style it was a bible verse. Anyway it's cool what they have.

After stuffing ourselves and agreeing that all the meals are perfect there's still desserts to go I probably have no more space but I can't say no to hot malva pudding plus hot custard. I know it's a bit plain but I love it! It was mama's fave anyway.

We make our way back to the hotel only hours later. I need a bed and twenty hours of sleep.

When I wake up it's in the wee hours of the morning and I check my phone. It buzzes till it stops. There are texts from Tshire when he arrived and then he asked me to come to his house today. His mother prefers that than us being alone somewhere in the city. She'll drive us if needs be.

Well Gugu is on my side and it took a lot to convince Mtho but he agreed eventually though he said he'll drive me to wherever I'm meeting Tshire, no question about that. It was the best deal so Gugu and I agreed to it. I had to say Tshire and I are just friends and he's my VP. That's all. A lie, we all know I want more and so does he.

I like having a protective big brother. I just hope he doesn't threaten Tshire or something. We're going at a pace I like and I don't want setbacks. Kind of hoping he asks me out too so a brother on his case won't help. Okay time to stop overthinking.

I could do with a snack. Early morning or not. I roll out of bed and hurry into the shower. I take a long one then come out and dry myself. Thank God it's not cold in here like it is out there. There's nothing to do so I get back in bed after the shower and doze off.

I wake up with my phone ringing and take the call without checking.

"Hey, Siphó." Tshireletso.

I sit up straight when I hear his voice.

"Hey!"

Okay that come out a bit more enthusiastic than I wanted. I clear my throat.

"Can you like make it? At eleven. My mom will drive you back."



"Sure. I'll tell my brother I now know the time."

"Okay cool. See you now now."

I smile as I get off the call and dash to find the outfit of the day. I settle on a black Adidas tracksuit, black leggings underneath because just seeing snow makes me shiver and a big fuzzy jacket with a hoodie. Not letting my earlobes freeze again. I walk out of my room and knock in Gugu's room. The door opens and she's here today. Awesome.

"I wasn't going to miss this. I don't trust him to drop you off."  
Gugu.

She says this as she squeezes me in a tight hug. She looks so fabulous and ready for the day.

"Good morning and thank you. I trust him though."

"Him is right here. Also, I can always tell the others and we'll see who can convince Loyiso to let you go see a boyfriend."  
Mtho.

"He's not my boyfriend."

"It doesn't matter." Mtho.

"Masinga you promised." Gugu.

He stares at her blankly and walks to the bedroom.

"He's being a baby." Gugu.

I won't lie, I like having someone be protective over me. It's awesome.

"Speaking of, where's Mangi?"

"Left him with the girls at the guesthouse."

Oh yeah they're not in the hotel. I don't really know why but it's only the guys here.

"Why aren't they here anyway."

"Just relaxing. They'll come here on Friday before the wedding to welcome Luvuyo."

"That's the one Ma called her baby, right?"

Ma once called me Luvuyo and blamed it on old age. It's cute how she loved them and made sure to share with me. Just to make me feel like a part of her life.

"Yeah. He's coming back."

"Okay."

I check the time. I have an hour. I wonder if Mtho is still taking me. He walks out about fifteen minutes later and grabs keys.

"Come. Ask that idiot to send the location." Mtho says as he walks out the door.

I literally jump out of the chair and rush to hug Gugu and give her a kiss on the cheek then I run out following Mtho who's probably already in the parking lot just so he can say no with reason.

Tshire's house is so warm and homely. They have a fireplace, Mtho was probably charmed by Mrs Molise's impeccable poise and grace. He hardly said anything to Tshire. As for me, I was happy Lethabo isn't here and their father too. It's just Tshire and his mother.

Mrs Molise is in the kitchen now cooking while playing gospel music. She's probably chaperoning us but not making it obvious. Tshire and I are watching a movie, my pick of course so it's a teenage romcom.

It's hard to feel the tingles with his mom right there but somehow he makes it happen. He's so chilled and laughing without any care at the movie I'm not watching because I just keep stealing glances at him.

I reach for the Doritos but so does he and our hands touch. He takes my hand and pulls it towards his face. I want to tell him to stop but I'm afraid it will draw attention from his mother so I giggle and try to free my hand. He eats the chip I had in my hand and we break into laughter.

"That's so unfair!"

"No it isn't. I wanted that particular one too."

"Why?"

"Because it was in your hand."

"Why are you putting emphasis on that it was in my hand?"

"I want anything that has to do with you."

"Kids, come take your plates. I'll be upstairs to change before Nkhono arrives. Tshireletso will make you whatever you want to drink Sipho."

"Yes Ma."

She walks upstairs like she's in a movie and she's the lead actress. Everything she does is so... Elegant and poised. A true peagent queen.

"Your gran is coming?"

"Yes. For dinner though meaning mom will be upstairs till we're done."

"Oh... Okay."

"I'll grab the food. You, sit tight."

I smile and watch him walk away. Gosh I'm so smitten!

How did this even happen? I check my phone and there's thousands of messages from Mtho.

Okay not thousands but a lot. One from Gugu and two from Siyanda asking where I am.

Good Lord I might come back and be in trouble. I text Gugu asking her what Siyanda knows and she said she covered for me so I must not even reply to him. I reply to Mtho's many "Are you still comfortable?" messages and get off my phone as Tshire gets under the blanket we're sharing on the couch.

I grab my plate on the table and we say a short prayer then dig in.

"Don't you wanna try out worms?"

"Euw! You know putting it like that will not make me interested."

"Thats why I said worms."

I push him lightly while chuckling. He can be so crazy.



"So, now that you're in my house I can ask you this and you can't say no."

"I can always, say no."

"Yeah I know but I'm hoping you don't."

We laugh and I shake my head.

"Yes Tshireletso?"

"Firstly, you're beautiful."

"Why thank you. Momma tried."

"She did extremely well."

I chuckle but he only gives me half a smile and just stares.

"You're being weird."

Actually he's giving me butterflies in my tummy but I can't say that now.

"That's because I love you. I love all of you Miss Zondi. I love that you're smart. I love your personality though you shut everyone out and live in your head. I love that you beat me most times with marks."

"And I'll be number one again for the past term."

He laughs.

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves now."

I put my plate on the table and so does he.

"Wanna bet?" I look straight at him.

He tickles me a bit and I laugh loudly.

"Only if you'll be mine. Forever."

It's happening people! Someone wants to keep me. I could do a victory dance right now.

"Forever is a very long time Mr Molise."

"If I spend it with you

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it'll feel like a single day."

"How?"

"You're amazing. I want to be with you and no amount of time would be sufficient."

How cheesy! Oh but who am I kidding? I'm taken by him.

"You're sweet."

"I know."

He wiggles his brows at me.

"Well I'll only be yours if you'll be mine."

"You mam drive a hard bargain."

"Haibo!"

He laughs loudly.

"Well if you need me so bad how can I say no?"

I push him and laugh. He's such a dork.

"So from today, you're my girl?"

I take his arm and put it over my shoulders, then lay on his chest.

"You bet I am."

He kisses the side of my forehead and we chill like that in perfect silence.

Mtho decided to fetch me. Instead of letting Mrs Molise take me back he drove here and came to pick me up without any warning whatsoever. I swear he's dramatic. I'm just thankful he knocked because Tshire and were cuddling and talking about nothing but it felt like something. Imagine arguing about the country's per capita income. It was fun though. He is very smart and clearly has a love for Economics. I just enjoyed pushing his buttons and arguing for the sake of it.

"Siphosami!"

"Uh yes, Mtho."

"You're day dreaming about your date aren't you?"

I've been looking out the window thinking. Not day dreaming!

"I am not!"

"Better not. I don't like that boy. He's too cheesy and clearly not street smart."

I laugh at him.

"Well good thing he's just my friend."

"I wasn't born yesterday. I have another little sister."

I didn't know this.

"Really? How old?"

"A year younger than you."

He must bring her around then.

"What's her name?"

"Nomvelo. She's coming with mom to the wedding but they'll arrive tomorrow morning."

"Does she also have some white hairs?"

He chuckles. He must get the question a lot.

"Yes and around the same spot on her head as me."

"I'll find her on Facebook."

"There are many Nomvelo Masinga's out there."

"I'm a teenager boet. Trust me."

I pat his shoulder.

He shakes his head and drives into a garage.

"Go get us hot chocolates in there while I fill up."

"Okay."

He hands me a card and says my birth month and year as the pin. I raise a brow and look at the card.

SK Zondi.



My initials. We'll address the K name that I hate later. How did he do this? I look at him and he laughs.

"Go."

I shake my head and hurry out to the freezing cold then I walk quickly to the shop. I'm afraid of running. What if I fall on this cold ass water.

I have a bank card. Meaning a bank account. I'm an adult people. Make way!

I buy the hot chocolates and go back to the car then we drive off.

"Thank you."

"What for? You're not getting that till December. Give it back."

"What?"

I laugh but he doesn't. I put it on the dashboard.

"You still need to focus. You'll need money in university. Not yet little girl."

"Why did you show it to me?"

I don't understand the logic behind that.

"Because you went on a date."

I laugh at him and he breaks out into a loud laughter too.

"No boys Siphosami. You'll find a man when you're thirty-nine."

He's kidding!

And he said it so casually!

"What?"

"Yeah too soon. That's what I thought, it'll be forty then. It's a well rounded figure"

"Forty!!"

"What's wrong with forty? Life starts at forty."

"That's the lie old people tell themselves!"

"You should see your face. It's like I said the world is ending."

"Well without boys..."

"Krotoa!"

Ah yes. The K name my mother said I was given by my father before he "died". Yes, after the Khoi woman who was a slave to Jan Van Riebeeck.

"Oh no why that name?"

I really dislike it. Like a lot.

"I like it. When you thinks you're too cool I'll use it."

I laugh and just then I realize I am blessed. Blessed that I have him and all the others. Even Siyanda who's getting married in a few days noticed I wasn't around and asked about it. He took time just to care about me. Apparently they're all hiding that I wasn't around from Loyiso cause he'll probably never let me out of the hotel if he knew. That's what Gugu said.

Tshireletso texted me about his Nkhono arriving and I can't text back cause I know Mtho will ask questions. I just enjoy the ride listening to orders from one of the dictators in my life. I love them all so much!!

It's Friday! I'm excited because the wedding is tomorrow and my brothers' girlfriends are at the hotel now and Marco sent me to the Spa here to get pampered. I love my life.

He told them I can't drink alcohol though before I could lie about my age. Well I wouldn't have but they just think I'll do it.

I'm getting a full body massage when Khethelo calls me.

"Sami."

"Hey."

"Come up and change we're welcoming Luvuyo back remember?"

"Yes. Just a few minutes."

"Okay. Pass by our room. Marco has your dress here."

I'll sure do so. I get free clothes almost daily. Expensive free clothes by the way.

The dress is beautiful and grey. It's knitted with a turtle neck and fits me like a glove. There's a long black coat too and viola! It's a girl!

I put on the new boots Gugu bought me and man I look fly. Khethelo promised she'd do my eyebrows and lips only so I walk off to their room.

Before I turn the corner I see Loyiso and a young man walking to his room, they're laughing. Must be Luvuyo. I don't see his face but he has a loud bass like his brother.

I walk on to get my face done.

"Your face is beautiful though." Khethelo.

Don't you just hate it when someone extremely beautiful tells you, you're beautiful? It's like CAN YOU EVEN SEE YOU'RE PERFECT?

"Thank you."

I don't know what else to say.

"Love the skin and your brown set."

My eyes are show stoppers.

"Thank you. I wish I was darker. Like you."

I really do. Mama was and maybe it would make me look more like her.

"Never wish for anything more than what you have babes.  
You're perfect like this."

Okay I love her!

"Babe, Sami let's go downstairs." Marco calls from behind the  
bedroom door.

"Coming love." Khethelo.

I get up first and grab my phone. She grabs the smallest bag I've  
ever seen and it's Versace. My goodness. I receive Lord.

We walk out of the bedroom Instagram perfect and Marco is  
already waiting.

He takes her arm and mine then we walk out of their suite.

I belong in Hollywood baby. Hollywood.



9

NINE:

"Sami this here is Luvuyo, he used to be the baby of the family. Luvuyo, this is MaZondi's baby." Gugu.

She's standing next to a tall slightly lighter and skinnier version of Loyiso and talking about him being a baby. I chuckle.

"Hi Luvuyo."

I smile at him. He's way too handsome for a living being. His eyes are small and they look like they have a slight shine to them. His beard makes him look older than his actual age and the trim is just right for his frame. If I wasn't sitting already I'd need a chair. I'm blown away.

"Hi Sami." Luvuyo.

He just looks at me blankly. So much for the little crush I thought I'd have on him. So much for my mother's favorite.

"Come..." Gugu pulls him away to somewhere else.

That was warm. Mxm. I go dish up for myself and sit back at the table as I text Tshire. Luvuyo is really into girls. I've seen him take different numbers from different women throughout the evening. Isn't he like twenty-three? Oh well.

I retire to bed before everyone else and after a shower and getting into my onesie I hit the bed and fall asleep. There's a wedding to attend tomorrow.

My very amazing boyfriend wakes me up with a call in the morning.

"Rato, what are you wearing?"

"Now?"

Is he being a creep?

"No, to the wedding. Mom and I are coming."

"What? Really? You're my date?"

"Well I'm my mother's date."

I laugh at my stupidity. The brothers would never let him be my date.

After the call I get up and shower. I wear warm clothes and head over to Gugu and Mtho's suite for breakfast. It's locked. There's no breakfast? I check my WhatsApp and they texted saying I should go to Loyiso and Tumi's suite. Great. I should've checked my WhatsApp first. I walk there and when I knock Luvuyo opens up in sweatpants and no shirt on.

He is very well built. Skinny but clearly does go to the gym. I realize I'm staring when he speaks,

"Oh, right. Come in..."

"Good morning to you too."

"Yeah yeah."

He sits in front of the television and has his breakfast. I dish up what I want and go sit next to him.

"When we come back from the wedding, please borrow me your room, you'll use mine here."

"Uh... Why?"

"I'm banking on this other chick from yesterday to pull through."

"You're very careless."

"Unbothered kid."

"No."

"What?"

"You heard me."

"Why not? You want to be the girl I bed tonight?"

He raises a brow and smirks a bit. I really wish his egotistic, annoying facial expression and words didn't do anything to me but I'd be lying. He gets closer to my face and I lean back while trying to control my breathing. He puts on a cheeky knowing smile and stares at my eyes then at my lips. I close my eyes and think of what to say.

"You? Never! For your information

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I have a boyfriend."

I can feel his breath on my skin he's close. Too close. I feel his body move back and I open my eyes. He lays back on the couch.

"Great. I'll let them know."

He tosses a baby tomato in his mouth and changes the channel like he didn't just do something to me.

"Them?"

I don't understand...

"Yes. Your big brothers."

I gag on my own spit.

"What? Why?"

I'm coughing a lot.

"Give me your room and I'll pretend I don't know little Sami has a boyfriend."

Blackmail?! He smiles and keeps eating.

"You're mean."

"Smart."

I narrow my eyes at him and click my tongue. He's an idiot. A selfish, self serving, annoying idiot. Let me get up and focus on my boyfriend who's coming to the wedding and nothing will ruin that not even this guy.

I go back to my room to change and wait for the car that'll take me to the wedding. Mtho said his mother and sister will be inside. I'll finally meet Nomvelo. Well not like I've known about her existence for long but I'm glad I'll meet her today. As for Luvuyo I'm praying he's not using the same transport.

The wedding was magical. A winter wonderland I promise you. Tshire was sitting far from me but during the reception he was able to make it to my table. I'm sitting with him and Nomvelo and some other teenagers we're not even talking to though. Nomvelo to be honest is a more feminine and younger Mtho with long hair. No jokes.

"Your mother is gorgeous Tshireletso." Nomvelo.

"Thank you. She will love you for those words." Tshire.

"I'm sure she gets it like everyday."

"Yeah dad kinda gets jealous too then he'll brag to me and Lethabo about his beautiful show stoping wife." Tshire.

"Wait guys, does my brother know that you two are..."  
Nomvelo.

"Definitely not! He suspects it but he doesn't know."



"Oh alright. He's much older than me so I don't even get to see him much." Nomvelo.

Luvuyo appears from nowhere. Lord help me. Nomvelo seems mesmerized. If only she knew. He hands me the card to the suite and I roll my eyes and fish for the one to my room in my bag.

I hand it to him.

"Not a word." Luvuyo.

He walks away in what I wish wasn't the coolest walk. I wish he'd slip and fall.

Tshire looks at me and so does Nomvelo. I sigh and explain what happened. Omitting that he had me breathing different of course.

"We should both ask to come around in December." Nomvelo.

She just saved me from Tshire's eyes. He seems to be processing what I just told them.

"That's a plan."

"So you'll be in Durban?" Tshire.

He sounds a little hurt.

Shit. I'm not used to this boyfriend business. He probably was making plans for us.

"Yeah... Did you have anything planned?"

"Not really but I wanted to be with you, that's for sure." Tshire.

Okay what do I do now?

"It's cool we can finalise things later. Maybe you can spend only half of December in Durban." Nomvelo.

"That could work." Tshire.

"Definitely not. She's spending all of December in Durban."  
Loyiso.

Lord kill me now. Where the hell did he come from? How much did he hear? He stares at the three of us and narrows his eyes at Tshire who looks down.

Damn Loyiso is scary. He walks away. No smile. Nothing. O-kay.

"That guy is scary." Tshire.

"Tell me about it."

"Hectic." Nomvelo.

"He looked like he suspects me of murder or some huge crime."  
Tshire.

"They all do that." Nomvelo.

Tshire's mother walks to our table and it's clear they're leaving now.

"We'll talk on WhatsApp. I love you." Tshire.

"Definitely. I love you too." I say it a bit softly. I didn't even think it through. Am I already in love?

He smiles and we stand up, he hugs me tightly and I feel tingles. I'll miss him so much! I wish he wasn't going.

I let go of him and realize the entire table with the brothers has stopped and they were looking at the hug. Oh shit. I nudge Nomvelo and she also hugs Tshire briefly just to save my ass.

We bid goodbye to Mrs Molise and Tshire then Gugu comes to our table.

"Come babies. You're going back to the hotel. Nomvelo, Ma will use Mtho and I's suite, you'll sleep with Sami or her, your choice." Gugu.

I think she's saving our asses so I comply.

"Thanks sis." Nomvelo.

"Goodnight girls." Gugu.

We get in the car. It's freezing out and I think I spotted Loyiso and Tumi walking from his car back to the hall.

Nomvelo and Mtho's mother is hilarious and I can tell she's a diva. Siyanda's mother is just slaying, her body doesn't even tell you she has son's as big as Siyanda and Sandile. Let alone that she's a grandmother of two going on three soon. Also in this car is Nomonde, she's Siyanda's baby mama. A pretty woman and

honestly she doesn't seem bothered that her baby daddy got married. Their daughter Namelwa is just beautiful in any case. Though she's asleep the whole way to the hotel.

I almost forgot Luvuyo bullied me when we arrived at the hotel. I tell Nomvelo the news and we go to Tumi and Loyiso's suite to use the bedroom Luvuyo was using.

10

TEN:

I've been home for a week but still nothing. My aunt pretends she didn't hear me everytime I mention the father talk so I've ignored it too. I'm focusing on school and minding my business. All the teachers are going on and on about finals so I'm focusing on that. The debate team needs me but I've taken a step back from all of it. School only matters.

I am back at my number one position by the way, by one mark, and Tshire was actually happy for me though he challenged me for finals. I think he does it to motivate me and I love him for it.

I'm chilling with the girls in class during our break doing electrical engineering before the class begins.

"Girls I have something to share." Gen.

"Is it like juicy?" Nothando.

"It depends how you look at it." Gen.

"Okay I'm curious."

"Same here." Bontle.

"Don't judge but I had sex for the first time." Gen.

"What?!" Bontle.

Nothando and I just look at her with our jaws dropped.

"With Tshepo?"

Tshepo is in our class so that would be awkward.

"No... We sort of broke up and I... I did it with Lethabo." Gen.



"Lethabo?!" Nothando.

"As in Tshire's brother?"

She nods and looks away.

"Well girl as long as it was your choice." Bontle.

"It was... I'm afraid I moved too quickly though and I don't even know what Lethabo and I are." Gen.

"Holy shit! How was it?"

I've never had a conversation with someone who admits to having sex other than June.

"It was... foreign. Painful a lot too but he was a gentleman about the whole thing and walked me home even though we're neighbors." Gen.

"That's cute. Any regrets?" Bontle.

"None really." Gen.

"Were you safe?"

"Yes, definitely." Gen.

"I can't wait for my first time." Bontle.

"Same here." Nothando.

"I'm not really placing value on it. If it happens, it happens."

They all look at me like I'm crazy.

"What? It's just sex. Long as I'm conscious and willing."

"Would you do it with Tshire?" Bontle.

"Not sure. It depends how things go between us I guess. I really like him but then we're still fresh so I'd rather wait."

The bell rings and ends our conversation.

When I get home my aunt is with a man in the sitting room. He looks big and tall, many tattoos and definitely coloured. I don't know whether to greet or hide. He has striking hazel eyes. He greets me first.

"You're here! Hi, I'm Caleb."

"Hey Mr Caleb... Aunty?"

I turn my attention to my aunt who sighs.

"My baby this is your father." Auntie.

What? My father? He looks...

"Are you sure?"

She looks at me like I'm acting crazy and I shrug. I didn't expect to meet my father today. How did my mother date such a scary man? Why even?

"I'm sure you have many questions Krotoa. You can ask me."

"I'll give you two some privacy." Auntie.

My aunt leaves me in the room with this man. He really must be my father.

I sit where my aunt was seated opposite him. The sofa is still warm so I take off my shoes and curl on it. Then I stare for signs of myself from this man.

I see my small ears. He's my exact skin tone. Our lashes are long and eyebrows bushy. Well right now mine were trimmed by Khethelo but nothing else. My eyes are brown

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his aren't. My lips are fuller than his but I just I don't know man.

"You look a little like your sister and a bit like my sister at the same time."

"I have a sister?"

"Sort of."

Huh?

"Oh. Okay. Why didn't I know about you before?"

"That will take the entire story of what happened between me and your mother for you to understand."

"I have time."

He chuckles and begins the story.

"Well when I met your mother I had recently lost my wife and your big sister. Everyone knew I was bad news, including your mother but she gave me a chance. She loved me despite being told not to. Then when she fell pregnant with you I wanted to do one last job. I was a criminal Krotoa. A hardened criminal. I was part of a job bombing an ATM and it went well but we were caught. I'm lucky I didn't die that day. All of my friends did that day. I was lucky. By the time you were born I was serving my sentence. I didn't tell them where the money is hidden so they kept me in jail using tactics, adding crimes to my sentence that I was clearly framed for. Digging up old things. They let me go eventually and I'm here."

"Did my aunt tell you my mother is gone."

"Yes. I'm sorry baby. I'm sorry I wasn't here. I'm sorry she had to work to raise you. I'm sorry I spent so many years away from you."

"Thanks for coming to meet me."

"It's the first thing I wanted to do. The first thing I had to do."

"Why did you say I must be told you died?"

"To be honest you were too inquisitive. The plan was to not say anything but you kept asking and asking we decided to just say I'm dead. Well your mother was against it but I asked her to."

I'm not sure I understand the logic behind that but hey, I have yet to be a parent so what do I know?

"So what do I call you? Dad? Caleb? Mr Caleb?"

"Anything you want Krotoa."

"Yeah about that name, why?"

He laughs loudly.

"I wanted you to have something of your roots."

"So I'm Khoi?"

"You're coloured."

"So you're not sure?"

"I was hoping you wouldn't notice."

I laugh and he does too and scratches his head.

"A lot of who I am is lost. I'm not sure about who my great grandparents are. Not sure where I come from exactly. I was



never told. I wish I had answers for you but, you might not even have an ounce of Khoi in you."

"Whoa. I hear you though."

I understand him perfectly. Somethings get lost in history.

My aunt brings us food.

"Enough talking, let's have dinner." Auntie.

I love uMaZondi wami though. It's actually my turn to cook. My dad... Weird... My dad thanks her and has dinner with us. He has a nice smile for a scary guy and my aunt clearly never liked my mom's relationship with him. She's hardly even laughing at his jokes about how my mother made him mellow.

"Well Zodwa thank you for your hospitality and allowing me to meet Krotoa. She's just beautiful and I'm thankful for her mother and you raising her to be this lovely young woman."  
Caleb.

My aunt just smiles. She doesn't like the guy. It's evident.

"I'll walk you out."

I offer and he smiles.

Oh this is his car. It's a Cressida. My mom told me stories about this car being the General Thath' lyngane of her time.

He opens the car door and reaches in. Then he hands me a rolled up stack of R200 notes.

"That's for school only Krotoa."

I frown. School? I study right here not in England.

"Uh thanks I guess... Wait! What's my surname?"

We've spoken about many things but not that.

"Right! I'm so silly. Booysen. You're Krotoa Booysen."

Wait... Booysen?!

You know when you lay in bed and connect the dots in your life and they all don't go where you want them to?

I mean... I'm Siphosami Booysen? Tshire's mother is Karen Booysen. This is not good at all. I'm even afraid of asking Tshire more about his mother. This cannot be. My heart beats out of my chest and it gets hot in the room. I remove the cover from my body. I cannot be having an anxiety attack right now. I breathe in and out slowly until my breathing becomes normal again and eventually I feel the cold and pull my cover over my body again. I need to sleep.

11

ELEVEN:

Today's day is slow, way too slow for my liking. I must see Tshireletso and tell him. I've tried my best not to tell the girls my theory and I'm cracking.

I need to ask him and soon. I pack my books into my bag as soon as the English teacher walks out. I must find Tshire so I walk to his class. I'm usually very careful about us and this will be no different I must be as impersonal as possible about taking him with me to my classroom. I choose my class because it's almost always empty.

As I walk back with him we're not talking at all. I guess I probably came across as angry so he's not saying anything to me on the way. We sit on my desk.

"Look, I think I should tell you something." Tshire.

This little meeting was requested by me but maybe he'll say something that'll make me feel like we shouldn't be together.

Oh who am I kidding? I really want to be with him. He's never said the wrong thing. He's actually liked me since we were kids and I did not look pretty without my front teeth at seven.

"Sure..."

"My uncle told my mother he has a seventeen year old daughter. He told her that she's named Krotoa and... You're literally the only person named Krotoa I know. I couldn't sleep a wink last night..."

"So it's true? We're cousins?"

"You know?"

"Yes. Well no. I put the pieces together when the man I'm told is my father told me my paternal surname."

"So you're really his daughter?"

"My aunt says so."

"No. My uncle can't come out of jail just to ruin my life! He can't!"

He leaves the classroom in a hurry. I can't even stop him or check on him. I'm numb on my seat.

Why did this come out now? Now that Tshire told me how he feels. Why not before? Now that I actually also feel something for him. It's unfair on the both of us.

"Girl? Why are you crying?" Gen.

I didn't even realize I had tears falling from my eyes. I wipe them with my hands and force a smile.

"I'm okay Gen."

It comes out as a whisper and she immediately sits next to me and pulls me into her arms.

"You know you can talk to me right?"

"I know babe. I just don't want to talk about it yet. It hurts Genevieve. It hurts."

"It's okay hun. It's okay. Whatever it is, I'm right here. I'll always be right here."

I stay in her arms and compose myself. I cannot show my sadness to everyone. Besides I'm going to a meeting with the principal and Tshire after this. I can't show my sadness. I can't show this school I can be vulnerable. I must lead.

\*\*\*

I got a call from Siyanda and Chels saying they're back from a little honeymoon with their son though. They just gisted me and that was it. Man they're awesome. I mean already the

school is buzzing with speculation on how I know such people. My teachers have tried to find out more. Can you imagine?

My dad well, I call him dad now, he's a thug. Apparently he's a well known thug in the streets, I just never heard about him because... Well clearly I'm not the type to be chilling with unemployed boys who do nothing but sit in the streets and gossip about township legends.

I've yet to meet Tshire's mom and more of the family and honestly I'd rather not. Tshire isn't taking this well, at all. He wants to kiss me. Says it'll be our first and last but I don't want to... I mean I do but... I'm afraid it won't help change anything about the attraction. Anyway I'm almost done with exams and it's November. Right after I finish I'm praying for Durban to be with my other family. June wanted to come here but her dad being the "strict" man he is said no. So I won't be staying any longer than I must here.

"Your father was too arrogant. That's why I didn't like him. My husband too didn't like him."



My aunt is forever explaining why she dislikes my father and practically locks herself in her room when he's here.

"That's all?"

I like to indulge her. She will tell me anyway even if I don't so rather be a willing participant.

"No. He was a thug. He was a widower. He just... Had too much wrong about him."

My last paper is coming up and as easy as language is

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I still want to skim through a book. However my aunt must vent.

"Being a widower is wrong? "

"No my baby. Just that I feel like he hadn't healed and used your mother to forget his wife."

"Was mom happy?"

"Yes baby. Before him your mother had never had a lasting relationship. Had never had a child or anything but your father gave her all that even though he left before he could see you."

"That's what matters isn't it?"

I'm stylishly wrapping up this conversation.

"True my baby. She loved him. You came to be. It's all that really matters. Okay baby I'll go start cooking."

"I love you aunty."

"Love you too Sam-Sam."

She smiles and leaves my room. Honestly a part of me wishes they had reunited before mama passed on. I don't want to cry so I push back thoughts of my mother and put on my game face. I take out my study material and browse through it.

After the exam even people who would hardly say hello to me hugged me and wished me luck as I did the same to them. Basically we were all saying goodbye. My friends and I walked everywhere together, from saying bye to the cleaning staff, to the securities to the teachers. They may have come late in my High school life, but they've been the best friends ever. To think that friendship was right under my nose but I ignored it. I really hope I'm not this closed up in University. Sure I did see Tshire but we acted as if we're okay. We don't have a matric dance in my school but there's a dinner tonight and they're already preparing for it. I'm basically performing my last duty as the president by hosting alongside Tshire. It's going to be tough but I know I can do it. My girls will be right there.

We head to our homes to fetch our dresses Gen and Thando said they're going to do our make-up here.

I got this lovely but expensive black long and tight dress with a bare back from Zara using dad's stack of cash. I'm guessing it was the money that kept him in jail.

After grabbing the dress I kiss my aunt's cheeks and rush out. Wait... Dad? He just parked in front of our gate.

I walk out to meet him. He gets out with a bouquet of flowers. Okay this is super sweet.

"For you. Congratulations my child."

I hug him tightly then I take the flowers from him.

"Thank you dad."

"I'll take you to school."

He opens the door for me and I get in. I feel like a princess. The old man tries shame, I'll give him that.

Well the event went well. We had food, a little dancing here and there, and now we're saying our goodbyes to each other. I'll miss some of these people a lot. Tshire maybe most of all but I'm glad I'm getting a break from seeing him. He breaks my heart when he gives me the begging eyes. I don't want to hurt him.

I want to call my dad for him to fetch me but I don't want Mrs Molise seeing him and realizing I'm the daughter. Apparently she wants to meet Krotoa and Tshire promised me he wouldn't tell her it's me.

Gen's mom offers to drop us all off and my heart dances. Thank God.

We start with Thando then they drop me off and I promise to call Gen later.

Dad's car is here. I wonder if he's waiting for my call inside. I look in and he's not inside. Well then aunty must've allowed him to come in. I open and close the gate then I unlock the door and burglar guard. I stop on my tracks when dad comes out of aunty's room followed by her.

What the...?

I chuckle and fold my arms. This, this they must explain.

12

I'm in a car on the way to a hotel in Beacon Bay. It's about five and a half hours away from my house so I'm trying to be as comfortable as possible. Once in Beacon Bay I'll meet up with Loyiso and Tumi who'll take me with to Durban.

I honestly cannot wait. My butt already hurts because I've been sitting in one position forever. Well about two hours to be precise but still.

My aunt calls for the second time. I smile and pick up.

"Aunty."

"Hello baby, are you still okay?"

"Still breathing aunty. Does he know yet?"

I asked her not to tell my father about me leaving. I felt like he made plans for me without asking so I wanted to just leave without telling him.

"Nope. I'm not saying anything till I'm asked."

"Okay aunty. Love you."

"Love you more."

I get off the call with her and text my girls and Nomvelo who's already in Durban at her brother's house.

My aunt and father did explain things to me when I caught them. I remember just laughing at my aunt more than anything because she was clearly embarrassed.

According to them "it just happened" and that day was the first time.

Well since then I've noticed the looks they give each other and I wouldn't mind if they got together. My aunt lost her husband five years ago and she's only forty-five. A little love would do her some good.

Nomvelo reminds me Luvuyo exists when she tells me he's also here with Tumi and Loyiso. I roll my eyes. Why must he be around?

He's such a smug idiot!

Anyway Siphosami you're not here for him, it's just a couple of hours then you'll be with Mvelo in Durban having fun.

I drift off to sleep after having a cup of hot chocolate with the driver. I've hardly touched the travel snacks I had with me. Mostly because I'm looking for the perfect moment to dig into a muffin or open a bag of potato chips. Yes, I'm that person.



By the time I get up we're about half an hour away from the hotel. I have a missed call from Tshire. I check my texts and he texted multiple times.

He says his mother knows I'm her niece. Something about a conversation she had with my father where he called me by my first name and not Krotoa.

I get a call from him again. I swallow and answer.

"My baby hello." It's his mother. I didn't expect this.

"Mrs Molise."

"It's auntie now baby. Why didn't you say anything?"

"I just... I felt bad."

"You and Tshireletso didn't know my baby and luckily you also didn't do anything."

"Yes. We didn't."

"Okay my baby when are you visiting?"

"I'm going to Durban now so I'm not sure."

"That's fine by me baby. We visit Durban sometimes during the festive season so I might come up. You can meet my husband and your other cousin Lethabo."

I pull a fake smile. Thankfully, she can't see me. Shoot me now.

"Yes. No problem auntie, we'll talk."

I literally run from that call.

When we get to the hotel I'm shown to my room where I sleep immediately after.

I'm woken up by someone slightly shaking me.

"Sam Sami. Hello baby girl." Tumi.

She smells and looks so amazing. I smile at her.

"Hey, you're back."

They had went to some ceremony at Loyiso's house.

"Yes hun. Are you hungry?"

I am actually. I didn't eat because I didn't get my perfect moment.

"Yes

a bit."

My stomach growls and she giggles. I join her.

"Come."

She pulls me from the bed and I follow her out to the room opposite mine.

"Hello guys."

"Hey Sami." Loyiso.

"Kid." Luvuyo.

I roll my eyes at Luvuyo and smile at Loyiso.

I join them and dig in since they're already eating.

"We're leaving in a few hours so we still have some time here. What do you guys wanna do?" Tumi.

"Hit the club scene?" Luvuyo.

"Sami can't be out clubbing." Loyiso.

"Yeah but I can." Luvuyo.

"Do something together Luvuyo." Tumi.

"Okay then, there's a food fest thing going on." Luvuyo.

"Okay you guys will go. I'll sleep in with Tumi." Loyiso.

At this point I'm just eating quietly waiting for a verdict.

"Okay then quit stuffing yourself up with this. We're going to a food fest."

He gets up and grabs his jacket. I smile at Loyiso and Tumi.

"Bye guys."

Luvuyo stands by the door while I grab my own jacket in my room.

"Cute room."

He says as I walk past him to the corridor.

"Forget it. Not this time. I no longer have a boyfriend."

"Relax. I have my own room too. What happened to the nerd boy?"

"Who told you he was a nerd?"

He rolls his eyes as if I'm dumb for asking.

"Anyway, turns out we're cousins."

"Father's side right?"

"Yeah."

We walk into the elevator and the couple that was in here walks out.

Well this is awkward. I follow him out to the car when we get to the parking lot. He drives us. I can't help but wonder if he wasn't so self centered would we like... I don't know it's silly but he's so sexy and hot I can't not wonder...

"Staring is rude Sami."

"I... Uh... I'm not staring."

"Whatever you say. We're here."

"That didn't take long."

"Yeah. Come. Ever tried sweet potato fries?"

I get out on my side.

"What?"

I've never even heard of that. Do they just fry sweet potatoes?

"I'm sure a stall or two here has them."

As we check out the food stalls, performances are going on and he is honestly not so bad today. He's making me try new things and we're honestly having fun. I thought he'd ditch me.

By the time we leave we have about an hour or so till the flight leaves. When we get to the hotel everything is packed and



Loyiso and Tumi are just waiting for us. We get in one car and drive off.

"You kids have fun?" Loyiso.

"She's the kid, and yeah it wasn't so bad." Luvuyo.

To be honest I thought he'd say he had fun. I'm a bit dissapointed.

"It was okay."

I look out the window. Mxm.

\*\*\*

Mvelo and I are taking care of Loyiso and Tumi's house while they go away on a baecation. I was so excited when they told me I called her same time. They're actually leaving us here

today and we can't wait to be alone without any adults. The following day they've left and we're officially alone here.

"How exciting is this?! Such a huge house, to ourselves?!"

I've been too excited to cover it up.

"I know right! The pictures I'm gonna take!" Mvelo.

We're looking at the pool. Can't go since it's raining and late but we're definitely going as soon as there's no more rain.

"Tag me!!"

Our IG game is going to be so cool!

"Okay come. Let's go to a huge bath tub, use loads of foam bath and petals then take pics."

Oh I love her!

"Great idea! Then we'll do towels on our heads and large gowns."

"Siphosami you beaut!"

We laugh our way up the stairs and go into a bedroom with it's own bathroom. The main bedroom is locked so I'm sure this one isn't off limits. Mvelo goes first. It looks so good! I even get her a glass of apple juice and make it seem like champagne. She's nailing it! The pictures look so good! You'd swear we are at some hotel Bonang frequents.

"Okay wait it'll be obvious it's the same place. Let's change bathrooms."

"Good idea."

We move the photoshoot to another bedroom. Well the foam bath here smells a bit male but hey, that's okay. We do our

thing and I swear this one must study photography. Her pictures make me look like Kendall Jenner!

"I'm enjoying the bath. I'll get out later."

"I should've gone last." She sulks.

"Join me."

"Nah. I'll go take some mirror selfies. Bye with your rich bish looking self."

I laugh and shake my head. I get to posting and my phone begins buzzing. Time to put it away and let them react.

I think I fell asleep in here and when I wake up the water is still warm. I get out and wrap a towel around my body. When I walk out I find Luvuyo on the bed sitting in his drawers with a towel over his shoulder.

"And then?"

He has a smug look on his face. I didn't even know he was going to be here. It's supposed to be just Mvelo and I.

"You're coming from my bathroom kid."

Fuck! I give him a tight lip smile and walk out quickly.

Fuck! My undies.

I walk back in and he's in the shower. Hopefully he didn't see anything. I grab my bra and panties then I walk out.

Never going in there again!

I find Nomvelo and we go to bed. Just before lights out I remember my phone.

"Shit."

"What now?"

"Left my phone in Luvuyo's bathroom."

"You'll get it in the morning."

"Yeah... You're right."

We cuddle and fall asleep talking about books... and boys of course.

The next morning Luvuyo isn't in his room and the phone isn't there either. What the hell?!

13

"Where's my phone?"

"Greet my guest."

He has a girl with him. She looks at me me up and down.

"Yeah no thanks. Luvuyo, I've been waiting for my phone."

"Did she just snub me? Oh hell no bitch!" The girl.

She attempts to hit me and Luvuyo grabs her hands.

"Okay, bye." Luvuyo.

He drags her out of the house.

"What? No! Where am I supposed to go? It's late." The girl.

He throws her out and locks the door.

"You owe me pussy lil cockblocker."

My heart is beating out of my chest. What does he mean? He points at me and walks to Nomvelo who's watching from the couch.

"What are you watching little sis?"

He messes her hair a bit and goes under the throw.

"It's Frozen..." Mvelo.

"Okay. We're watching action. Hobbs and Shaw." Luvuyo.

He takes over the remote. I'm still where I was when his girlfriend almost hit me.



I go sit next to him.

"My phone, please."

"Did you ask Aunty?"

"As a matter of fact yes."

"Then I guess it's in a drawer somewhere in my bedroom."

"Luvuyo I want it now."

"Then go look. Geez."

Nomvelo has her mouth shut and she's just looking at the screen.

Ugh. I head upstairs to his room while he's playfully teasing Mvelo. I roll my eyes. Mxm.

I look through the drawer next to his bed and boom. My phone. Next to condoms. Luvuyo is an idiot.

I head back downstairs and sit next to him again. I get under the fleece.

"Mvelo when you're old you'll have black hairs seeing as you already have grey hairs." Luvuyo.

Mvelo giggles and playfully hits him. He always goes out of his way to make me feel excluded.

"Found my phone."

I announce. He turns to me.

"Gee would you look at that. I didn't have it."

"I had left it in your bathroom."

"What were you doing there?"

His face is inches from mine. His breath smells like alcohol and mint. Weird combo.

"Taking pictures."

He squints his eyes and looks at my eyes before turning to the screen.

"Make me popcorn brat."

"Excuse me?"

I am not his maid!

"I was talking to my sister, but since you want to, salt and vinegar."

He's serious? Yup he's serious. What the hell?

"I'm your sister too."

"Nah kid

you aren't. The brat is."

For some reason that he doesn't think of me as a sister makes me slightly happy.

"I'm not a brat." Mvelo.

"And she claims to not be a kid." Luvuyo.

Goodness me he's annoying. The skinny girl should've stayed.

I go make his popcorn and a few moments later Mvelo joins me in the kitchen looking as grumpy as me.

"He wants me to get him a beer."

I laugh at her.

"At least that's quick. He's taken over the television."

"Drunk Luvuyo is worse than sober Luvuyo."

"I agree."

She goes to sit next to him and hands him the beer. The popcorn is done and I go back to my seat with it.

He takes the bowl and starts digging in. He should've just asked for his dinner.

This movie isn't half bad. Lots of lies though but it's not bad.

By the time it's over he's half asleep. We help him up the stairs and put him in bed. Then we take his shoes off and his jacket. His phone screensaver is a selfie of me and Mvelo at the wedding in Lesotho.

"I guess in his own way, he cares." Mvelo.

"Very weird way."

We walk out and leave him there. My father has been asking me to come home but I told him I made these plans before he was in my life so he can't ask me that. He tried using an authoritative tone but unfortunately for him I'm not afraid of his scary ass. He's new in my life so he must really relax. My mother let me do what I want and I'm super good. He can't think I'm going to change for him.

\*\*\*

It's been a week and Luvuyo brought two girls over this one day. After that he's been coming home alone and bothering Mvelo and I. We like it better when he comes home without a woman. Loyiso and Tumi are back and we're going to Siyanda and Chelsea's house. They're going to be there which makes it less fun but we can't wait to hang out with the babies.

"We didn't hang out at all. We should plan a girls date." Tumi.

"That would be fun." Mvelo.

"Anyday."

Chelsea walks in.

"Hey girls." Chels.

We all rush to her and give her hugs.

"You look so lovely sthandwa!" Tumi.

"Getting there babe." Chels.

They give each other a long hug and break it already crying. They miss Sandy. I never wish to lose any of my friends. This must be hard. Mvelo and I being cry babies are also crying.

After a lunch with Chelsea, Tumi and Loyiso we drive to Chelsea's with her. It's literally ten minutes away from the gate of Loyiso's to theirs. We get shown our new rooms and before we can even chill Mrs Luthuli here walks in.

"Let's go out for dinner, look fancy babes. Siyanda's paying."  
Chels.

We laugh and do a little dance before ramaging through our clothes to find fancy stuff.

The dinner is at a hotel in Umhlanga. To say everything looks gorgeous is an understatement. Siyanda and Chels are the perfect fit honestly and they're such amazing people. Sandile



joins us a little later. He also got the memo, we're all in black. The night goes well and when we get back to the house Mvelo and I shower together and go to the same bed.

"Sandile is cute."

I get up on my butt same time.

"What?!"

She turns away.

"Oh no Nomvelo Masinga... What?!"

I shake her and she giggles and turns back.

"Well it's true. He's just way older and would never look at me like that."

"As in nine years older!"

I lay back on the bed.

"Oh please. Vuyo is like six years older than you."

"I'm not judging sister. Just saying. Anyway you're right, he is cute."

"His love for his Amelia is just beautiful. His face lit up everytime he spoke of her."

"He's a yummy daddy."

We giggle and go on and on about meaningless things and stupid crushes.

14

I spent Christmas with Mvelo's family. We went down with Mtho, Gugu and Nombuso. I'm very intrigued by the dynamics of their relationships. Mtho having two wives is really cool. He makes it look like something I could do... The having a sister wife part.

For New Year's Luvuyo said he's hosting a party and the older brothers made him agree to host us and promise to look after us so we're going to be at his apartment. Sihle and Nosi are going to be there and Sandile too so Mvelo is excited just cause she'll see him. It's the thirty first of December and we're being driven to his apartment way too early in my opinion.

"You two be useful to Luvuyo. Help him pack up food and drinks and stuff. That way he won't see you guys as a burden." Gugu.

"We will be sure to help him."

It's not like he gives us a choice.

"Good. We'll fetch you guys later tomorrow." Gugu.

"Later next year." Mvelo.

We all laugh.

"Just have fun guys. Don't give Luvuyo a hard time. No entertaining boys." Nono.

"Trust me, Luvuyo will make sure they don't." Mtho.

Don't ask how I know that, I just do.

They drop us off at Luvuyo's penthouse apartment and Mtho has a word with him before they leave.

"You two

stay in your room." Luvuyo.

He says this as he points at it and walks past us sitting awkwardly in the kitchen. We move to the room and fall asleep again.

I'm woken up by some girl's moans and immediately feel disgusted. Mxm. I get up and decide to take a shower while Mvelo is still sleeping. It's outside the room so I get to hear the moans clearly. I walk down the hallway and into the bathroom being followed down by the annoying and constant moaning.

By the time I'm finished it's stopped and the apartment is rather quiet. I get out and walk to the bedroom. Luvuyo is on his phone in the kitchen and he signals for me to come to him using his head. I leave my toiletries on the dressing table and go out to him.

"Do you understand what stay in your room means?"

I shrug.

"I took a shower."

"And as soon as my girl heard the shower she couldn't stay any longer."

Well that's great.

"Do you even remember her name?"

"None of your business."

He grabs some cereal.

"Why do you hate me?"

"Hate? Don't flatter yourself. Your debt has doubled."

"Debt? What debt?... Wait! What? How am I supposed to pay that?"

He's got to be joking. He gives me a half smile and looks at me. It makes my temperature rise a bit and I step back.

"With your pussy."

My mouth goes dry but definitely not my pussy. I want to reply but we hear the door opening and Mvelo's footsteps.

"Morning." Mvelo.

"Morning girl."

"Morning lil sis. Take a shower and come make breakfast."  
Luvuyo.

I'm standing right in front of him! Ugh this guy just grates my tits sometimes.

\*\*\*

I feel like I was working out. Luvuyo made us push the trolleys and carry the plastic bags as punishment for leaving our room before he said to. Now we're making salads for the party and helping him with the punch and whatever else. He even bought fireworks.

Someone knocks and Mvelo gets it. She walks in with a bag and is followed by Sandile with groceries. OMG! She must be super excited he's staying over.

"Hey Sami." Sandile.

His hug is comfy and he smells nice. Funny enough it's nothing like Luvuyo. Well Luvuyo doesn't hug me but the feeling he gives me isn't brotherly like Sandile.

"Hey big bro."

"Can I get a beer?"



He sits in the dining room and browses over Luvuyo's mainly hip hop playlist. I get him a beer and continue with the food. Luvuyo joins him and they do a weird handshake and hug.

Mvelo comes back beaming.

"You must be so excited."

"I don't even know why cause he called me kid... Right in the middle of a great hug."

"Maybe we should misbehave. That way, we might get noticed."

I don't know if I'm still myself or it's the punch I stole but Luvuyo is making me want to be bad.

"Damn right."

I'm glad she agrees!

"Nomvelo get me a beer." Luvuyo.

She rolls her eyes and gets it for him. No one is really invited to this party they just posted about it and loads of requests to join have been pinging on their phones.

♡♡♡

Admin: I know it's short, very busy just writing the pdf guys, sorry.

FIFTEEN:

Some people are already here. The music is blasting and they're dancing. Mvelo and I were told to mind the kitchen.

We moved some of the furniture to Loyiso's apartment across and left the couches and a dining room table only for beer pong. Luvuyo and Sandile are handling the meat out on the balcony with some other guys.

"Okay I'm going to change now."

I tell Mvelo and she smiles and nods.

"I'll cover for you. Go."

She's the best ever. I go to the bedroom. This one guy here keeps eyeing me and he's so cute.

I change into denim shorts Nombuso got for me from Fashion Nova and a peach body suit that makes my perky set look

bigger than I add white Nike sneakers. I'm not good at this make-up thing yet but I've been learning on YouTube. Luckily for me my brows are perfect, I use the foundation and bronzer then the blush. I use some mascara for my lashes and then nude lipstick. I think I look pretty enough. I walk out and bump into the guy who eyed me in the passage.

"Semhle man." Him.

I smile at him like a retard. He's so cute!

"Thanks." I don't know what to say. He takes my phone from me and does something to it before handing it to me again.

"I'm Yonela by the way. Don't get confused I'm here with my twin."

I nod and smile. I really need to learn how to flirt properly.

I take my phone from him and he walks the opposite way to the bathroom while I go back to the kitchen for Mvelo.

"Ooh la la! You look banging!" Mvelo beams.

"You think?"

"I know! Damn girl!"

"Thank babe. Your turn."

Sometimes it feels like she's older than me. She walks to the bedroom. I hand some guy a beer and text June while at it. We're anxious about our results.

I pass out some more drinks and snacks then Sandile appears with the meat in a pot.

"Sami please just slice the meat up to bite sizes and I'll get it out there." Sandile.

"Sure."

I almost fall when that famous guy Tevin walks in with his girlfriend. I remember reading online that he's dating a younger girl. Never thought I'd actually see him.

"T and T what it do!" Sandile.

He actually knows them?

"Hey bro!" the girl.

They walk here and I'm unable to even continue what I was doing. It's so surreal seeing Tevin. He greets Sandile and the girl walks over to me.

"I'm Thando

Advertisement

give me a hug gorgeous."

I hug her. Guess I should share my name.

"I'm Sipho. Nice to meet you."

Mvelo walks in the kitchen and stops on her tracks too. She looks so amazing! Is there a professional make-up artist in there I didn't know?

Tevin greets her and she pops her eyes out and mutters a "hey".

"Babe greet Sipho too." Thando says as she pulls Mvelo for a hug. She's so bubbly and nice.

"Sorry hey, unjani? I'm Tevin"

I think I'm gonna faint.

"I'm okay..."

Thando ends up helping us while Tevin is right here chatting to Sandile.

They all move to the other people with the meat in plates Sandile comes back and eats with us. I keep quiet so Mvelo can speak to her crush.

"How do you feel about moving here?" Sandile.

"I wasn't looking forward to it but now something makes me want to." Mvelo.

That's my girl. Luvuyo comes to us and sits behind me. He literally has me boxed in between his thighs.

"Dish up separately for us." Luvuyo.



He whispered in my ear and I find myself squeezing little missy down below as I did so. I couldn't turn to face him so I just ate with him like that. Mvelo and Sandile were now looking at each other and she had him in stitches. Damn she's good.

The party is super lit with some dancing and lots of kissing.

"Come to the balcony." Luvuyo.

He leaves me here.

It's almost midnight. I follow him out leaving these two cracking up and deep in conversation.

I'm super excited. He just leans and looks at me. The braai stand is still hot so we're not cold. I shrug and stare at him back. Lord have mercy Luvuyo is damn hot. The count down begins from ten seconds and he pulls me to him. It feels like an eternity of just staring into his eyes. I can't hold the gaze because my heart beats too fast so I look away. When they get to "Happy New Year" he smiles and kisses me. At first I freeze. It's happening. My first kiss. I follow his lead and feel his grip tighten around my waist... Siphosami you did it!!

16

Luvuyo closes the bedrooms door and I panic a bit,

"What if Sandile finds us?"

"Relax. He's chilled. It's the older brothers that can't know about any of this."

I nod slowly am I going to be deflowered? Oh man I never imagine it like this. I thought it would be someone I'm actually dating.

He sits next to me on the bed and cups my face with one hand then we make out slowly. He lays me on the bed and all I'm doing is trying not to freak out. My heart is beating out of my chest and kissing his lips feels like magic. The intensity of us our bodies so close makes me feel like I'm losing my mind. Our clothes fly off and we're left in our underwear when he stops and gets us under the covers before big spooning me and starting a conversation while his hands rub on my ass. I can feel the flood between my legs, why isn't he trying to have sex with

me? What if I've already bored him? Or he wanted me to also touch him? I can do that.

I reach for his thing behind me and touch it. He curses under his breath.

"Siphosami no. I dont want to just have sex with you. Much less randomly. I want to just hold you like this before tomorrow when I have to let you go. Siphosami I want you to enjoy University for the next couple of years, live, have fun and just be so we can both be ready for what comes after."

That's years away though!

"Don't I get a say?"

"There's no use hurting each other over this period. Look at Sihle and Nosi, they're so in love but he kept hurting her because he wanted her before he was ready and I don't want that. I don't want you to be a part of my foolish stage there was no reason for Nosi to suffer through his bullshit."

I honestly didn't know Sihle had cheated, cause I'm sure foolish stage is code for man whore phase.

"I understand. Let's just keep cuddling."

I'm hurt too though. I mean I wanted this to happen now but I really do get what he's saying and it's smarter but the heart wants what it wants, the body too.

"I could give you an orgasm with my tongue rather."

He says this as he slips his hand between my thighs. His hands feel amazing on my body.

\*\*\*

I wake up next to Luvuyo with a smile across my face. We're naked and just staring at each other. We did not have sex. Well just oral and we explored each other's bodies and learned

where to touch or lick to please each other. I have never felt the way he made me feel.

Well no surprises there I'm a virgin but still. It was electricity and the most amazing feeling of pleasure washed over me with every body trembling load of cum I let out.

He gives me a kiss on my forehead before greeting and rolling out of bed.

"Let's shower together then chance and say nothing to Sandiie and Nomvelo." Luvuyo.

Shit! I think I told Luvuyo last night during a talk that Mvelo has a crush on Sandile. I trust him not to spill though.

"Sounds great."

I only leave his room when I'm clean and in his robe. I brush my teeth in the general bathroom which is shockingly still clean and get dressed in Mvelo and I's room. I can hear her and

Sandile talking somewhere in this apartment but haven't seen them.

I walk down the passage when I'm ready and find Mvelo and Sandile in the living room while Luvuyo is in the kitchen.

"Morning guys."

They greet back. I go to sit with Luvuyo in the kitchen and we have the breakfast together. I'm guessing either Sandile or Mvelo made it. The conversation just hasn't dried up between Mvelo and Sandile. I don't think he knows it but he's being seduced and damnit she's good at it.

Luvuyo and I are also discussing my matric year and what lies ahead with university coming up. He honestly cares about me more than he let me know. I know because of the way he is trying to make sure I know exactly what I chose to study and if I actually love it.

"The boring older brothers are on the way." Sandile announces.

"Get ready to answer 21 questions." Luvuyo.

"Who cleaned up?"

I've been asking myself that actually.

"We did." Sandile.

"Did you two even sleep?" Luvuyo.

"Actually no, and I'm enjoying Mvelo's company." Sandile.

They're both in fresh clothes though. They don't even look tired.

"And you Mvelo?" Luvuyo.

He better not be putting her on the spot because I told him how she feels.

Sandile looks at her and she smiles.

"He's not bad shame for an old guy." Mvelo.

"Didn't we speak about this? I'm very young." Sandile.

"We did but we didn't agree on anything." Mvelo.

Now we're just eating and watching them talk. They look like they've forgotten we're right across them.

"You're a tough nut to crack." Sandile.

"Just the truth though. When's the last time you thoroughly enjoyed doing something that wasn't with or for Amelia?"  
Mvelo.



"Last night, watching you dance." Sandile.

Silence fills the room and I look at Luvuyo.

"Well that's a new development." Mvelo replies after a while looking into his eyes. I'm watching The Bold and The Beautiful, live. They look like they're about to kiss.

"We uh... Forgot something." Luvuyo says pulling me out to the bedroom. I wanted to see if it would happen! Now it probably won't because I'm sure us leaving made it awkward.

"Whoa what was happening there?"

He looks at me and shrugs.

"When we spoke last night he was just here for a good time. Considered you two family and didn't judge me for saying I like you. Today though... I really think he doesn't realise he started

feeling something new for her. I don't know what it means but it's worse than me falling for you."

He's falling for me? He said he likes me. But more importantly he's right about them being a worse combo than us. Mtho is Mvelo's actual big brother by a whole sixteen years.

Sandile is a brother and friend to Mtho. It's way too tricky.

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I knew things would go well. I got a distinction in all eight of my subjects and money from all the big brothers for shopping before Uni. Except for Marco. He said he had a better surprise in mind so I'm still waiting for tomorrow, he's sending a car for me. June also got four distinctions and even her hard to please father was super impressed. We've already had registration and orientation at the University but we're really unsuccessful with a place to stay. I've been keeping tabs on all my girls and they're all doing well and studying in various Universities across the country. Mvelo is back in Durban doing her matric so Mtho hardly let's her use her phone but we speak whenever she can. No updates on Sandile and her so I guess she forgot about the crush.

As for me and Luvuyo... We talk at times, he texts back, really cute and all but I know he's not waiting for me but back to being himself. I mean I can't ever see his WhatsApp statuses and sometimes he'll ignore texts for a week before getting back to me. We just talk, a little flirting sometimes but that's it. I will not lie it gets to me. Like why can't we just be together? What's there to explore with Luvuyo there? I thought I'd handle this easily but I think I'm too into him.

June walks into the bedroom.

"So cuz, can you like ask your brothers to send me cash too?"

I laugh and shake my head.

"I already said we can share. I got more than enough."

"Right neh? Okay but what about tomorrow?"

"I'll call Marco but I think it's okay if you come along. I can't leave you here to get bored by your aunt."

"She's not bad. It's just the idea of just us two cuz. Hhay no."

"Pack clothes for an overnight visit. They never let me come back if it's late."

She squeals.

"I'm getting new pictures for my Instagram!!"

"Oh June bug! Are you done cooking?"

"Yeah. Aunty is already digging in."

The next day we wake up early so when we get picked up we're ready. I called Marco about June coming and he was okay with it.

"Stop texting on those phones and get ready. Your brother called me to ask that you two stay overnight and said the car is close by." Aunty.

"All that's left is getting dressed MaZondi. We'll be ready."

"Mhm" aunty

She walks out of our room and we finish up doing our faces and get dressed. I can't wait to see Khethelo, she's been texting me and I'm sure she'll be there with Marco. They're so beautiful together, I enjoy snapping their moments.

"They're all so gorgeous, all of them." June.

She's browsing through their Instagrams as we ride in the car Marco sent. I really hope she behaves. Not saying she's too bad but June is an oddball.

"I know hey. Even better in person! Their kids are all adorable even!"

"I mean duh!!"

We laugh and chat some more till we fall asleep in the car.

I'm woken by my phone ringing. I take the call without looking at it.

"Wake up sleepy head." Marco.

I smile and nudge June on my shoulder. We must be in P.E already.

"I'm up boet."

"I see that. Come."

"See?" I look out the window and he's outside smiling.

I scream and unbuckle myself, open the door then I launch myself at him. He catches me and spins me around.

"Hey little one."

I'll never stop being small to all my big brothers but I think Marco babies me the most and I love it.

I spot Khethelo behind him and scream louder then untangle myself from Marco to run to her. We hug for a while.

"Hey Marco's baby."

I giggle.

"I think that's you."

She laughs.

"I saw your results, very impressive."

"You know, that's how I do."

"Good! Keep it like that, your brothers love it when you make them proud."



"Then I get money and it's pretty great motivation."

Well it's true. Since dad and my aunt became official, she's been telling him to lay off giving me cash instead he should save it for me after studying. It's a great plan but mama had that done for me

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all my brothers put money into it too so I know I'm already at least half a million richer after studies.

"Trust me, it helps. Introduce me to this one."

I had even forgotten I had to do that. I turn around and June's smiling awkwardly by the car. I go pull her towards the couple.

"Fam, this is my cousin June, cuz, this is my brother Marco and his love Khethelo."

"Hey June." Khethelo.

"Nice to meet you June." Marco.

"Nice to meet you both." June.

At least she can have manners. I love my cousin but sometimes she can't act right.

We spend the few hours we can shopping at Greenacres till we drop, except Marco of course, he said we'd find him at the hotel. Having June here worked out because we both got to shop which made me feel less guilty about having so many clothes already.

After the spree Khethelo wanted ice cream so we got that before going to the hotel where we met up with Marco again and had dinner, and more ice cream. Marco said we'll go out a little later tomorrow so June and I are just in bed reminiscing about the day.

"I never thought I'd get a shopping spree just like that." June.

She only knows the tip of the iceberg. Marco's house is a mall itself!

"The entire fam is generous, but too overprotective."

"You must've felt like you won the lottery."

"No actually. Mama was telling me about them for years before I met them. It just felt like family, instantly."

"That's nice, do you think if your mom told you about your dad instead he would've felt like family instantly?"

I feel my gut drop. What? I look at her and she's so oblivious. She doesn't realize what she said hurts. I'm not even sure I've dealt with them keeping dad from me. I just... I sigh.

"I don't know. Maybe. Goodnight cuz."

"Goodnight cuzzo."

I turn away from her.

Mama why did you keep dad from me? Were the stories about Siyanda and them a distraction from my father? Oh mama...

It's noon and Marco is driving us somewhere. He looks happy and so does Khethelo. I know they are hiding some sort of surprise. Perhaps a gift for matriculating? That would be awesome.

We stop at a building. It's new here and screams "luxury apartments." The name of it is still covered that's how new it is.

Marco gets out of the car first and greets some guy before coming to get us a little while later.

"This place is just beautiful." Khethelo says when we walk inside and she's right. It's clearly empty but very clean and big. June is as in a daze as I am.

"It's also not quite done, the interior designer is a bit slow."  
Marco.

All I'm thinking is how I'd love to meet whoever that is, as a future interior designer.

We take an elevator to the last floor. There's only two doors here. Marco takes out a key and opens the door. It's a fully furnished, gorgeous apartment with clean whites and light greys. It's absolutely gorgeous! There's an upstairs bedroom right above the kitchen with just glass covering it. Oh wow it's amazing. The couches are so white I'm afraid to walk past let alone sit. My jaw is on the floor. I love how open it is. Then for privacy there's three doors on the right I'm guessing a bathroom and bedroom probably. The third I'm not sure.

Marco opens up the blinds and a magnificent view of P.E is revealed. The entire left side is glass and leads to a long balcony. Marco has serious guap. I mean it's just... I'm distracted by Marco throwing something at me and I catch it.

"It's yours. Congratulations Sami." Marco.

I look at my hands. It's the keys. Khethelo hugs me and June screams. I'm numb. What?!

After the initial shock the day Marco bought me an apartment I was excited, screamed my lungs out and cried in his arms for at least ten minutes straight before doing the same thing in Khethelo's arms. I still cannot believe it and I've moved in my place with June of course. The bedroom above the kitchen has a shower but you can't see it if you're downstairs. The three other doors were for a general bathroom and two bedrooms, one with it's own bathroom. June and I haven't really discussed who sleeps where since it's day one. We're just happy to have everything here. I think it'll be so weird once people move in downstairs and I get a neighbour because I'm sure I'll eventually get used to how quiet it is right now. It's just me and security. No one is in any other room since security is only downstairs with cameras covering all the hallways. I'm excited for the coffee shop that'll be downstairs, I'll probably become a resident once it's open. We have two days before schools... I mean the University begins classes... Lectures. I can't wait honestly. I've gotten all my textbooks and pencils plus a brand new drawing board and of course a MacBook with my own money. Well dad's money rather. I'm thinking of not having anyone permanently use the bedroom upstairs since it's not very private and there's hardly any space for clothes, there's only a clothing rod on the wall and a wall shelf for shoes . It'll be a guest bedroom.

"Cuzzy."

I join her on the couch with popcorn and place it on the glass coffee table.

"Yeah cuz."

"I think we need a couple of house rules to live by, I'd love to keep this place as clean as it is now."

"Ugh cuz you're sounding like my mom."

"Well we have to have rules. For one, the bedroom upstairs is going to be for guests."

"Guests? Dude what guests? You already said no guys."

"June please don't be difficult."

"Okay what else."

"Always use the coaster. Avoid placing things on the couch, it's very white. We take the trash out before it even topples over. Let's try to avoid single use plastics, I can get us both water bottles. The glasses can only come out if we have friends over."

"Can you write those down? It's too long."

Wow.

"Junebug! Anyway, I'll take the bedroom with an ensuite."

"Why you? You're the one who doesn't want to use the upstairs bedroom now you're taking the one with an ensuite? Oh wait, it's your place, your rules. I forgot."

She gets up and walks to the bedroom I said she'd use and slams the door.



Am I being unreasonable? No actually I know I'm not being unreasonable. She pays nothing for this place and currently hitches rides in my Ubers. I'm not unreasonable. She even has the general bathroom all to herself. If the tub is an issue

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she really can use my bathroom for showers.

She walks out and comes to hug me.

"I'm sorry cuz. I shouldn't have said that. I guess it's pms. I really appreciate you cuz and this place a lot. Dad does too, he was happy he won't pay rent but he said he'd send food money every month and I promise to buy us groceries with it every month."

"We can go do that together, as flatmates you know. It'll be fun."

"Yes! Actually let's try go gluten free."

"I can't not eat bread. I'm sorry."

We laugh and cuddle on the couch.

"You know, I really appreciate you Sipho. A lot."

"I know babe. I appreciate you too."

"Love you cuz."

"Love you too cuz."

Maybe we'll be just fine after all.

I'm kind of nervous about today. I took a shower and was having oats in the kitchen by six in the morning. My first lecture is at eight and from Mill Park to Summerstrand it's a fifteen minute drive. I'm anxious. Too anxious to continue sleeping. June is still snoring away and will probably wake up at seven.

Okay, she's taking her shower now and it's quarter to seven. Earlier than I thought she would.

I'm in a short flowy dress with spaghetti straps and sandals. I don't want to do too much. I did Fulani braids so no need to worry about hair. I have already read a few pages off the first chapter, the nerd in me couldn't help herself. I'm a clued up now on History of Art and Design I. I make myself some coffee while I wait for June as she gets dressed. When she finishes she makes cornflakes and we have a little catch up.

"I'm shit scared of this day already. I just hope I don't make a fool of myself."

"I never knew you got embarrassed by anything Junebug."

"Embarassed? I'm planning on scouting hot lecturers."

"And there she is!"

"Your favourite cousin."

"If I had a choice, you wouldn't be."

"Yeah right. You know you love me let's go."

She puts her bowl in the sink.

"Please wash that."

She rolls her eyes and does it while I request the Uber.

Our campus is damn huge and if it wasn't for orientation I'd have probably been here by five in the morning looking for the lecture halls.

June is wearing shorts and a crop t-shirt and man are we getting attention. Humans really need to get over bodies. They exist, we all have them. If you choose to show yours is your choice, if not it's also your choice.

I get to my lecture in time, in fact five minutes early and sit alone second row from the front. I'm like the fifth person here. At least I wasn't anxious alone. More people walk in when only a minute is left and the lecturer is right on time. She's a lady in her forties and well quite weirdly styled, like Tabitha the witch on aunty's old favorite soapie Passions. She's just short of a Timmy. She seems to be taking some stuff out of her bag.

Someone pats my back.

"Hey, how are you?"

It's a girl. She looks a little lost.

"I'm okay and yourself?"

"I guess I'm fine is this DHD1001?"

"You're in the right place."

"Oh thank you."

I smile at her and turn back.

"Good morning ladies and gentlemen, old and new faces I'm Florence your History of Art and Design lecturer..."

My hunger to learn always replaces my anxiety. I have forgotten about everyone else in this room and focussed on Tabitha. I know she's Florence but I prefer Tabitha.

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Campus was pretty cool. I liked it but I already have a dining room to design so I really want to go home and get started. I'm actually super excited to be using new pencils. There's just something about that.

I called June to ask if she's taking the Uber home with me and she said she's coming to the gate so I'm waiting for her.

Some guy stands in front of me and looks at me like he knows me.

"Sorry?"

"Siphosami Zondi? Right?"

I am not saying anything till he tells me who he is so I just look at him.

"I'm Karabo Masinga. Nomvelo is like my sister."

Oh I have him on my Instagram, he followed me after Mvelo tagged me on a post.

"Right, hey."

"You're even prettier in person."

"Thanks."

"Ride home?"

“Nah, taking an Uber with my cousin.”

Luckily for me June arrives just then and stands next to me.

“We can go cuz... Hello there.” June.

I take out my phone and request while these two have a conversation and even exchange numbers. When the driver arrives we say bye and hop in.

“He’s so cute!”

“True. You like him?”

“I think so.”

“What about the other guy?”

“All the way in Richards Bay? I called it quits.”

“Cool. I support you getting with Karabo then.”

“Would you let him pull up to your place?”

“Our place and yes, long as he’ll be your boyfriend and not a fling, I can tell my brothers.”

“So you just don’t want random niggas?”

“You know they’d freak out if I had random niggas there.”

“Cool, that’s understandable.”



When we get to our apartment I take a quick shower and sit down to draw with my EarPods on. I don't know if I'll find the time to cook so I order some McDonald's for me and June. When the food arrives I've started drawing but I get up and fetch it downstairs before coming back up to eat.

June and I talk about how the first day was.

"I won't lie I didn't expect us to hit the ground running. I thought it was gonna be like high school, the first day is an off day." June.

I laugh and nod in agreement.

"Felt the same way a bit but I was glad it wasn't like that would've been a waste."

"Yeah. Did you meet any guys?"

"Sure, a few I share classes with but I'm not really interested in any."

"You wouldn't go for first years anyway babes."

"I'm a fresher too so why not?"

I'm not going to date any of them but June is too entertaining not to ask.

"Honey, no! That is so boring and you're my cousin, can't let you do that to yourself."

I shake my head and giggle.

“Don’t worry Junebug, there’s no chance of that any way. Luvuyo runs my mind.”

“That one will still be there, live a little.”

Trust June to say that. I decide to change the topic, “Has Karabo texted you?”

She squeals and shows me the text she hasn’t opened. He said hey beautiful. Well he’s on the right track from the look on her face. I smile.

“When are you replying?” I ask.

“An hour from now.”

I shake my head. I wish I knew how to ignore Luvuyo like that. Make him wait but I just can’t. When I see his text, I smile and reply ASAP.

“Could never be me.”

“He needs to think I have better things to do so he’ll fight for my attention.”

“Well good luck Junebug, I need to finish a dining room.”

“I’ll go start my assignment too.”

Assignment? Already? Well I also kinda got one today. Uni is proving to be loads of work I see.

I can no longer live like this. I've been a zombie for seven months straight. There is so much work, I don't think I would've had time for a boyfriend even if I wanted one.

Speaking of boyfriends, June and Karabo are a thing. I didn't have to ask the brothers to grant him access to my place because he found an apartment here, one of the two bedroom apartments downstairs. June spends time with him a lot but the good thing is that she doesn't forget her studies and he actually encourages her to focus. Me? I'm still hung up on Luvuyo. It doesn't help that he was here about a month ago with Loyiso and I couldn't see him because well, somehow the brothers found out about us. There's hardly even an us but I think what really angered them is Nomvelo and Sandile. Luvuyo told me shit hit the fan when somehow Mtho overheard Sandile say he loves Mvelo. Now everything is a mess. I'm just waiting to finish exams, visit my beautiful MaZondi and dad then January till February go to Durban to be with Mvelo... Of course I'm also trying to spend time with Luvuyo somehow. I don't know how I'm supposed to do that because from what he told me, the brothers are doing best to have us four remain apart. Doesn't make it better that exam time means no social media for me so we haven't texted.

Tabitha's exam is the last one and I'm chilled about it because it's theory. Design is a whole other thing because it's literally about how innovative you are and honestly the lecturer's opinion more than anything. Remember that girl who tapped me in Tabitha's lecture? Her name is Andrea and we really get along now. She's like my best friend now and she stays at her home but she has been staying with me since exams started. We share a bed and everything. June likes her so there's no awkwardness in the house.

"I'm making breakfast. What would you like?" Andy says coming from the shower.

"Anything is fine by me boo. I'll take a quick shower."

I close my laptop and go shower while she heads to the kitchen to make us food.

I sing in the shower, loudly and without any shame. I mean when you can't sing in public because you're so bad, you opt for the shower. When I'm done maybe twenty whole minutes later

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no judging the water was too nice, I locate my phone and I have a missed call from Luvuyo. I call him back immediately.

"Hey Siphosam, are you at your place?"

“Yeah I am... Why?”

“No reason, talk later, bye.”

Just like that the conversation is over. Weird. I head out and go sit by the counter on the high chairs next to June and Andy gives me my food.

“Enjoy.”

“I definitely will.”

She cut some avos, made scrambled egg, cut up some tomatoes and a sausage. It looks filling already but I still take a single slice of bread and dig in.

“I’ll see you guys on campus, bae is taking me now so I can join a study group till late.” June.

“Are we seeing you later?”

“You know she’s gonna get d after.” Andy.

We all laugh.

“Girl you know me!” June.

They high five, she gives me a kiss and out she goes.

“Someone is here for you Sami.” June yells by the door.

“Coming.”

I don't remember authorizing any visit but I still get up to check who it is.

It's a delivery guy.

He hands me a box and has me sign. I haven't been online shopping lately so I'm a bit confused till I see the gift sticker with a message.

I go in and go by the counter to check it out.

"Hope your studies are going good."

That's all.

"What did you buy?" Andy.

"It's a gift."

"From?"

I shrug and open it.

It's coffee and a new mug.

Oh my gosh! It's from Luvuyo. The cup looks like the ones he has at his place. I think I made a comment in passing about how I liked seeing inside the coffee mug.

"Is it the guy?" Andy.

I've told her about the guy I like but can't be with all the way in Durban.

“Oh my gosh! No wonder you can’t live your life, he’s even sending gifts.”

“This is the first time. I really wonder why.”

“This looks like very expensive coffee too.”

She flaps her blue eyes at me and I laugh.

“We share everything you know that.”

She giggles and we decide to get dressed then continue with our modern country house designs.

The final exam was a bit tricky but I believe I saw through Tabitha's tricky questioning. I'm hopeful for next year and of course hopeful I've avoided a supplementary exam. Now to just chill and wait for results. I'm grateful for Andy too or I'd be bored out of my mind. We're chilling together by my window seat watching Netflix.

June made it clear to me she's spending all the time she has left in this province for the year with Karabo. So I would be alone right now if it wasn't for this girl.

"Wanna go to Liam's braai? He said he's celebrating moving to his house." Andy.

Liam is some guy she bumped into in this building and said he was new and moving out soon as he finds a house.

Well I can't be bothered by Luvuyo all my life. He told me we can't be and me moping and texting him isn't helping so...

"Okay, let's choose outfits."

"Awesome! He said it's chilled so I won't try too hard."

"Liam is like 25 or something, running a company around here. You know the girls there will be bomb as fuck. Try hard girl. I will be simple."

"You think?"



“Not unless you aren’t interested. Which I doubt. It’s been Liam this, Liam that since you met him.”

“Okay fine.”

She gets up to shower. I won’t bother showering again. I’m not planning on scoring. Just to perhaps find someone who’ll take me out on a date. Andy is going to Mozambique with her family in December so she won’t be here.

I put on light make-up, shorts and a t-shirt with a kimono on top. Sis Nombuso bought them for me and Mvelo when she went to Japan for design inspiration and business they’re so cute and in various colors and patterns.

“Cute kimono! Please help me with this make-up.”

“Okay.”

I help her get cute and into a cute short denim dungaree dress with a cute black sports bra. Her petite body looks bomb asf.

We buy wine and champagne on the way and man Liam’s house is gorgeous. It’s all modern and sleek. As soon as I see him he looks familiar. I don’t know why though. I mean forget that this whole time I thought Liam was a white guy. I never bothered to ask Andy though so I’m also to blame. We give him the bottles and he welcomes us.

“Some of my employees are here, I hope you don’t mind.”  
Liam.

He tells Andrea.

“Not at all. This is my friend the apartment owner, Siphosami.”  
Andy.

“Nice to meet you Liam.”

“Likewise. I think I’ve seen you on Instagram. Anyway

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make yourselves at home, you guys can go upstairs the pajama lounge is easy to spot, I’ll be back.” Liam.

These girls downstairs give us weird looks but I couldn’t give a fuck really. We walk upstairs and he was right we spot the pj lounge and go sit there, just us two.

“So? What do you think of him?” Andy.

“I just can’t get over this house.”

“I know right?! It’s too damn perfect. Almost my dream home really.”

“As for Liam he looks familiar to me too. I doubt it’s Instagram though he just looks like someone. I can’t pin point who.”

We chat some more and Liam appears five minutes later with food.

“I hope you guys eat meat. I only put meat there because I know girls and their diets with pap. What do you drink?”

“We’d rather stick to non-alcoholic anything you have.” Andy.

She’s definitely impressing him by saying this. We drank wine just a day ago. “Water then? Got it!” Liam.

We laugh as he walks out and doesn’t go downstairs. He comes back with Appletiser. Well that’s sweet of him.

He gets himself a beer and joins us in eating.

“Who’s hosting if you’re here?” Andy

“Londa. He’s this funny piece of shit who works at the company. We hit it off so he’s kind of like a friend now.”

He keeps us entertained for quite a while before Londa makes it upstairs and he excuses himself and Andy.

“Those two better play safe.” Londa.

“I hope so too. Do you think he likes her?”

“Haven’t known him for that long but definitely not. My guy is a hit and runner.”

My conscience won’t let me just let that go so I text my friend this news from Londa. I want her decision to be informed because I would expect the same from her.

“You’re cute. You and your friend look young though.” Londa.

“Well we’re old enough to drink.”

“That’s enough for me. Give me your tens, I’ll take you out sometime.”

Well this is turning out to be promising.

I give him my number and we chat some more about his work and my schooling and he’s really cool and kind.

He excuses himself for the bathroom so I get on my phone. Andy made a boomerang of us three and tagged Liam so I go to his profile.

Bingo! Liam is Mvelo’s brother. Making him Mtho’s brother. That’s why he looked familiar! Liam\_M. The M is for Masinga!

Okay enough of being Sherlock. I need to pee so I follow the direction Londa took.

When I open the door I’m met by the shock of my life!

Londa is on top of Andy. His hands are covering her mouth and I scream. Liam gets there quickly in his boxers only and he also stands by the door shocked. Londa lets go of her mouth and she screams for him to stop. The tears running down her face confirm even further the blatant truth. I can’t believe this just happened. Liam runs in and pulls him off her. She’s also in just the sports bra. Clearly Liam and her had sex already or were going to before this. Liam starts punching him and yelling for

me to take the hysterical Andy to his room. I do so quickly. Tears are gushing down my eyes because I can't even believe what I saw. In front of me. I saw my friend get raped.

Mtho! I need to call Mtho. I don't know what's happening in that bathroom and downstairs is too noisy with the music so I know they don't have a clue something is wrong up here.

"Bhuti please come to Liam's house. Something terrible has happened."

I know he's in Durban but I also know he'll make it here by at least the wee hours of the morning.

"Siphosami why are you even at Li... You know what? I'm coming. Tell Liam to call me. I'll be there in a few hours." Mtho.

He sounded shocked and angry all at once. I still think calling him was a good decision. Liam walks in his bedroom. Puts on sweats and runs out. I am too busy comforting Andy who is just crying for me to even ask where he's going.

I dress her in a t-shirt I find here and my kimono. At least she's no longer naked. I hear the music get quiet.

"Right fucking now! Leave! All of you!" Liam yells.

Okay... That's why. Where is Londa though? Is he even still conscious. Liam was just seeing red I'm sure.

After a few minutes he makes it back up.

“I need to take you to hospital Andrea.” Liam.

She shakes her head profusely.

“Babe please. You need to get a shot.”

I chip in. She looks at me then him.

“I don’t want to talk.” Andy.

My heart aches. I don’t even want to imagine how she feels.

“If that’s what you want for now I’ll make one call and we’ll go somewhere no one will ask but still make you a kit.” Liam.

I think now is a good time to confess in case he’s thinking of his brother so he isn’t surprised when he knows something is wrong. “I already called Mtho.”

“Good thinking, thanks. I’ll call him on the way. Andrea please.”  
Liam.

She looks at me, then at him and nods. He picks her up.

“For her own good I think you should come with.” Liam.

I get up and follow. Andy’s parents are going to blame me. I just know it and I can’t blame them. She’s staying with me.

When we get back to Liam's house Mtho and Siyanda are there. Inside and waiting for us.

"Sami are you okay?" Siyanda.

I nod and sit opposite them.

"What the hell Liam?" Mtho.

He ignores him and carries Andy upstairs.

"What happened here Siphosami?" Mtho.

The look! I don't know what to say.

"I... We... Andy is my friend."

"That girl he's carrying?" Siyanda.

"Yes...."

"Andrea came here for me. She brought along her friend, Sipho. This guy who works at the company raped her here last night." Liam.

"Wait so you're telling me my employee raped her?" Mtho.

"Yes. He's at the bathroom. I locked him there last night." Liam.

"Siphosami go to Andrea. Lock the door." Siyanda.

"But..."

“But listen! Go!” Siyanda.

I startle and rush upstairs, straight to Liam’s bedroom and I lock the door behind me.

I join Andy’s shower and when she finishes she leaves me in the bathroom. I wonder why she didn’t use this en-suite bathroom yesterday. Perhaps Liam was in here already. Anyway I find her on the bed so I join her and we cuddle.

“Still want to remain quiet?”

She sniffs and nods.

I give her a squeeze and keep brushing her arm.

“I love you okay? You’re going to be just fine.”

We remain quiet and I think she’s asleep when I hear Londa talk.

“Wait! I’m sorry! Wait.”

I don’t know what’s happening but it sounds like he’s being taken out of the bathroom but protesting.

Andy reaches for the hand I was rubbing her with and squeezes it. It’s probably his voice making her shiver and hold on to my hand.

After a while it’s silent and I hear the door close. I need to sleep. We need to sleep.



I'm woken up by the sun shining on my face. Andy is still asleep so I get out of bed slowly and head out. I need to get me and her out of here. Right in the passage bhut' Mtho walks to me then gives me a plastic.

"You're up, good. Take this stuff. Make sure you both shower and get dressed and we're leaving." Mtho.

"Okay."

I get back in. Luckily Andy is up typing on her phone.

"Baby let's shower and go."

"Where's Liam?"

"I... Look, remember when I told you I have brothers who are sort of adoptive? Liam's brother Mtho is one of them. He said we're going and that's pretty much how they are because they're overprotective."

"You think they blame him? They can't. I did this to myself. I should've listened to him."

I know they blame Liam because even if it happened in their houses they would blame themselves.

"Andy stop! I won't let you do that."

“It’s true. I wanted to be a daredevil and walk down the passage naked. Look what it got me.”

“No! It doesn’t matter that you were naked. That idiot and rapist should’ve left the moment he saw you were busy.”

“Let’s go shower.”

She gets up first. I sigh and follow.

We’re being driven and Siyanda is the only one. I wonder where Liam and Mtho are.

“You girls mind if I leave you two at the hotel?”

I look at Andy. She shakes her head.

“No, we don’t mind.”

“Okay I’ll check on you two later, call me if you need me. You can order whatever you want or go to the spa downstairs anything. Andrea Liam said you didn’t want him to take you to the police...”

“I don’t want to report him. This is South Africa. How many rapists are actually charged? I’d rather not.”

“You remind me of my wife. Hella stubborn. If that’s what you want kid.”

He drops us off and gives us the card for the hotel room.

“Your brother is nice. I thought you said you’re afraid of them.”

“Trust me

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they’re both amazing and scary.”

I get a call from Gugu and right as I answer my battery dies.

Shiiiiit! She’ll kill me. Andy and I rush up to the room, I look for a charger and when I don’t find one I call the reception and they bring one up in ten minutes.

I hurry and charge. Soon as it turns on I call her back. I put her on loudspeaker.

“Siphosami do you want me to come there huh? Is that what you want?” Gugu. Oh kill me.

“No sis Gugu no.”

“Yet you are partying with Liam now? Are you dating?” Gugu.

“What? No sis no.” “Uthi nyath kmina?” Gugu.

“Sorry sis Gugu I was just shocked. He’s not my boyfriend. He’s with my friend.” “Where is that friend?” Gugu.

“Here sis Gugu something terrible happened.”

I need her to not yell at Andy... Hopefully.

“I know, give her the phone.” Gugu.

I nudge her. "Hi sis Gugu." Andy.

"Andy right? How are you baby?" Gugu.

"I'm okay, just hungry." Andy.

"Kanti what is Siphosami with you for?" Gugu.

I run to the hotel phone and call reception for food. When I've ordered I come back to the phone.

"Liam is 25 years old my baby. A grown ass man. If he likes you, he'll go against whatever my husband says about being with you. If he doesn't, you don't need him and it can never ever be because of what happened. If so, I will personally kick his ass."

Gugu. Andy sniffs,

"Thank you sis Gugu for talking to me." Andy.

"Any day my baby. No more parties though. Tell Siphosami I'll see her soon. She better not go to anymore parties." Gugu.

"We won't sis Gugu." Andy.

"Okay bye babies." Gugu.

She hangs up.

"She is the best." Andy.

"Yeah for you. I'm in deep shit."

Nolonger looking forward to Durban.

Andy and I are back in my apartment finally. The brothers kept us at the hotel for two days before letting us go back and leaving. Throughout that time we spent their money in Malls because that's where they would take us and we met up with them later for the two days. So you could say we spent more time shopping than at the hotel.

"I am so jelly! What did you do for YSL Andy?" June.

We didn't tell her about what happened we just said my brothers came by and took us both with to the hotel.

"She was here, while you were with your man."

"Her brothers are very nice and very loaded. I couldn't believe it." Andy.

"I should've been there. Siphon you could've called me." June.

"It was not my place to invite people. Can you let it go please?"

"Fine. I'll stop sulking." June.

"Thank you! Can we pack now?"

She rolls her eyes and walks out of my room to hers so she can pack her stuff. We're leaving the city in a day or so.

We all did well and obviously we're second year students now. Andy and I have faculty awards to attend though but I don't

want to tell June that yet because she'll sulk. She's always complaining about something.

Andy and I will just leave after she goes to Karabo which is a given because they're attached at the hip.

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"My baby!"

"MaZondi wami!"

She hugs me tightly. I really missed her and clearly she missed me too.

"I missed you so much."

"I missed you too aunty. I also have great news."

We sit on the couch.

"Yes baby?"

"Well, your baby here took most of the awards from my faculty for first years."

"You've always been an over achiever I would be worried if you didn't."

I laugh and she hugs me once more.

"Wamuhle, where are you going?"

"Out

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lock the doors and don't wait up."

She stands up and I laugh.

"Date with my father?"

"Yes. It's not my fault you didn't say you were coming."

I shake my head and walk her out.

"Make anything for yourself, I won't complain about the grocery."

"Because I bought food."

"Exactly. If you hadn't buzolala ngamanzi."

I laugh as she walks to dad's car. I hope she doesn't tell him I'm back immediately because he'll want to greet his Krotoa. I'm not used to that name.

The car drives away.

Thank God!

I text Andy and Mvelo and my high school friends, even my now cousin Tshireletso so we can plan a hangout.

The following day I go out to meet up with my girls. Can't wait to catch up with all of them. As soon as I approach the table

she's seated at I spot Gen with a baby stroller. I get there and we greet and hug.

"And who is this?"

"Tanner Modise. Lethabo and I have a son."

My eyes pop out.

"What?! Am I the only one who doesn't know this?"

"I just felt like I would be judged so I didn't tell you guys and asked Tshire and Lethabo not to post my baby."

"Gen! He's my nephew. I would never judge you!"

She shrugs and I hug her.

"Thank you for not reacting how I was afraid people would."

"Gen I'm your friend! Not your parent, I would never."

We talk some more before the other girls arrive.



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Tshire looks grown now. Lethabo is even worse as a father and loving boyfriend to Gen. I went to the Modise home with dad and my aunt. They were really nice and Mrs Modise specifically is such an angel. Can't believe we're related.

I am however too excited for Durban. I decided to leave earlier, it pissed dad off but he knows now not to compete with the brothers. I am leaving tomorrow. I get a call from June.

"JuneBug"

"Sipho, when are you going to Durban?"

"Tomorrow why?"

"What? Tomorrow can you wait for me?"

"Unfortunately no hun, I'm being transported the whole way."

"I'm still coming there though. I'm so done with dad."

“Your aunt won’t mind so come through for her.”

We catch up some more for a while then she hangs up.

I really think June thinks my brothers are the bank, hence I don’t think I want them around her. I can’t put anything past her so she might just try something

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therefore it’s a no.

I literally cannot wait for the Loyiso and Tumi wedding in a few months. They’re just goals honestly. Also, I’ll be meeting Lisakhanya their daughter for the first time.

I’m sitting at the airport waiting for Chelsea to fetch me. She’s running a little late. Someone sits next to me.

“Hey freshman.”

I look at him. He’s this white dude from campus.

“Oh so in Durban you know me?”

“Even on campus I know you. You’re always looking good.”

“Well hey.”

I get a message from Chels.

“My sister is here.”

He nods,

“It’s cool, campus reopens in a month or so anyway.”

I roll my eyes. What does he want me now?

I walk away and out to look for Chels. I spot her walking towards me and go to her.

“Hey baby!” She’s as excited as me.

“Hey sis!”

“Let’s go so I can go grab Nami and we’ll drive back.”

We hurry to the car, put my bags in and drive off.

“I’ll ask Nombuso and Mtho to borrow me Mvelo so you two can hang out.”

“That would be awesome.”

She calls Mtho immediately. She has headsets on so I only hear her. Seems like he doesn’t want her there judging from the way Chelsea is talking. After a while she sighs and says bye.

“Well we can fetch Mvelo later today but Mtho is worried.”

I already know why so I don't ask because I don't want to be asked about Luvuyo myself.

"Thank you."

"You girls really put us in between some messy business."

I look outside the window. What do I even say? I'm sorry won't cut it here.

"I just.. I'm sorry, we never planned for it."

"I know baby. No one plans for that stuff. But you have to also understand they thought Sandile and Luvuyo also thought of you two as sisters. To them it's hard to accept."

"I do understand."

I actually do. I just can't do anything about it either. I really do like Luvuyo. Regardless of whether we can be together or not.

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“So where are you going to study?”

I ask her as we take the last of our selfies.

“Right here. I’m not giving my brother his wish of going somewhere far from Sandile.”

I understand her. I mean maybe I should also move here. However that would be stupid of me. Moving for Luvuyo would be self sabotage. I wouldn’t be able to see him with his girlfriends or whatever the girls are and function well.

“So you’re actually into him?”

“Yes and unfortunately we’ve been mizing each other. He said something about me being too young, I got mad and we haven’t been talking.”

“You two aren’t even together yet but see plenty fights.”

“I know na. We’re not giving up on each other though. I hope.”

“I hope so too Mvelo. I can tell how much you like him. Let’s go before Chelsea comes to drag us out.”

We go out and find Chelsea feeding Sandiso and Amelia. Nami left this morning but I’m not sure when Amelia made it here. Well the kids go in and out as they please in this house.

“Hey Amelia. When did you get here?”

“A few minutes ago, dropped off by her grandmother.” Chels.

I take over feeding Amelia and though she gives me a hard time at first, she ends up eating when I make her laugh and Mvelo is making lunch for everyone.

Siyanda isn’t home, hasn’t been for the past three days but it’s all so normal to Chelsea. I wonder if I could handle being

married to someone who goes on business trips for days. It's worrying honestly.

The three of us sit for lunch and a conversation before Chelsea takes Amelia to her dad's so we're left to take care of Sandiso.

Luckily he's sleeping and might stay like that for a while. There's also a possibility of being fetched by sis Gugu to spend the weekend with her. We're by the poolside just looking at the space in this yard.

"Ever imagined yourself living this life forever?" Mvelo.

"This life?"

"Yeah, mansion, cars

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money and all this stuff?"

"Who doesn't?"



“Me. Well before I knew my brother was this loaded, as much as dad is comfortable we aren’t balling like this at home. So sure I went to expensive schools but I was never the richest kid in the room. Worse my house as nice as it is, is in a rural area.”

“Hmm so you only saw the money recently?”

“Yeah. I was in high school when I realized my brother was probably a multimillionaire. Googled him and everything was confirmed. Sometimes I feel like he hated me.”

“Hated you? Why?”

“Well by the time I was grown enough to understand, he wasn’t around. But we don’t share a mother.”

“You don’t?”

I’m so shocked. They look so much alike I can’t even believe it.

“We don’t. So sometimes I feel like he is so hard on me because of it. Of all my brothers I don’t remember much of a conversation with him, ever. Even after the Sandile thing he just told me what to do only.”

Wow. Never judge a book by it’s cover. I thought Mvelo was just fine with her brother. No problems whatsoever.

“Your mother, do you know her?”

“Not at all. MaNhlapho is the only mother I’ve ever known and I love her so much. I wish she was my mother too.”

My heart breaks for her. She has a few tears streaming down her eyes. I just want to give her a hug.

“Let’s go in to pack our...”

She freezes looking behind and so I turn around.

Mtho is standing not too far from us. It's not like we were whispering but if he's been there long, he most likely heard everything.

"Hey bhuti..."

I don't know what to say so I look at her and rush into the house first. You know, in case they want to talk family stuff.

I've been back to my place and at university an entire month now with June. Spending my time with my Durban family was everything really. Luvuyo "stole" me for a night from my bed and we went to a roof top. He had a little picnic set up. We talked, we laughed, he asked about how I was and if there was a boyfriend. I think I caught him smile when I said no. I asked him he said he's not going to be boxed by anyone but me. It sure as hell made me blush. We kissed and before sunrise he snuck me back into the house safely.

I'm almost certain sis Gugu knew but she didn't say anything. She just spent the entire morning giving me side eyes for being tired and laughing at me. I know Mvelo went on a drive with Sandile too and well it was an open secret. After her talk with Mtho he said he'll let her make her own mistakes and learn from them. It didn't mean she can go date Sandile directly but in a way he was letting her be. Then he reassured her he loved her as his sister not half sister and he cared about her too much not to worry or want to try and control her but he promised to ease up.

I'm sitting at the cafeteria doing my work on the MacBook and AirPods on. Shekhinah has the most beautiful voice I swear. She actually helps me concentrate. I feel someone's hand on my shoulder and when I look to my side he's already invited himself to my bench. It's that guy who saw me at the airport. I stop the song on my phone and stare at him back.

"Hey Siphosami."

He gives me a wide grin clearly happy with himself for knowing my name.

"Hi, stalker." I reply.

I go back to my laptop. This essay on interior design in the 19th century won't write itself.

"My name is Ben and you ignored my messages when I asked you to hang out in Durban."

“I have so many message requests I wouldn’t know hey. Don’t you have family there?”

I reach for my Lays now in his hands. He must be damn comfy around me.

“Sure but it gets boring. I also wanted to get to to know you.”

“Is it?”

“Yes, and if you don’t mind I would love to take you out for coffee right now.”

I finally look at him directly. He’s got on a pretty boy smile his blonde hair tucked behind his ears but still making it to his face. It’s shoulder length and looks good on him. His eyes are a piercing blue and his lips are thin and pink. Clear skin, cute dimples, tall and skinny. He’s actually really hot to be honest.

“Fine. Only if we go to the spot I choose.”

I'm not going some place I don't know so I'm going to take him to the coffee shop in my building.

"Alright cool."

He saves my work then closes the MacBook for me before picking it up. I grab my bag and follow him to the student parking. We get to his car a Toyota Supra. It looks really nice and it's red. He gets the door for me, I sit and put my bag at the back. I text June so Karabo and her don't wait for me then I text Andy that I'll see her tomorrow. He smells nice. His car too. It's clean though I spot a McDonald's cool drink container.

"So you're really just trusting me?"

"Not even my guy. I have told all my friends your plate number and name."

He laughs. I'm actually not joking but I only sent it to Mvelo though she hasn't read it. She'd be able to help by alerting the brothers.

“Well that’s okay because I’m really not tryna steak you, just your heart.”

“Oh is it now, Ben?”

“Is it working?”

“Nah

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try harder.”

“Oh wow. Where are we going?”

I give him my building address and he puts it on his gps.

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We sat at a table across each other and got ourselves coffee and cupcakes.



“I didn’t know this place. It’s actually nice and their coffee is good.”

“This is where I stay actually, hence I grabbed my stuff when we got out of the car.”

“Oh you’re smart. Free ride home.”

“If you weren’t going to take me home anyway, this coffee date can end now.”

“Oh so it’s a date?”

“Don’t make me feel awkward. Tell me if it isn’t.”

“You’re quite blunt. Well yes Siphosami, it’s a date.”

“Cool. So what are your intentions with me?”

We both simultaneously laugh after a brief eye lock moment.

“I’m kidding man. I just want to understand why me?”

“The truth is, someone in my squad pointed out your friend as a potential girlfriend for me. Y’all were walking together hand in hand but instead of looking at her, I focused on you.”

“Was I with Andy?”

“Yeah that’s the one.”

“Wow okay. What do you study?”

“Literally the same thing as you. I’m doing my final year though.”

No wonder I’ve seen him on campus a lot. He’s such a people’s person.

“Oh so you can help me with Thabitha’s latest scheme to fail us?”

“Thabitha?”

I forget that’s what Andy and I only call her.

“Florence.”

He laughs and shakes his head,

“She’s quite complicated isn’t she?”

“Complicated? She literally plans for us to fail.”

“She’s my grandma.”

My eyes pop out.

“For real?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m so sorry dude.”

Luckily he gets the joke and laughs.

“Been there my whole life so I’m used to her. She made me fall in love with interior decoration so I must thank her regardless.”

“She’s clearly passionate about it, I can’t lie.”

“Siphosami I like you. Like a lot.”

I swallow and stare at him. No words come out.

“I’m pretty sure it won’t be as easy as me just telling you that but I really want to be with you. Think about it, tell me what

you think after, then you can just tell me if you don't mind actually going out with me or not." Ben.

He gives me a kiss on my cheek and walks out to leave.

As soon as I grab my things and I'm on my way to my room Luvuyo's face appears in my mind on the night we hung out, as he smiles at me with lights shining on his eyes. My heart skips a little.

What the hell do I do?

As soon as I told Andy about my day she was immediately excited about it. She fully endorses a relationship with Ben and after Mvelo reminded me that Luvuyo had said to enjoy my time in University, a part of me feels it's okay. While another part of me can't imagine Luvuyo being thrilled about this.

Ugh but then again I can't live my life worried about what Luvuyo thinks half the time. He isn't thinking of me when screwing other women. That thought alone is enough for me to decide on being with Ben. I mean he's hot, he smells good and he wants me now, not in future.

I just hope I'm making the right decision here.

I'm cooking tonight so I get to it before June arrives. I get a call from Andy,

"Hey girl."

"Hey baby, what's up?"

“I just had a lengthy conversation with the parents, they’re moving and I need a place to rent. Do they have empty flats there?”

“Yes, but you do know you can come stay here. You’ll get to save money and spoil yourself.”

“I can’t do that babe.”

“Oh come on, it’s not going to be free free, you’ll contribute for food.”

“Hmmm I don’t know. Let me ask mom and dad.”

“They’ll say yes cause it’s a great idea. Can’t wait to live with you!”

She laughs and we talk about my decision on Ben a little and her thing with Liam before hanging up.

I clearly wasn't in the mood for cooking. I barely make pasta without a cheese sauce but I can't be bothered. I have an assignment to get through. June arrives a few minutes after I start eating

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"Hey cuz, you left earlier than you said you would."

"Hey Junebug, yeah decided to come back and work here. How's Karabo?"

"He's good hey."

"Alright cool. Look, there's a possibility Andy is coming to stay here with us."

"Oh okay. It's your place anyway no need to tell me."

What the actual fuck? I'm not one to do this but does she forget she stays here rent free?



“You know what? You’re right. It’s my place and I can ask whoever I like to move in.”

I look at her square in her eyes and she seems to get that I’m pissed off because she looks away. I’m so tired of her and her attitude honestly. If she wants, she can stay with her boyfriend, I don’t care.

I go back to eating while trying to type this damn essay.

The following day I was too late for my first class but at least I submitted the essay. I’m busy with design at the cafeteria when I feel a presence behind me. I turn around and it’s Ben.

“Hey there, you do know we have labs?”

“Hello and yes I do.”

“You just enjoy working amidst the chaos huh?”

“Not really, this one time I was in the labs drawing a design for a lounge some guy was literally looking at my work and incorporated it into his lounge.”

“Oh yeah that happens at times. People steal style.”

“I didn’t even know till the lecturer pointed out similarities. He had been behind me so I knew what he did and so did he but he never apologised.”

“Hectic. He did it well though if y’all weren’t asked to redo.”

“That’s the problem, my Morden contemporary looked even better with his Bohemian style. I was pissed.”

He laughs at me and shakes his head.

“So it’s jealousy.”

I roll my eyes.

“You wouldn’t understand.”

“I would actually. Trust me it happens more often than you’d think. He liked your style, incorporated it on his work. It’s called being an inspiration, you should be happy and be inspired by other styles too.”

Mxm. I ignore him and pack my stuff. Andy would kill me if I miss the next class. I’m sure she was bored without me.

“Bye Ben.”

“Think about my offer Siphoh.”

Something about the way he shortens my name sounds more like a masculine name. I can’t have that. He needs to pronounce it like everyone else.

“I already did.”

I'm already a few meters away from him and I hear him running behind me to stand in front of me.

"And?"

"And I'll be your girlfriend."

"Really? What? You won't regret this."

He leaves a kiss on my cheek before punching the air and running back to the cafeteria. I chuckle and walk into the next lecture room. I'm way early so I sit at Andy and I's usual spot then wait to brief her.

According to Andy, Ben is good for me. I guess he is hey. We hang out a lot on campus. I've chilled with his friends, all white but one black guy who acts white, not sure if they all like me but then I don't care. For someone who hates being judged I just realized I judge Ben's friend and assume he acts white because of his accent and the skating he does. Anyway Andy moved in and we've been sharing a bedroom. June dropped the attitude and she's actually appreciative for the two day break from cooking.

"Hey baby, when is Ben getting you?"

Andy just walked in to the the room. Ben said he's coming to fetch me today. It's a weekend so I don't mind, even though he didn't tell me where I'm going.

"In like two hours. What are you doing today?"

"Finishing up the assignment you're doing."

I laugh, save my work and close my laptop. I'm almost done anyway so I can finish up tomorrow morning and then submit.

"And Liam?"

She rolls her eyes. I don't know what the deal is between them

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“Liam can stay at his place with hoes. I don’t want him here.”

“What happened now?”

“Ugh nothing. I just can’t believe he hasn’t asked me out you know.”

“Why don’t you ask him out?”

“Firstly, we spend so much time together but he can’t even ask me out by himself, why would I do it?”

“Because you like him.”

“And what if he doesn’t like me? Or what if...”

She looks down.

“What if?”

“What if he can’t be with someone who was raped?”

She can’t think that! What?! No!

“Excuse me? He could never and would never! I would personally slap him silly, what?!”

“I don’t know babe but he doesn’t even touch me like that day. He keeps a safe distance I don’t know hey.”

She sobs in my arms.

“That can never be it babe. I swear. So many other women have been through the same thing. He would never hold something you had no control over against you. Ever.”

She has to stop thinking like this. She lays on my legs. I keep her hair off her face and sigh.

“I can still smell him you know. On top of me. Huffing and puffing. I feel him so vividly at times.”

She’s talking about the rape. I never know how to speak on this because it hurts me so much too. I still have the image of him on top of her engraved in my mind too.

“Do you still go to the therapist Liam took you to?”

“The therapy has been a waste of my time because instead of addressing it, that woman keeps asking me about my upbringing and other things that don’t matter.”

“It’s all a part of it really. There’s a purpose. Keep going.”

“That’s what Liam said.”

“See that he cares? What if he isn’t trying to get with you before you heal better? Or, he blames himself for everything.”

She gets up so fast from my lap and looks at me. She wipes the streaming tears off her cheeks but they keep coming.

“What if he blames himself?”

It's like I just introduced a new way for her to torture herself. I can't allow it.

"Okay you're going to his place like now. Call him and tell him you're on the way. You two need to talk."

"Now?"

"Yes now babe. I'll get you an Uber. Go shower. I'll delay Ben."

She gets up slowly, gives me a peck on my cheek and then goes on to walk to the bathroom.

I ask Ben to be a little late. At least I'm ready. Now I just have to wait for Andy to finish up. I get on my phone and scroll text Mvelo who has been less and less of a frequent texter but I know she'll get back to me later.

Andy walks in looking far better in a short bodycon and sneakers.

"I'm ready."

She puts on earrings.

"You look good."

"I'll pay back your money when I come back."

"Please don't. Go downstairs babes I'll order the ride for you in like two minutes cause you know an Uber is always around.

"Okay send the details on WhatsApp"



She gives me a hug and walks out. Her eyes are still reddish but she looked way better than when she was crying and pink.

I order her ride and grab my own bag. I know it's a bit early but I don't want Ben waiting too long.

Someone knocks at the door. I wonder who it is because Ben's never been up here. I get the door and almost scream. It's Luvuyo!! My phone rings just then... It's Ben.

“Aren’t you going to get that?”

I look up at him. I... I don’t know what he means or why he’s asking like that but I know he’s not about to make me feel bad about this when he’s never said anything to me about coming this weekend.

“Luvuyo what are you doing here?”

“I’m here to see you. I can see you’re on your way out though, I’ll see you when you get back.”

He hands me a wrapped box and walks away to his place. Right opposite mine. How the hell does he think my day is going to go on now? I already feel some kind of way.

I sigh, put the box in my room without even checking and head out while calling Ben. By the time I get to him I feel sick. I can feel a headache starting.

“Hey babe. Were you still getting ready?” Ben.

He gives me a peck and looks at me.

“Uh no. I wasn’t I’m just not feeling okay.”

I put on the seatbelt and lay back. My head hurts.

“Really? We can cancel you know.”

Ben is truly the nicest person I know. He doesn't deserve this whole Luvuyo triangle he doesn't even know he's involved in.

"You've planned this for a while baby I'll be okay."

"No. You can't. You look like you're not okay already."

He's right. I can't imagine being good company right now. With or without being sick

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knowing Luvuyo is around makes me feel some kind of way already. I won't be comfortable with my own boyfriend.

"Sure?"

"Positive. Go upstairs and rest."

"Thanks babe."

I give him a peck and head upstairs. I don't even want to see Luvuyo. I'm disappointed at myself. I could've still went with Ben just to be with him because I would do that for Luvuyo but I chose the easy way out. I can blame everything under the sun but that's just the truth. I chose Luvuyo over being with Ben. I just want to go to bed.

Soon as I open my door. Luvuyo opens his and looks at me. I sigh and wait for him. He walks to me and I walk into the apartment.

“Please lock.”

I walk up to the bedroom above the kitchen. I use it for naps only from time to time but since this one is here I don't want Andy being confused if she's even coming back. By the time he's up here I'm under covers.

He joins me in bed and cuddles me.

No words. Good. I really need to sleep.

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“Sami. Vuka.”

I open my eyes slowly. Luvuyo. He looks kind of worried about me. I'm not sure what's going on but I sit up and stare at him.

I clear my throat.

“Yeah?”

“Your temperature is worrying. I called a doctor and she'll be here first thing tomorrow morning. For now, please eat and take pills.”

My head feels heavy and my entire body feels hot. I remove the covers from my body and nod. I think it's nothing much but if he's choosing to be fussy I doubt I can stop him.

I take the food next to me and try to eat. I definitely don't feel like it though and it's so tasteless.

“Your roommates aren’t coming back are they?”

“Probably not... I feel cold again.”

He covers me. He genuinely looks worried.

“Your body is hot. I don’t know what’s wrong but you’re scaring me.” “I think it’s just flu. Haven’t you ever had bad flu?”

“That’s what the doctor said. I don’t remember myself ever feeling sick at all.”

Right. Well I could’ve guessed that. That’s why he acts like a God. Mxm. “Well I’ve felt this way many times before.”

“It’s worrying. Finish up so you can sleep.”

“Why are you in the Eastern Cape?”

“We went home to introduce my niece. When we came back from home I came here, they left for Durban.”

“Why did you come here?”

“For business... Well to be honest for you.”

I roll my eyes. I wish I could look him in the eyes and tell him to fuck off but they still make me weak.

“Why? I’m doing fine you know.”

“I know. Ben is taking care of you.”

I choke on my food. Wtf?!

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“It’s okay. Calm down. Please drink some water.”

He gives me water and I gulp it down.

“What?!”

“Ben. You think I didn’t know about him? He’s your boyfriend I know.”

I look at him. He doesn’t look bothered at all. Does he care?  
Does he not?

“Luvuyo you’re the one who told me to live my life here.”

“Agreed.”

“Then why did you come around today?”

“Because I wanted to see you. Unless being with Ben means I can’t see you anymore.”

Of course not but why today?

“No, you came here to confuse me.”

“On the contrary Sami. I came here to see you because I miss you. There’s nothing I can do about your life here.”

“Today though? Of all days?”

“I didn’t know you planned to lose your virginity today. If I had known I would’ve stayed away.”

Okay what is he on about? Sure Ben and I have spoken about it but we didn’t plan that.

“What?!”

“Isn’t that why he was taking you to some hotel?”

He was? How did I not know this but Luvuyo does? What the hell?

“I didn’t know where we were going. How do you know?”

“You two were never going to get there. You think Siyanda would allow it? If your guy is smart he’ll take you to his house.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Because no matter what you believe, I want you to be happy Sami. Happy even if it’s not with me.”

Not with him? Why not with him?

“You said we’d be together eventually. Why are you saying that now? What’s changed? Is it Ben?”

He said I can live my life right? I’m not doing anything wrong by trying out a relationship with someone else am I?

“No Sami. I’m just saying in case you have changed your mind.”

“Why would I do that?”

“It can happen. I’m just saying anyway. You need to rest. I’ll go wash these.”

Is he playing mind games with me? I don’t understand why he’s acting so cool with everything.

Let me just take these pills and rest. I’m really weak.

The doctor said it’s just flu and I’ll be okay with the medication she prescribed for me. Luvuyo made me some Med-Lemon and as terrible as it is I’m drinking it.

“You look beautiful by the way.” Luvuyo.

I frown. He’s not serious really.

“With snot running down my nose every five seconds

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sure.”

“No for real though, you’re very beautiful and smart, you make better decisions than I ever could’ve at your age and you honestly mean so much to me, I hope you know that much.”



“I don’t because you barely talk to me sometimes.”

“You can’t tell me you don’t know I love you just because I won’t always say it. I can’t compete with your boyfriend.”

He can’t? In what sense? I don’t understand Luvuyo at all sometimes.

I feel better. I just sneeze or cough now and then but I'm far better than I was when the fever started. Luvuyo is still here and he even moved me to his apartment. He's even met Andy because she came back and has been helping me with the two days of campus I've missed. She's helping me in bed because Luvuyo won't allow me to leave the covers for anything. Apparently I'll catch another cold.

"So, what's up between you two?" Andy.

I don't know either. How do I answer her?

"I wish I knew. It's all confusing."

Sounds well thought out Sami. Mxm I don't have anything figured out!

"What do you mean?"

I mean I don't know Andrea! But I can't say that now can I...

"I mean I love him, everyone knows this. He told me he loves me too. It should be simple right? However it isn't."

"Then Ben it is. If Luvuyo won't say he wants to be with you, he's said enough."

I sigh. She's right. He's said enough. I'm done with his ass.

"True. Do you mind giving us space? I want to talk to him."

“I’m going to our place. If he throws you out...”

Woah! Never gonna happen. This is Luvuyo.

“He would never. Before anything he cares about me.”

“Okay. I’ll go to sleep then. I love you and good night.”

Well what if he does actually kick me out? What will I do then?

Nah. There’s no way.

“Love you too.”

She waves and walks downstairs. I’m sure Luvuyo will walk up in a few minutes so I wait while logging off my MacBook and texting Mvelo. I think something is up with her but knowing her she’ll only really tell me when we see each other.

Luvuyo walks up with a concoction of sorts. I force a smile, take it and only sip once. I hate the smell of cinnamon let alone the mixture of it with lemon and probably some other stuff and warm water to top it off. He sits on the edge of the bed by my side.

“What’s up with Sandile?”

He looks taken aback, didn’t expect the question I guess.

“Sandile? He’s okay, why?”

“Anything about him and Mvelo?”

“Yeah they’re dating but hiding it. Well it’s like hiding in plain sight because I’m sure your nosy family knows.”

“Oh wow. They’re allowing it?”

“How are they going to really stop them? Sandile is too grown to move around. Mvelo is already here under Mtho’s care. He wouldn’t want to make his father think he can’t take care of her if he suddenly wants to move her away from him.”

Ooh yeah. Mvelo only went to Durban to be under her brother’s watch.

“Dicy situation... We need to talk.”

“I heard you and Andy. No need to talk about it.”

That’s why he didn’t expect my Sandile question. He was expecting me to talk about us.

“So you agree?”

“Siphosami we spoke about this a year ago. We agreed you would do whatever you want here. I don’t understand why you’re even saying it’s confusing or making it seem like you have to choose or I had to say something to stop you from being with Ben. Your life here is yours. Live it.”

That simple huh?

“How when you come here and confuse me and make me wonder if I’m playing Ben or what’s going on.”

“Look, what you’re feeling is guilt because your heart isn’t with him. I’m not saying don’t try with him, I’m saying it’s not my fault.”

He did not just say that

did he?

“Wow Luvuyo so you didn’t do anything, you just showed up?”

“I did something yes. I showed up here before you could go lose your virginity to some dude. Yes I made a power play and it was due to being jealous. However, I still don’t mean stop the relationship or don’t be with anyone, after I leave you’ll go back to campus and see him and you two can be together. I just wanted that weekend with you, before he changes things. When you fell sick I had to stay. That’s all.”

The look in his eyes... I don’t know what it is...

“All that you said only says you’re contradicting yourself. It’s okay though. I know how I feel every time I think of the amount of girls you’re with in Durban.”

“Well at least you get that the jealousy is there. It always will be when it comes to you.”

He puts his hand on my cheek and his touch affects me because I find myself leaning to it.

“Luvuyo...”

“Siphosami.”

The way he’s looking at me... It reminds me of that day he made me explode with pleasure.

“I want you to be my first.”

Wait do I mean it?

“What about...?”

“He doesn’t know.”

It’s true. Ben knows nothing about my sexual history.

“Are you sure?”

Why do I feel like he came here planning just this? Common sense won’t win though. Not when his other hand has already landed on my hip.

“Certain.”

He stares at me with the sexiest smirk I’ve ever seen before slowly kissing me. My entire body feels it. His affect on me is shocking. He doesn’t have to do much and I’m already there. If it were up to me, my clothes would already be on the floor, but no he’s taking his time slowly taking off each item of clothing

while giving me soft kisses in between. When he finally gets my panties off they're soaked. He uses one hand to touch my pussy then he licks my juices off his finger. Fuck he looks so damn hot doing it.

"Tasty."

I'm kind of embarrassed so I hide my face with a pillow. His hands are running up my thighs and I feel his lips on my navel immediately making me moan and arch my back a little. I feel his hand rub my pussy and remove the pillow to watch. He gives me a smile and lowers his face. His tongue plays with my clit delicately and I almost lose it. He goes in more. Using his tongue to transport me to places and making me explode. He cleans me off with the very tongue before positioning himself at my entry... Wait! When did his clothes come off?

He kisses my lips slowly, softly and I can actually taste myself off them. He stops and stares at me...

"You ready?"

I nod. He kisses me again and I feel him pushing in. I don't know what I'm feeling but it's kind of painful so I stop kissing him and close my eyes.

He's stopped.

"Don't stop."

“You’re in pain.”

“Just do it, please.”

He kisses my neck once and repositions himself between my thighs. I look at him. His eyes are fixed on mine. Then I feel it again. That pain. I hold on to the bed covers and take a deep breath. He’s stopped and looking at me. I guess waiting for me to relax my body. I breathe out.

“I love you, Siphosami.”

The pain after those words down there feels like something tore me apart. WTF?!



It's been about a month since I lost my virginity to Luvuyo. Am I happy I did it? Yes. Do I regret it? Not at all.

However I do regret having to hurt Ben. I couldn't lie to myself and keep being with him so I ended things. He's such a good guy that he kept us friends and honestly it makes me feel even worse. Did I make the right decision? I hope so.

He's there for me. Luvuyo that is. He talks to me more. He literally does anything for me and I can't understand what it means for us because I've gotten to the point where I'm afraid of asking. I'm afraid of asking him about us because I fear he'll tell me things that hurt. I don't want to do that now. I don't want my current happiness taken away from me. We're at a good place and that's enough.

This new lecturer has to be the most annoying person on earth. I mean he's hot, that's for sure. However at about thirty-two years old he's such a sadist. I don't think anyone has gotten an easy A from him. Not even if it's deserved. He will tear down what you bring to him a day before the due date and expect you to submit the following day. Andy and I call him Mr

Impossible, he's actually Mr Phiri. Says he grew up in Bulawayo for ten years before he moved to South Africa.

Girls, especially from other faculties would swoon over him. To them, he's a hot lecturer they could bang. For us, his students, he's a pain in the ass and today was no different. By the end of his lecture Andy and I were too eager to do well that when everyone left us in there we didn't even notice. We just stayed and talked about our ideas.

"I mean maybe it's just me but painting the ceiling white would probably help." Andy.

She was right. The wood would make the room dark so painting it white would actually brighten it.

"Yeah that could work, but it would have to go all the way down because I doubt making the walls a different color would be a good idea."

"Yeah then the bi-fold or stacker doors can have a black frame."

“Ladies...” Mr Phiri.

We’re shocked when we hear his voice. Everything just dissolved into the background when we started discussing the room.

“Oh sorry we didn’t realize everyone had left...” Andy.

He looked at us both and smiled. Something weird but he smiled at us and walked around to his chair behind a table.

“It’s okay. Just don’t forget the client brief when doing the assignment.” Mr Phiri.

“We won’t.”

I answered him this time and looked at Andy to grab our stuff and get out of there.

We laugh as soon as we close the door behind us. He was just... I don’t know. Different with us today. Maybe his cruelty could be turned on and off depending on whether he had a class or not.

When we got back to our place we decided to study the history and procrastinate the assignment by Mr Impossible. See the assignment had a due date. As for Thabitha she could tell us we have a test in two days and we would have to be ready for it. The only thing keeping us alive is that this is the last semester we have to do history.

A few minutes into studying June and Andy were already on calls with their boyfriends. Andrea and Liam made things official and she's been glowing since. He really takes care of her, but the truth is he did that from that day. That day we never talk about.

The following day Mr Impossible's class was different. Maybe just for me but he seemed to look at me more. He even pulled out some of my and Andy's previous work as an example for the others on how to use color better. By the end of the class which today wasn't the last one, again Andy and I were the last to leave but just as we were about to walk out hand in hand, he called us.

"Girls.." Mr Phiri.

We stopped and stared at him. Waiting for him to speak again I guess.

“I hope you don’t mind I used your work today. After yesterday I had to check your styles and as different as you both are in terms of style

you still both understand exactly what to do with a brief and consider everything exactly how it’s supposed to be. Keep that up.”

I smiled at him. His whole aura was just different. More relaxed. Maybe just towards us, but I’m still glad.

“Thank you Mr Phiri.”

“Yes, thank you Mr Phiri...” Andy.

“Nonsense. Call me Steve.”

I decided on a smile and pulled Andy out of there. Something was just suddenly different and I didn’t know what.

Ben was the first person to spot us as we walked the corridors to get to the cafeteria.

“Hey you two.” Ben.

“Hey Ben. Have you had lunch?”

There was this new friendship we both just had. At first I didn’t want it because to be honest I did him dirty but eventually I realized I couldn’t really explain to him why he can’t make me his friend so I opted to take his friendship, reluctantly.

“Nope not yet. Let’s get something from Uber Eats. My treat.”  
Ben.

Well they bought lunch for each other from time to time so it wasn’t new.

“Well then let’s go to the garden. There’s literally no need to be at the caf now.” Andy.

She was right so we went to sit on the benches and wait for food. I eventually got tired of asking Ben about hanging out with his friends when I realize he literally is the type who hangs out everywhere so every last one of his friend groups got to hang out with him eventually and he could make new friends in literal minutes.

“Hey Ben what do you think about Mr Phiri?”

I don’t know why I’m so interested in knowing more about this lecturer but I am. It’s such a June thing to do.

“Stevovo? I like the dude. He’s like a mentor to me. Very smart.” Ben. “That’s what they call him?” Andy.

“Well I’m practically a student tutor so I spend a lot of time with the lecturers. Even before that because of grandma Thabitha.” Ben.

Andy and I laugh. The Thabitha name spread like wildfire and eventually even Florence knew about it. She just doesn't know who said it first.

Today is a Friday which means going home early to finish up assignments and watch some Netflix. I just wish Andy didn't ditch me at like ten in the morning for Liam. She's probably only coming back to the apartment tomorrow which means I'll be alone because June does not study on weekends. At least not with us.

We may be studying something different from her but we study together for the moral support.

I don't have "Steve's" class today but I go to the lecture room when I'm done with my classes. The doors are too thick to knock so I barge in. He looks at me once, smiles and goes back to his laptop as I close the door. "Miss Zondi. How can I help you?"

He's so different from the grinch he was just a few days ago it's weird.

"You can call me Sipho... Or Siphosami. I just need to do some of my work in here, that's all."

Well to be honest I don't know what I'll do in here. I think it's obvious even to myself now that this man intrigues me. He says something without actually saying it to me lately and this...

Tension is just so addictive. Maybe because it reminds me a lot of how it feels to be around Luvuyo where there's intensity and unspoken words. Maybe I'm as toxic as Luvuyo is for enjoying such a weird feeling of uncertainty.

I need a reaction. I may not be as good as Nomvelo at provoking a man but I'll stay in this lecture hall and do his assignment as long as it takes for him to say something to me.

"Sure. I never liked the labs either as a student."

I take a deep breath. It's loud enough that he hears it and that's what I wanted. This wasn't part of my plans. I'm supposed to be on an Uber home but nope. I want to stare at this well crafted dark chocolate man while hoping he just comes clean about whatever it is he wants with me.

Or Andy. I don't know why I'm ruling out that maybe it isn't even me but Andy he wants something with.

Now and again I'll feel his eyes on me and catch him staring and it excites me. Makes me involuntarily clench my... You know what I mean.

"You know Siphon, I'm not a child."

I look up at him from the laptop and close it. I'm ready to pack in case he humiliates me and accuses me of wanting him. More than that, I'm ready to deny it completely.



“I know that.”

“I’m a thirty four year old, grown man. I don’t play games. If I want something, I get it.”

What? He’s even older than Mtho. I take a gamble...

“Then get it.”

Something in his eyes changes. He closes his laptop too, takes off his glasses and stares at me. “Get what?”

He must be kidding if he thinks I’ll admit anything.

“Whatever it is you want?”

“For that to happen, you would have to put on your big girl panties and get what you want.”

I look away and gulp on saliva. I didn’t prepare for this. At all.

“Don’t you think it’s fun this way?”

I ask already putting my stuff in my bag and walking down the auditorium style steps. Going closer and closer to him.

“Fun?” His eyes are fixed on me and I give him a sweet smile before answering. “There’s something fun about tiptoeing around the unsaid.”

I wink at him and walk out. I don’t know what that was but it definitely felt great. It was an adrenaline rush to flirt with the lecturer.

I don't know if it's because I know what I'm doing is wrong or if it's because I want to protect myself from my brothers but I've yet to say anything about my little conversation with Steve to anyone. Not even Andy. I've yet to be able to look him in the eye either. It just feels some type of way. I'm just not sure what it is to be honest.

It's been weeks since that incident and I avoid him, well at least until he asked to see me after class today because according to him I was talking in his class. Which is true but it was brief and I was talking to Andy so I wanted to convince her to stay but then again I need to face my mess eventually.

"Good luck." Andy says as she's about to walk out and leave me with this man.

Why again did I flirt with this guy? Luvuyo would kill me if he knew about this.

Andy leaves and it's quiet. I want to move but I don't know if I should so I remain seated.

“Should I walk up there?” He asks in a way that makes me feel like I shouldn’t let him walk to me so I’m on my feet by the time I answer,

“No need.”

I even grab my bag so it’ll be easier to bolt out of here. I put leave the bag near the door and stand in front of his desk.

Well what a day to wear a t-shirt dress Siphosami. You just had to.

He stops doing whatever it is he’s always doing on his laptop and closes it before removing his glasses and looking at me.

“You are one of the best students here, never let it get to your head though. You can still listen to your lecturers.”

I’ve never

not even once been told I think I’m too good for being taught.

I’ve never had that kind of attitude even if I actually should.

Does he really think I need him to pass this class? I have a brain

and probably am one of the students who go above and beyond the most. To be accused of getting too cocky is a slap in the face because I actually should be!

“With all due respect, I appreciate your sentiments but I spoke to Andrea in class, I wasn’t the only one to talk nor did I even do it loudly. I do not think being told about my attitude is warranted here.”

I didn’t realize I was actually this angry but he deserves my anger. How dare he?

“Fiesty! I love it. Never lose it.”

He says with a smug smile on his face. I let out a little laugh when I realize he wasn’t being serious about the first comment.

“Come to my place this coming weekend. We can take what we both want.”

“I don’t know where you stay.”

“I’ll send you my address in an email.”

“I’ll wait.”

He gives me that smug smile again and puts his glasses on again.

“You’re excused.”

I feel like a naughty schoolgirl as I walk away from in front of his desk. Damn!

Friday evening I get the email. I’m never that slow but it definitely hits me the moment it comes in. How the hell am I going to get there knowing very well Mtho probably has been keeping a close eye on my moves since the whole Andy thing? Shit!

Okay Siphosami. You're just going to have to use faith and hope to go into this. Long as they don't know who stays there, everything should be okay at least for this one visit. I hope Andy is having a date night or something tomorrow. I'll leave around ten in the morning and be back by five. That's more than enough time to tease the lecturer and eventually have some fun.

That's okay right? Luvuyo has been doing what he wants to do for almost two years now. He even gave me the go ahead. Well at least before he became my first he was okay with it. Let me actually explore this option without any guilt. He'll be just fine as I have been too.

By the time I go to bed I've already planned my whole outfit. A pink high waisted mini skirt with a white shirt tucked in. The school girl look? Definitely playing with it. Underneath I'll wear the white lingerie set I got from Woolies while shopping with Chelsea.

The following day I'm up first and to avoid questions from Andy or June I'm out by 9am and having breakfast at the coffee shop

downstairs. June and Karabo are rabbits so there's no chance they would be down here but Andy could be so I am extra alert.

I really hope all this is worth it. I've never been so panicked and paranoid in my life. It feels like someone knows and is just watching me. I take a deep breath and call the Uber. When it arrives I'm already on the pavement waiting so I get in quickly.

This is actually a whole lot more exciting now that I'm already on the way to his place. The driver isn't so chatty which is perfect for me because really what am I going to say to him?

I give him his money when we arrive plus a tip for not being chatty then I wait outside the building and text Steve that I'm downstairs. Someone takes my phone from my hands and I almost scream thinking I'm being mugged till I look at them.

Holy fuck! I'm in trouble. I open and close my mouth not knowing what to say to him.

Steve appears from behind him with a smile on his face. I wish he could read the room and walk the fuck away.

"Hey, is this guy bothering you?" Steve.

Fuck my whole life!

I don't think I had ever been around so many couples with the love just overflowing between them till I got to meet my mom's other kids.

Every time I think about the stories she told me about them, I can't help but smile and wonder how happy she would be to see them like this.

She used to say Loyiso was her baby but he was not a relationship person and whoever would make him marry her had to either be very special or a witch. I'd say Tumi is the former.

Mvelo and I have been running around and driving around with security for errands since the beginning of the week. Thanks to Dabs who is Loyiso's aunt I think we've bought tea more times than anything else to be honest. Mvelo and I reckon she misplaces it because there's no way it's all been consumed, absolutely no way.

Right now we're babysitting because all the nannies are off. I see Marco walking into the house with more food and he of course gets praises from Dabs and her kitchen team of Nombuso, Kay and Nosi.



I avoid making eye contact with Marco. I can't look at him since that day with Steve. I still wonder how he knew and when he got there. I want to believe he was already in the Eastern Cape because he couldn't possibly have travelled from KZN just for catching me and Steve.

I laugh now but it wasn't funny then. The confusion on Steve's face when I said Marco is my brother, then the fact that Marco just looked at him. He didn't say anything at all

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just one punch then he dragged me by my arm to the car before driving us to the airport.

I took an entire week off school and I wasn't in trouble somehow, I still don't know why not but none of my lecturers gave me trouble. Even Steve. The only person who had questions was Andy and I had to just say my brothers came and got me and I wasn't sure why.

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Lisa and Lizwe are the sister and brother duo coming for Namelwa and Slandiso's throne. They look so alike you can't really tell they don't share a mom. They're wearing these cute little outfits, a white dress for Lisa and a black tux for Lizwe to watch their mom and dad get married today.

Luvuyo though he isn't one of the groomsmen looks so good! I think my heart skipped a beat when I saw him in his suit. He gave me this arrogant smile and my knees got weak.

"This wedding is so beautiful!" Mvelo.

"I know right?! Tumi looks gorgeous!"

"Sis Nombuso is a damn great designer too."

"Your big brother hit the jackpot with both his wives really."

"To be fair though all the brothers got amazing partners."

"That much is true."

After Tumi and Loyiso leave for their short honeymoon there's a bit of confusion and Luvuyo steals me for a drive to his place. I pray nobody notices we're gone.

We cuddle on the couch and talk, it's been overdue.

"So... You wanted your lecturer?"

"I don't understand how you make me feel bad for doing the things you do."

"I'm not making you feel bad. I'm asking. You forget you aren't me. You can act like me but you'll get hurt."

"So what do you suggest I do? Wait around for Luvuyo?"

"Be yourself Sami. You don't have to do all this bad bitch stunting. You're perfect just the way you are."

“What makes you think it’s about you?”

“Who is it about?”

I look at him. I don’t have an answer for that so I just angrily get up and walk away to his bedroom and shut the door loudly. I take my dress off and go shower. It’s a pretty dress. Dusty pink and a body con that looked amazing on me. After the long and hot shower I get out wrapped in his towel and then I look for something to wear from his closet. I opt for his boxer shorts and his t-shirt. I get in bed soon after.

I must’ve fallen asleep but I wake up when I feel his arm over me. He spoons me and I’m too happy about it to fight him so I say nothing. He definitely can make me happy by doing something others would consider small or not enough. I don’t know why but I definitely let him off easy. Well if one thing must kill a girl, can it be love?

The people I'm most grateful for are all in one room cheering me on to collect my cum laude degree, I don't know how they all got in but they did it. From my aunt and dad to my Durban brothers and sisters, yes including Luvuyo, everyone is here. The only missing few are the kids. I'm honestly as happy as I am embarrassed because they're honestly so loud. Luckily I don't have to be up here too long.

After the graduation ceremony I meet them all outside and get hugs from each of them. I have like two hours to change my suit and wear a dress then go to a restaurant for my graduation party, well it's more mine and Andrea's. Her parents said they'll do something small for her when they get home and agreed to the joint graduation with me.

"Well now that you've graduated, here you go." Siyanda.

He hands me a box.

I thank him and open it immediately. I'm lost for words when I see BMW keys. I look up at him, tears already forming and they all look up the street where I spot a red car with ribbons and

balloons approaching. If others around us couldn't see what was happening they definitely realized from the scream I let out as I ran towards the car.

"For me? No! What? Oh my gosh! Oh my God! Thank you!" I keep repeating as the driver gets out of the car and leaves the door open for me.

"You deserve it. We all decided on the car and the custom colourful designs on the leather are all Nono." Gugu.

"I chose the exterior color, the rest is all your brothers." Chels.

"I am so grateful! I am happy with everything! Thank you so much!" I say and get out to hug them all again.

My aunt can't stop crying. Dad doesn't really look impressed but I know he doesn't like my connection with my Durban family.

“Oh my children! Thank you all so much. My sister must truly be happy.” Auntie.

I’m already crying and her mention of my mother just makes me sob more. I wish she was here for this milestone.

“Oh MaZondi would already be inside the car at this point.” Mtho says and we all laugh.

That much is definitely true. Maybe I can drive Andrea and I to the apartment because my aunt and dad are booked at a hotel thanks to Marco. I look for Luvuyo and realize he’s been recording the whole thing. I smile and thank his foresight, now I’ll be able to remember this forever.

The party is in full swing by late afternoon. The speeches are done and more gifts have been handed to me and Andy, now everyone is just enjoying themselves eating, drinking, dancing whatever they want. I look at Sihle and Nosi on opposite ends of the room and my heart hurts for them again. They officially broke up about a year ago, now Sihle just has a new girl every

second week and Nosi has actually been single and focusing on her practicals.

Imagine making it out of an accident that should've killed you with someone you love but instead of growing stronger

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you grow apart? They were involved in a scary accident after Tumi and Loyiso's wedding. In fact everyone thought they died because the car sank to the bottom of the river, but luckily they were both able to make it out thanks to Sihle's quick thinking. He saved her and himself. I always say at least they don't hate each other.

As for Sandile and Nomvelo, they're still unofficially dating under the radar. Even now they're sitting on the same table sharing laughs. Mtho still rolls his eyes at the sight. I mean I know he knows but they both haven't really come out to claim the relationship to him.

I also think he doesn't want Nomvelo to hate him if he makes her leave the man she loves.

Nombuso and Gugu are dancing together much to the excitement of some guys Andy and I were studying with.



Apparently every guy wishes to marry two sexy women. They can't stop recording them. Mtho being who he is isn't even bothered.

Mtho, Loyiso, Tumi, Marco, Khethelo, Siyanda and Chelsea are all on a table just talking and laughing. Andrea and I are sitting with Liam and Luvuyo. I mean it's like two couples but Luvuyo and I are unofficial. No tags, we just vibe and you can almost always guarantee we're ending up on the same bed whenever it's possible.

"We need to go to a club later." Liam.

"You guys can definitely head there, personally I'm not ready to fight my brothers."

"Stop being boring Siphosami, we'll join you guys." Luvuyo.

I just stare at him. He's speaking for 'us' now?

“Thank you Vuyo! Now let’s go dance baby.” Andy says dragging Liam up to the dance floor with her.

I turn my attention back to Luvuyo.

“You want me dead don’t you?”

“They’ll only talk, no one will kill you for going out, trust me.”  
He says a pops a price of cake into his mouth.

All I can do is shake my head and drink my champagne.

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The club scene isn't my favorite but I'm actually enjoying myself tonight. I don't know if it's Luvuyo being with me or the fact that I'm excited to be a graduate, with a junior position already waiting for me, in Durban where Luvuyo currently works as well may I mention. Loyiso said he isn't ready to head up a whole company by himself so he is currently working in Durban. We've actually been working in the same company for months since I did my internship with Loyiso's EC branch, now we'll get to be together.

Andy and Liam come to the table to say they're going to his place within invite for Luvuyo and I but he declines for us. I just look at him as my best friend and her boyfriend are walking away from us.

"So what are we going to do now?"

"Go fuck at a hotel." He says and gets closer to me.

As soon as we lock eyes I know I'll follow him everywhere. He kisses me softly before I deepen the kiss, then we stop and smile to each other, I swear this man is my kryptonite.

The following morning we rush back to my apartment first thing in the morning so I can change and be ready for the day of shopping with my sisters. Knowing Gugu she'll tell them to leave me if I'm not at their hotel by the stipulated hour.

Luvuyo drives me back to my place and leaves since I'll have to drive myself to the hotel I'm meeting up with the sisters at. As soon as I'm ready I get out of the house and drive to the hotel, on the way I get a call from June.

"Hey cuz."

"Hey Junebug, are you excited to be graduating next week?"

"I'm not getting a lavish party or car like you but yeah I guess."

I take a deep breath. June can really test my patience.

“Hau June? What’s up?”

“Nothing. Nothing. I’m sorry cuz, can I bring your uncle and aunt to the apartment so they stay there? I can’t put them in a hotel unfortunately.”

I don’t miss the passive aggressive nature of her statement but I decide to just ignore it. My uncle, as much as I don’t like him deserves to see his daughter graduate.

“Obviously there’s no issues cuz.” I reply making a rental note to make sure my room is locked before I leave.

“Okay

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thanks Siphon.” She says and hangs up.

I feel bad about the way my relationship with her has deteriorated sometimes and sure it’s easy people around me to say it’s not my fault but they aren’t in my shoes. My brothers have given Andrea gifts and cash but not my cousin, never

directly anyway and I understand why she would feel like they don't care for her.

I get to the hotel and meet up with my sisters outside Gigi's rented V class. I'm happy to see them all again today and the first person to spot me and give me a hug is Nomvelo.

"Okay! Now that Siphosami is here, we can drive to the airport, we're shopping in Cape Town!" Gugu says excitedly and Mvelo and I scream in excitement.

"Cape Town? The kids..." Mbali

"Are taken care of. They're with their capable fathers and nannies." Gugu.

"Yeah she planned this a week ago, the guys agreed after she told them they must be grateful we're not going to Dubai." Nombuso.

“Oh I could definitely use the time to relax but y’all know I have to go to work.” Nosi.

“Yes and you’re going back home tonight, after a day of shopping with us.” Gugu.

“I can’t imagine Loyiso alone with the kids.” Tumi.

“Well, you’ll just have to imagine it. Let’s go!” Gugu.

“God only knows what’ll happen here.” Chelsea.

Mvelo and I decide to butt out of the talk about kids and husbands, all we want to do is buy new clothes. I need new work clothes, she needs clothes for university.

“Oh this is about to be fun!” Mvelo.

“Right? I need to text Luvuyo so he knows what’s up.”

“Ugh I haven’t told Sandile yet.” She says taking out her phone as well.

When we get to the jet mimosas are flowing and laughs are being shared. I understand why Gugu is doing this, it’s important for us to connect and enjoy each other’s company. Especially for me who hasn’t been around them for long.

.....**The End**.....

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