



For daily latest books please visit <https://novelsguru.com/>

And also visit my Facebook page, and like and share it

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3345453369055623>

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

When the Bough Breaks by Kelly Mompoti

Chapter 1

As the sun began to rise over the beautiful trees of the village, Salani put the traditional broom away. She had woken up early in the morning to ensure that the yard was swept and that the water was warming up before the rest of the household woke up. Her mother usually helped her but it had been one of those nights. So as the firstborn, she took responsibility and did what her mother did every morning. She took a bowl from the Setlaagana {Traditional kitchen/fireplace}, then she walked into the kitchen through the back door and poured some flour into a bowl so she could prepare magwinya {fat cakes}.

Just as she was bent over mixing flour in the bowl, she heard the sound of grains of sand hitting the tin roof. Her heart immediately skipped a beat. She knew who it was and she knew it was a signal for her. She looked at her hands and grabbed a jug of water to wash the dough off her hands. Then

she took a cloth to wipe the flour dust off her dress. After that, she took her headscarf off and flattened her dress with her palms before tip-toeing out of the house. Just the guilt of sneaking off made her tiptoe even though she had been walking around careless of if her footsteps were heard by anyone.

She ran out of the gate holding an empty bucket. Then she ran across the plain field towards the big rocks that had become their meeting spot. She stopped running when she got closer to the rocks. She picked a stone and threw it over the rocks. She heard movement from behind the rocks then he stood up and gave her that smile that always had her trying to climb trees so she could touch the sun. She couldn't get used to this.

Tiro: Hi

Salani blushed and walked over to him. He gave her a quick hug then they sat behind the rocks, hidden from everyone.

Tiro: I missed you.

Salani: (shyly) I missed you too.

She wasn't lying. She had seen him last night before the nightmare broke out, but it still felt like it had been a whole week since she had seen him last.

Tiro: My sponsorship was approved. I have to go to Gaborone tomorrow to collect it.

Salani felt a pit in her stomach as soon as she heard him say that. She had been afraid of this since their results came out. She had failed so badly that her teachers had told her mother that the government wouldn't sponsor her. But not Tiro. Tiro was the brightest boy in her class and he had been accepted in every school he had applied to. He had chosen to go and study at UB. When he told her that, she knew that she would probably never see him again. He was nineteen and leaving their village. That was everyone's dream. Hers too

but life wasn't that kind to her. Her mother believed that her daughter had been bewitched. Salani could understand perfectly when the teacher was teaching them verbally. Then everything would go south when she would turn around and write on the board. The words wouldn't make sense to her and even when she tried to copy it out onto her notebook, it wouldn't make sense to anyone who looked at her work. She was used to people teasing her and calling her stupid. She remembered how her mother took her to a pastor to deliver her before her exams. She walked out of that church as oily as a fat cake cooked in warm cooking oil. But that didn't help her. She still failed dismally and she wasn't going anywhere even

though the majority of her mates were off to Gaborone for University. There was even one girl who was going to school in Canada. The Chief had even thrown a party for her at the kgotla.

Tiro: (touched her chin) Hey. Don't be sad. You know that this changes nothing akere.

Salani: You say that now but you know it isn't true. You are going to forget me when you get to Gaborone. I hear that the city is full of flashy lights and beautiful women. I would be foolish to think you will remember a village girl like me.

Tiro: (sadly) Salani you know that I love you. I have loved you since form one and I am still here. Have I ever cheated on you?

She shook her head sadly as tears built up.

Tiro: So why are you doubting me now?

She looked away as she felt the hot tears rub down her cheeks. He turned her face back to him and wiped the tears with his thumbs.

Tiro: Baby don't cry. It's not like I am going forever tomorrow. School only starts in two months. I am just going to get my letter and come back home. We will spend every day together the way we always do. Morning and evening. You know I will keep my promise akere? Please smile because you know how your tears hurt me.

She forced herself to smile but the tears didn't stop. He put his hand behind her neck and tilted her head so he could kiss her.

Tiro: I am sorry. Should I tell my parents that I am staying here with you?

Salani: (smiled) Don't be silly. I want you to go and make a better life for yourself.

Tiro: You mean a better life for us akere?

She shrugged and nodded her head. Then he moved his hand up her dress. The hugger it went, the warmer and softer her body felt. Tiro could hardly breathe as his hand found her cotton panties. He never got used to this. The feeling of knowing he was about to experience something so mind-blowing that it brought down kingdoms. Salani laid down on the bed of grass they made for themselves. She lifted her legs as he pulled her panties off. His throat dried up as he looked at her hairy p**sy. He pushed his pants down and took the condom he stole from his big brother's bag then he #EXPLICIT....

Tiro wrapped the condom up and put it in his pocket after they were both dressed. He kissed her cheek and looked at her.

Tiro: I will come and see you in the evening akere?

Salani nodded her head and hugged him.

Tiro: Okay go first.

She stood up and started to walk away.

Tiro: Baby emere! {the bucket}

She rushed back and took the bucket before running back home. Her heart dropped when she saw her mother walk out of the house. She was sure that her mother could also hear her heartbeat as she walked through the gate.

Salani: Dumelang.

Mma Salani: Where are you coming from?

Salani: Ne ke ile go senka dibi. {I went to collect dry cow dung}

She showed her the bucket with her pulse racing.

Mma Salani: How can you leave the dough until it spills over?
Akere o ne o itse gore o dubile borotho Salani. {You know you had mixed the dough}.

Salani ran into the kitchen and found that indeed the dough had risen and spilled out of the bowl, making a mess on top of their small kitchen counter. She started to clean up then she took the bowl out and went to fry the fat cakes at the fireplace. From the corner of her eye, she could see her mother limping towards the toilet. Even though she was relieved that she wasn't caught or shouted at for wasting food, she wondered if it was because of the pain she was in.

Her mother came back to the fireplace and sat down. Salani saw the bruise on her neck and she felt her chest tighten up. She felt like there was no part of her mother's body that didn't have scars from her father. She couldn't understand why she wouldn't just leave him.

Mma Salani: Hurry up and stop looking at me. Your father will be awake soon. He will want his food to be ready.

Salani felt like vomiting from pain at the thought of her father.

Salani: Why do you care about whether he eats or not? You are better off poisoning him.

Mma Salani: (angrily) Don't speak about your father like that! How dare you threaten your father's life?

Salani: Mama he beats you almost every day! How does that make any sense? Why don't you leave him?

Mma Salani: Salani your father is not a bad man. He just has anger issues and acts up when he is drunk. You know he is very kind when he is sober.

Salani: Which is what? Once a week? Are you going to wait until he kills you?

Mma Salani slowly stood up and headed for the door. She stopped by the door and looked at her with tears in her eyes.

Mma Salani: I wish you knew that I love this man. He may not be perfect, but he is mine. Every couple fights and as a strong woman, you are taught to stand for your marriage and pray when things get tough. The devil hates marriage. That's something you have to know if you want to get married one day. You don't just up and leave when the going gets tough. Gape you blame your father but you don't know why he acts like that. Sometimes it's my fault that I get beaten. I am not perfect just like him. You are a child. Wait until you grow up.

She walked away and left Salani turning the fat cakes over.

Salani: (shook her head) That cannot be called love. What kind of man beats a woman he claims to love? Nxla! Nonsense!

She continued to fry the fat cakes. Then her two younger sisters came out of the house. Salani covered the bowl of the fat cakes that were ready so they didn't see them. Their immaturity at fifteen and thirteen always infuriated her.

Sesame: Sasa I want fat cakes!

Salome: Me too!

Salani: They aren't ready yet. Go and bathe then you can eat.

Sesame: Ao mma. They are in the bowl.

Salani: I said go and bath.

They scoffed then Salome took a jug and started to pour hot water into a bucket so they could go and bath.....

Later that evening, the family sat in front of the television to watch soopies. Salani's mother didn't allow them to watch TV until the evening when everything was done. Even her two younger brothers had accepted that they couldn't watch cartoons during the day. So they played outside until it was time to bath. As usual, her father wasn't home. That meant he had gone out drinking and would only return to beat their mother up at midnight. Salani was consumed by what she was

watching then her heart skipped when she heard a voice shouting outside.

Tiro: TIRO!!! TIRO WEEE!! TIRO!!

Mma Salani: Heh gatwe ke eng jaanong? {What is this?} This Tiro is always being called while we are watching scandal.

Salani's ears got hot and she could hardly breathe. She could feel her sisters' eyes on her and she wanted to throw her plate in their faces while Tiro continued to shout his name outside.....

2

bough: /baʊ/ - noun

Definition: a main branch of a tree.

"When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall"

At Mma Salani's house

Salani gulped when her mother stood up and opened the curtain. Tiro had stopped calling out for her so she hoped to God that he wasn't anywhere near the house.

Mma Salani: Tota whose child is that who calls out like a mad person at night? Ao!

Sesame: But I think I know that voice.

Salani felt her knees go cold. She looked at her sister and tried her best to be calm. Her 11 year old brother looked at Sesame.

Taolo: From where?

Sesame: (gave him a side-eye) How is it your business?

Salani's 10 year old brother chimed in as well.

Taelo: Is he the boy from your school?

Mma Salani: (frowned) What boy? Sesame, have you started?
What have I told you about the 7B's?

Sesame: (folded her arms) But mama I don't have a boyfriend! I swear!

Mma Salani: I asked you a question. What did I say about the 7B's? Salani, Salome, and Sesame? What did I say?

All: Books Before Boys Because Boys Bring Babies.

Salani could hardly focus. She needed an excuse to get out of the house.

Mma Salani: Right! Until you are done with school, you don't go anywhere near boys.

Salome: Does that include Sasa? Akere ene she failed so it means she is done with books.

Salani's heart sank. She couldn't understand why she was the only one of her siblings that performed way below average. The rest of her four siblings did well in school. She looked at her mother who just frowned at Salome then went back to watching TV. Salani picked up the dinner plates and walked out.

Mma Salani: You can just put them in the kitchen. Your sisters will wash them in the morning.

Salani: Uh... No, it's okay. I will go and wash them. Akere they are going to school tomorrow. I don't want to have a lot of work to do.

She walked away before her mother could protest any further. She went to the traditional kitchen walking under the light of the house. She looked in the distance and she saw it. The flash from Tiro's torch. She put the dirty plates on the small table in the corner and walked towards the back gate. She opened it as slowly as she could, trying hard not to make a sound. When she had opened up enough space for her to make it out the gate

Advertisement

she ran towards the light with her heart pounding at the thought of her mother calling her name in the dark. The further she got from her house, the less electrical light there was and the moonlight shone around her. She ran into Tiro's arms and laid her head on his shoulder.

Tiro: I thought you were not going to come.

Salani: (giggled) Wena le wena rra! I told you to just call me twice! Kana mama has noticed.

Tiro: Oh God! Did you get in trouble?

Salani: no. But my sisters know. I can tell.

Tiro: (hugged her) I am sorry.

Salani: It's okay. What time are you leaving tomorrow?

Tiro: I will be on the 5 am bus so I can be in Gaborone at 10 am. Hopefully, I will be done in time to catch the bus back here tomorrow night.

Salani: (took a deep breath) It's not that I am not happy for you or anything. I just wish that I was also getting out of this place. I am tired of living the life I live at home. Right now my father isn't home. I am pretty sure that he is going to come home and beat my mother. I don't know why she doesn't just leave him. My brothers are always swearing about how they will beat him when they grow up. Imagine what that is doing to them.

Tiro: I am sorry baby. Maybe you can come to Gaborone and find a job or something. You don't have to stay here.

Salani: What will happen to my mother if I leave?

Tiro: And what will you do if you stay? It's not like you are doing anything to help the situation by being here. It's just hurting you more.

Salani: I just wish she would leave him. Or at least fight back. I can't imagine myself just letting someone treat me like that and stay. How do you stop loving yourself so much that you allow yourself to be a punching bag? I don't understand her at all.

Tiro: Abuse is a complex thing Sasa. You can see it because he hits her. But you don't know how it started or what he did to cripple her into being the version of herself that you see. The unfortunate truth is that only she can walk away from this. No one can make her. The problem with our parents' generation is that they believe that being divorced is shameful. Even if they are with the wrong person, they will stay and pray for their marriage.

Salani: (shook her head) That will never be me. Nna even if you tell me o re ke tla go betsa hela, {even if you say you will beat me} I will run for my life. I will not wait to see if you are telling the truth when you say it.

Tiro: But you know that I would never lay a hand on you akere. I wasn't raised that way.

Salani: I am just saying. Love or no love, I will leave. (sighed) Gape wena I know you are going to meet someone in Gaborone. A semester is six months long. You will move on.

Tiro: wow... Kante why don't you trust me?

Salani: I am a realist. You know that. We are nineteen years old. It would take a miracle for us to make this work when you are moving halfway across the country.

Tiro: (sighed) I am not sure what you expect me to say when you talk like that. I know we are young but can't you just act

like a normal girlfriend and show that you are hopeful that we will make it? Act like you care.

Salani: Ao.. Sorry tlherra. I wasn't trying to hurt you or anything. Of course I care. I am just trying to protect my heart.

Tiro sighed then they heard a movement in the dark. Their hearts skipped as Rra Salani stumbled home coming from the bar. Salani felt ready to pass out as she waited to see if he would recognize her. She knew that everything would go south if he did. He passed them while he whistled and stumbled back and forth. Salani could smell the beer oozing out of his pores even though he was about five meters away from them.

Salani: (whispered) I have to go home. My mother will know I am not home if I don't come with my father's food because she thinks I am outside.

Tiro: okay. I am going to miss you.

Salani: Me too. Travel safely.

Tiro kissed her under the moonlight before she ran off. He watched her until she tiptoed through the gate before he jogged home.

.

.

At Mma Salani's house

Salani walked into the living room with her father's tray. The whole living room reeked of alcohol and she could truly see that her father was home. Nobody was seated as comfortably as they were when he wasn't home. No one had their feet on the couches. They were all seated upright and quietly. She knew what they were feeling. She always felt it too. Salani placed the tray on the table and started to walk back to get water to wash his hands.

Mma Salani: Salani

Salani: (stopped) Maa?

Mma Salani: How many times do I have to tell you how to serve your father? O kgonama o tshwere dijo tsa ga rraago? {How can you bend over while holding your father's food?}

Salani: Sorry.

Mma Salani: (angrily) Do it right monna! How will you serve your husband if you can't serve your father?

Salani could feel a lump growing in her throat as she took the tray and knelt down to put the tray back. She hated the version of her mother that came out whenever her father was around. All the kids knew that she was a puppet. They knew that if she didn't shout at them, he would punish her. But that didn't make it any less painful for them. She walked back to get the water to wash his hands. She knelt back down and washed his hands. Then she walked back out and she could hear her siblings walking out behind her.

Salome: Sometimes I wish he could wake up dead.

Sesame: Or someone could just stab him at the bar and help us.

Taolo: I wish I was strong so I could beat him.

Taelo: (sadly) What if he kills her? Why do nest anyone help her?

Salani felt tears running down her cheeks as she listened to them. This had been her life for as long as she could remember. Her mother had even had a miscarriage before her brothers were born. He had kicked her in the stomach several times and she lost the baby. Salani felt too emotional to wash the dishes she had lied about. So she walked out of the fireplace then Salome started to do the dishes. Salani wiped her tears and walked back to the house. She didn't want to leave her mother alone with her father. Just as she opened the back door, she heard her mother scream. Salani ran into the living room and found her father sitting on top of her mother punching her while she laid on the floor with her hands over her face.

Rra Salani: (punching her) What kind of manner-less children are you raising in my house? Huh? What nonsense are you teaching them?

Salani ran back to the kitchen and bumped into her siblings who had also heard their mother's screams. She was fed up and she had to do something. She took her mother's large wooden whisk that they used to cook when there were events in the village. She pulled it out from behind the kitchen unit and ran past her siblings who were helplessly screaming for him to stop.

Mma Salani: (crying) Insthwarele! {Please forgive me!}

He continued to punch her while seated in her stomach. The blood coming out of Mma Salani's nose gave Salani the courage she needed to break the ultimate rule in life as she lifted the wooden whisk over her head with both hands and hit him across his back. The shock from the pain made him turn around and Salani hit him again straight across face. He tried to stand up but she continued to hit him as her siblings stood by in total shock. Her mother tried to stand up but she was in too much pain.

Rra Salani finally stood up and grabbed the wooden whisk. He pulled it and as hard as he could from Salani. She knew that

letting him have it would be catastrophic for all of them so she tried to hold on to it with all her might. He finally overpowered her and she lost her hold on it getting splinters in her hands. Rra Salani lost his balance after pulling the whisk away. He tripped and fell on the glass table, hitting the back of his head before falling to floor.

Mma Salani screamed as blood began to pool up from the back of his head.

Mma Salani: (Cried out) MODIMO WAME! TIRELO!! TIRELO!!

She tried to shake him awake as her children covered their mouths waiting for him to open his eyes. Salani felt urine run down her leg as the pool of blood grew and her father's eyes remained closed.

Mma Salani: (shook him) TIRELO! Ao Modimo o a ntheng tota?
{God why are you doing this to me?}

.

.

3

At Mma Salani's house

Mma Salani stood up from the pool of blood and looked at her children. Salani fell to her knees and stared at her father. She didn't mean to do this. All she was trying to do was to defend her mother.

Mma Salani: (tearfully) Sesame, take the whisk to the kitchen. Put it back where it belongs. Okay?

Sesame stared at her father's lifeless body. She was completely zoned out.

Mma Salani: Salome, take it. My hands are bloody.

Salome nodded her head and walked over to get the whisk.

Mma Salani: Taolo, give me my phone so I can call the police.

Taolo ran to the bedroom to get his mother's phone.

Mma Salani: Sally,

Salani just kept staring at her father's face waiting for him to open his eyes.

Mma Salani: Salani!

Salani: (whispered) Maa?

Mma Salani: You didn't do this. Okay?

Salani just continued to stare at her father. Her mother stepped over the body and walked over to Salani. Salani got startled when she felt her mother's hands on her shoulder.

Mma Salani: Sally wee, I have to call the police. But I don't want you to say anything about this. (looked at her children) None of you can say anything about what happened here. When the

police get in here, all you have to tell them is that you found him lying on the floor when you ran into the house. (Taolo gave her the phone) Do you understand me? Taolo, if the police ask you about what happened, you tell them you found him on the floor when you came in. Okay?

Salome: Is Salani going to jail?

Mma Salani: (frowned) No! I said nobody should say anything about that! I will take care of it. Salani

Advertisement

do you understand me?

Salani: I can't let you go to jail. I did this.

Mma Salani: Salani Moeng, I said you didn't do this! This was an accident! I am going to tell the police that I pushed him. You were not in here when it happened. Now I have to call the police so all of you have to make sure you remember what I said or we will all get into trouble.

She dialed the police while trying her best to act strong for her children. She had failed them their whole lives and she couldn't let one of them get punished for trying to defend her.....

Later that night, some police officers walked around taking pictures of the crime scene while the paramedics bagged the body. Everyone else was outside giving statements.

Police: I need you to tell me everything that happened.

Mma Salani: (wiped her tears) My husband came home drunk as usual. My daughter served him his food and the kids left the house because they are all afraid of him. He didn't like the way Salani served him so he started to beat me. He dragged me out of the chair I was on and pulled my hair. That's when I pushed him and he lost his balance and hit the table.

Officer: (looked at her bruises) Was it the first time this happened? Him beating you?

Mma Salani looked at the police officer and her chest got heavy. She couldn't even remember a time when she wasn't a punching bag. She couldn't remember it at all.

Mma Salani: (emotionally) I have been married for twenty years. He started to beat me after my nineteen year old daughter was born. He wanted a boy.

She covered her mouth and started to cry.

Officer: Okay I need you to go to the clinic so they can make a doctor's report for you. I have to also get statements from your children. You can come with me. I can't question them alone as minors. But you can't say anything while I ask them a question.

Mma Salani looked at her five children. She hoped to God that they would let her do this for them. She had dreamt of this for as long as she could remember. She had hoped that one day he just wouldn't come home and her nightmare would be over. But it never happened. She felt so emotionally crippled that she didn't even know what she was going to do when the sun rose,

but all she knew was that she couldn't let Salani be punished for this.

The police officer walked over and greeted the children. Neighbors were looking in from all around the fence. They all came running when they heard the police car and ambulance. Nobody could resist a good story for morning tea at a neighbor's house. The officer could see the trauma on the children's faces but he had to do his job.

Officer: (to Salome) where were you when this happened?

Salome rubbed her arms while looking at her mother.

Salome: We were outside washing dishes.

Officer: All of you?

Salome: No one likes staying in the house when my father is home. We always go ko Setlaaganeng ha tla. {to the fireplace when he arrives.}

Officer: (To Taolo) You didn't hear the fight?

Taolo: Mama always tells us not to get involved in their fights. We were outside.

Officer: So you heard your father beating your mother and stayed outside?

Taolo: We didn't hear it. We were outside.

Officer: (frowned and turned to Salani) Tell me what happened here tonight.

Salani watched her father's body get wheeled out of the house on a stretcher. She closed her eyes and she could still see the blood.

Officer: I asked a question.

Mma Salani: But haven't they told you everything I have already said?

Officer: The agreement was that you wouldn't say anything akere. Kana this isn't a cut and dry case. We have to thoroughly investigate this. Just because you claim that it was self-defense, it doesn't mean a prosecutor will also see it that way. We will still question your neighbors too. (to Salani) What did you say you saw?

Salani: I... It was.... (took a deep breath) I didn't see anything. I was outside.

Tears fell from her eyes as her mother took a deep breath in relief. The officer took down all their names then they took Mma Salani with them to go to the clinic while the children remained. They all sat outside the house as people cleared away. Some neighbors had come into the yard to ask them what happened. But none of them spoke to them so they gave up and left. Salani, Sesame, Salome, Taolo, and Taelo sat in the fireplace in complete silence as everyone got consumed by the thought of everything that happened.

Sesame: What if mama doesn't come back? What are we going to do?

They all looked at her. All of them except Salani. She could hardly feel anything. She was numb to the world.

Salome: Don't think like that. She will come back. She is the victim here. Everyone in our Kgotla knows that papa was abusive. Even the chief knew. They can't put her in jail. If it was Sally maybe it would be more questionable but mama took the fall. She will come back. I am sure.

They all fell into silence again and watched the fire. Part of their reason for not wanting to go into the house was the blood on the floor. They weren't sure if it had been cleaned up or not, and no one wanted to find out. Just then a voice called out from outside the yard.

Tiro: TIRO! TIRO WEE!

Salome: (sighed) O a bo a tsile. {of course he is here.}

They looked at Salani waiting for her to go and attend to her boyfriend but she didn't move. She just stared at the fire replaying everything in her head.

Tiro: TIROYAONE!

Salome: (shook Salani) Heela motho o a go bitsa. {he is calling you.}

She snapped out of her trance and looked at her sister.

Salani: huh?

Salome: Tiro is calling you.

That's when she heard it. She took a deep breath and went out. She walked out the gate and walked over to the flashlight in the distance. The night suddenly felt chilly and she couldn't help but wonder if it was because the heavens knew she was the

guilty one. Tiro met her halfway and hugged her. It was a little after 10 pm so the moon was very bright.

Tiro: Are you okay? I heard there were police at your house.

Salani: I... I am fine...

Tiro: What happened? Were your parents fighting again? Did she actually allow you to call the police this time?

Salani's eyes shook as tears filled them under the night sky. Tiro could see them well up in her eyes.

Tiro: What happened? Did something happen to your mother?

Salani: I... My father is dead.

Tiro:(shocked) what? What happened?

He hugged her and let her cry. He didn't understand why she was crying because she truly hated her father and had wished death on him more times than he could count.

Salani: (crying) They took my mother to the police station. She told them she is the one who pushed him. She is taking the blame for it.

Tiro: What happened?

Salani: It was me...

She got out of his hold and told him what happened. Tiro looked at her in shock as she told him everything leading up to their statements.

Salani: I am the one who should be in jail. What if she doesn't come back? What is going to happen to my siblings? She is the only one who works.

Tiro: I... (took a deep breath) It was an accident. You don't have to blame yourself.

Salani: (sniffled) Please promise me that you won't tell anyone. Mama says we will all get in trouble if the truth comes out.

Tiro nodded his head and hugged her tightly.

Tiro: Don't blame yourself for this. You are going to be fine. Your mother won't go to jail.

He said all this with his heart pounding in his chest while she cried.....

.

.

[FIVE YEARS LATER]

At The Glow Salon

Salani sat across from the Salon manager. She couldn't understand why she was feeling nervous when this was a rent-a-chair salon. She would finally get to be her own boss in a place where she stood to make money. The foot traffic in the Gaborone West mini-mall was very promising and the salon was just a ten-minute walk from her rented one room. She had tried it both ways before. She had worked in a Salon as an employee for a few months just so she could sharpen her plating skills. With two sisters and a mother, Salani could plait cornrows very well before she moved to the city at the age of twenty. She learned the rest when she worked in a salon. Then two years later, she left the salon and started to work on house-to-house appointments. Traveling from one point of the city to another to her clients was costing her more than it was worth. Which is why when she saw the advert for a vacant chair in a salon, she called in and made an appointment to meet the manager.

Manager: Okay so you say you have some experience?

Salani: Yes. I do. I have five years' worth of experience.

Manager: (smiled) That's good. Even though you will virtually be your own boss, I still have to ensure that we get people who will not bring the reputation of our salon down.

Salani: I understand.

Manager: The rent is P1500 per month.

Salani nodded her head.

Salani: I am fine with that.

Manager: We will start with a one-year contract which we will later review at the end of the year.

She placed a one page long contract in front of Salani. Salani looked at the cover page and she could already see the words parting on the page. She closed her eyes and smiled.

Salani: Is it a standard contract?

Manager: Yes. You can go through it before signing. It's not long. Just a cover page and one page of clauses.

Salani: Ah no it's okay. Let me sign.

She opened the page and looked at the paper. The words wouldn't stay still she picked up the pen and looked at the Manager.

Salani: Please show me where to sign.

The manager gave a confused frown but she quickly smiled not wanting to seem rude. She pointed at the line at the bottom of the page. Salani pinned the pen on the spot and started to sign her name. But the line kept moving and she tried her best to follow it. She gave the paper back and the manager looked at the signature.

Manager: I hope you won't be offended if ask you gore o
heletse kae ko sekolong. {How far you went with school}

Salani: Form five.

Manager: (smiled) okay.

She looked back at the paper and some of the letters in her name were written over some of the typed letters. Then other letters were facing the opposite direction. She had never seen anything like it but she didn't know what to say without offending her.

Manager: (closed the contract) Can I see pictures of your work.

Salani swiped her phone open. Her phone screen was dark with
hued colors. She went to the settings and switched off the color
inversion setting. It made it difficult for her to use her phone
without it, but she knew the manager wouldn't be able to see
anything if she didn't switch it off.

Salani: (gave her the phone) you can check in the gallery under camera.

The manager took the phone and went through the pictures.

Manager: (surprised) Wow! Is this really your work? It is so neat!

Salani: (smiled) Thank you.

Manager: Kana it looks like the pictures we download to advertise. Heh!

Salani: (giggled) That's what my clients always used to say.

Manager: (shook her head) Tota I doubted you when I saw your writing but this! Nnyaa Mma.

Salani: (sighed) I don't know how to write in a way for people to understand. Tota I have an ink pad that I prefer to use of I have

to sign. It's just that it can be embarrassing to tell someone that I don't know how to read and write. Some people have even said that ke ronwa ke go nna ledela ke le montle. {Being dumb doesn't suit me when I am this beautiful.}

The manager looked at her with guilt. She too had judged her based on her looks. She had styled her afro so beautifully and her makeup was immaculate. She was like one of those girls people used to admire for their beauty in school even though they were failing every subject. The kind teachers always called out to have beauty without brains.

Manager: We all have different gifts. You don't have to be ashamed of your limitations.

Salani smiled and took her ink pad out of her bag. Then she pressed her thumb on it.

Salani: Please point your finger in the line for me.

The manager did that then Salani pressed her thumb on the spot.

Salani: Thank you.

She took the money out of her bag and placed it in front of her. Money was easier to handle because she didn't need to look at the numbers. Just the colors helped her identify the note amount.

Salani: Here is my first month's rent.

Manager: Thank you. (wrote her receipt) When do you want to start?

Salani: Is tomorrow fine?

Manager: Of course. You can come at 8 am so I can introduce you to everyone else before we open.

Salani: Okay. Thank you....

.

.

At Salani's house

Salani dropped her bag on her bed and threw herself on the bed. She felt happier than she had felt in a long time. She took her phone and dialed her mother.

Mma Salani: Hello?

Salani: Dumelang.

Mma Salani: how did it go?

Salani: The space was still vacant. I got it.

Mma Salani: I told you akere. I don't know why you always doubt yourself.

Salani took a deep breath and smiled.

Salani: I will start working tomorrow.

Mma Salani: That is good. Heish nna your sister is stressing me. I thought Salome was stressful but now that she has gone to University, I have seen that Sesame is worse. I am just grateful that she is in form 5 and I won't have to deal with her next year. These girls were nothing like you. Ba rata basimane! {they like boys}

Salani giggled thinking about how she successfully hid the fact that she was dating from her parents.

Salani: Ke stage mama. {It's just a stage}. It will pass.

Mma Salani: All I keep praying for is that they won't bring babies before they are done with school. Cleaning people's houses is how I survive. If I now have to stay home taking care of their children

I will not be able to take care of myself and your brothers.

Salani: You don't have to worry about things that haven't happened yet mama.

Mma Salani: Are you eating well?

Salani: (chuckled) I do.

They continued to chat until Mma Salani hung up. By the end of the call, Salani found herself thinking back to the day her father died and the days after. In as much as her mother had taken the fall for everything, her husband's death had affected her greatly. She didn't know what to be if she wasn't his wife. It took her months to be able to sit in the living room again. The grim atmosphere in the house broke their hearts more and it ruined their sibling bond. Salani went from being a chatterbox to sitting in silence while the other siblings did their own thing in pairs. She couldn't help but wonder if everyone blamed her for what happened. She couldn't even begin to imagine what would have happened if the police investigation hadn't ruled the incident as an accident in self-defense. Salani couldn't stay

home any longer and left to work as a shampoo girl in a salon. She avoided going home even though she kept in touch with her mother. The only times she would force herself to go home is during Easter and Christmas. Other than that, she preferred to be in Gaborone where she wasn't reminded of the blood on her hands whenever she looked at their house back home.

.

.

At The Glow Salon

At ten minutes before eight the next day, Salani walked up to the salon and found the doors open. She walked in and found people chatting and laughing. walked up to the salon and found the doors open. She walked in and found people chatting and laughing.

Manager: Oh Salani! You are here already!

Salani: (smiled) Hello.

Manager: Guys this is Salani. She is the one who will be taking the vacant chair. Please welcome her.

She shook hands with everyone and they told her their names. She didn't catch any of the names because thirteen people were telling her their names. It wasn't until the last guy shook her hand. He looked at her so intensely that she felt her insides shift.

Him: (smiled) My name is Mogomotsi.

Her throat got tight all of a sudden as she looked at his thick eyebrows and lashed that were very undeserving of a man's face. She never understood why God would give men long eyelashes then give women short ones. It didn't make sense.

Salani: I am Salani.

Mogomotsi: (still holding her hand) O montle tlhemma. {You are so beautiful}

Woman: Bathong Mogomotsi!

Everyone laughed then he let go of her and continued to look at her with eyes that spoke volumes. Salani felt like she was in a hot freezer. Her feelings didn't make sense to her as the manager showed her to her chair. She had avoided men for four years. After Tiro proved her right and forgot about her when he went to University, she didn't feel the need to let men lie to her anymore. She hadn't allowed herself to be lied to by a man again. Sex was just sex. Relationships on the other hand were things she didn't allow herself to have. And yet here she was, feeling it. Knowing that there was no way she could escape this man if he wanted her.

She took a deep breath and took her combs out of her bag. She lifted her eyes and looked into the mirror where she caught Mogomotsi looking at her through his mirror while he cleaned his clipping machines.

Salani: (took a deep breath) Oh boy....

5

At the Salon

Salani and some of her colleagues sat outside the salon waiting for customers to come. The ladies chatted while Salani listened to them quietly as they went on and on.

Edith: I told you to make your own wigs and sell them. Expensive weaves aren't bought as much as the cheap ones. Not many Batswana can afford to drop 2k for a wig.

Tebo; Exactly! With that 2k I can pay rent and buy combo and meat. Wig? No.

Aone: My stress right now is the wigs I have. There are 4 of them and they are worth 2.5 to 3k each. I spent all my money a motshelo on them.

Tebo: (shook her head) nc nc nc.. You don't fully invest in something you are trying out. Ao le wena.

They had been talking about it for a while and Salani was itching to give her input but she felt like she would seem too forward if she did.

Aone: (took a deep breath) And I have to contribute 1k next week in another motshelo. I don't know what I am going to do because I am so broke.

Salani: (blurted) Why don't you just sell them at cost?

They all looked at her.

Aone: What does that mean?

Salani: I... I mean you can sell them at the amount you spent on buying them and shipping them so that you can at least get your money back. Akere you say they haven't loved for three months?

Aone: Yeah.. But I will lose my profit. What will the use be?

Salani: Well.. Akere if you keep them you still won't have that money. But if you sell them, you can try something else to make money.

Tebo: Mme kana she has a point. (looked at Salani) Who did your hair?

Salani: I did it myself.

Tebo: Ao? How?

Salani: (smiled) Two mirrors.

Edith: (smirked) Mmh.. Gone mme it's nice.

Mogomotsi and his customer walked out of the salon after Mogomotsi gave his locks a touch-up.

Aone: Mme gone Mma your idea might help me. I will advertise
ke re it's a sale.

Salani nodded and tried to take a calm breath so no one could see that the atmosphere had just changed. She could feel his eyes on her but she refused to give in and look at him even though the side of her neck felt like it had been set on fire by his gaze. A lady walked over with a scarf on her head.

Edith: O batla go loga eng sweetie? {What hairstyle do you want to do?}

The woman smiled and walked past her headed straight to Salani.

Her: Hi.

Salani: (smiled) Hello.

Her: You look like someone who will know how to handle my hair. Do you know how to do the same hairstyle you have now?

Salani: Ee Mma. I did it myself.

Her: Wow! Really? Tlhemma ee I want that wena. Kana I struggle with finding a hairdresser who can style natural hair. How much will you charge me for that?

Salani: The hairstyle can only last a week. Two weeks if you really take care of it so I will charge you P50 for it. Then you can come back and get a different one when this one gets ruined. Let's get inside.

They walked into the salon while Mogomotsi shook his head and walked away.

Her: (laughed) Tlhemma wena be serious! Kana I will give you P200 right now knowing that I get styled every week for P50. Kana I don't like high manipulation hairstyles on my hair tota. I

have just been doing it because most hairdressers try to convince me to relax my hair if I talk about styling it.

Salani: (giggled) you can sit over here so I can see what we are dealing with.

She sat and took her head wrap off.

Salani: Okay. Let's give it a wash first then we will towel dry and style. I don't need it to be dry when I style it. Damp is good.

The client walked off to the sinks feeling confident that she was going to leave the salon looking like a million bucks...

Everyone in the salon admired the client's hair as she paid Salani with a big smile on her face.

Her: Heish Mma! Will I even sleep? I want to go all over Gaborone so that I can bump into exes bogolo. I can't waste this.

Salani laughed and put the money in her pocket.

Her: Nnyaa Mma take P20 and get yourself some lunch. This is immaculate.

Salani: Thank you so much.

Her: Let me get your number so I can call you when I come. I don't want to find twenty people here. And I am going to bring you many people. Most of my friends have natural hair.

Salani laughed and spelled out her number. Other clients took her number too and saved it as the lady walked out. Salani walked back out and sat down.

Tebo: Ah Mma you did a really good job.

Aone: Ke gore ke tlhwahale ka di wig. {I better get serious about my wigs} We will lose clients here.

Salani chuckled feeling uncomfortable.

Tebo: Do you have a boyfriend?

Salani: (taken aback) Why do you ask?

Tebo: (laughed) Sorry. Ke gore I can see gore Mogomotsi wants you.

Salani: (looked away) Ah... Sheh...

Tebo: Ah ah... tlhemma my friend doesn't have a girlfriend. Do you have a boyfriend?

Salani: (thinned her eyes) Did he send you?

Tebo: No.

Salani: Okay. He will find out if he wants to know.

Edith gave her a look that she chose to ignore. She took her phone out and uploaded the pictures of the client on her page.

Edith: Mh Mh.... Jaanong what happened to your phone?

Salani: Nothing.

She locked her phone and put it back in her pocket. Another client came up to her and asked if she knew how to plait carrot. She showed her the style she wanted and asked for the charge.

Salani: Do you want the singles to be this long?

Her: Yes.

Salani: Okay. P300.

Her: And can you add a face beat?

Salani: (smiled) Sure. I brought my makeup case. I'll charge you P50 for the face beat.

Her: Great.

They walked in and the three ladies started to feel threatened....

.

.

At Rail Park Mall.

Salani walked around the makeup shop looking for the lighter foundation tone she needed for light-skinned customers.

Salani: (lifted the foundation) How much?

Shop attendant: P85.

Salani walked up to the counter and paid for the foundation.

Just then

Advertisement

she heard a burst of familiar laughter inside the shop. Her heart went straight to her throat and her knees went weak.

Voice: Baby you know that I like this scent better. Choose this one.

Woman: (giggled) But Ty this isn't your perfume kana!

She turned around and looked behind. Then just like that, her heart sank. It really was him. He was wearing a black suit and his haircut was so fresh that it looked like he had just come from the salon. The cashier tried to hand Salani the plastic but her eyes were glued on the good-looking couple at the back of the store.

Cashier: Ma'am, here is your plastic.

Tiro looked up and their eyes locked. He furrowed his brow when he saw someone who looked familiar to him. But no... it couldn't be...

Tiro: (whispered) Salani?

His girlfriend looked at him and followed his gaze.

Her: Huh?

Salani turned around and took the plastic. She started to walk out but her legs were shaking at the thought of their last encounter. One of her feet faced the wrong direction as she took a step so she tripped over it and fell to the floor.....

6

At Rail Park Mall

As soon as Salani touched the floor, she stood up quickly and ran out of the store ignoring the pain she felt in her ankle. Tiro came out of the store and called out to her.

Tiro: Salani!

She took a deep breath and stopped. Then she turned around and looked at him as he walked over to her.

Salani: What?

Tiro: You fell. Are you hurt?

He tried to touch her hand but she folded her arms while people passed by.

Salani: I think you can see that I am fine. I just tripped and fell. That wasn't the first time you've seen me falling akere.

Tiro took a deep breath and stuffed his hands in his pocket as he looked her over and smiled.

Tiro: Wow... you look... what are you doing here?

Salani: In a mall?

Tiro: No. I mean in Gaborone. I haven't seen you in years.

Salani: (rubbed her arms) Four to be specific.

Tiro's girlfriend walked out of the store holding her plastic and found him clearly admiring Salani.

Her: kgmm... babe can we go? I have a deadline.

Tiro: (looked at her) Oh... yeah... babe, this is Salani. She is my... former classmate.

Salani felt gutted so she chuckled and shook the girlfriend's long manicured nails.

Her: Is she the dumb one who doesn't even know how to write her name?

Salani felt like her face had peeled off her skull and fell to the floor. Her throat ached as she started to feel like everyone's eyes were on them and had heard what she had just said. Tiro frowned at his girlfriend and looked at Salani feeling embarrassed.

Tiro: You know I didn't say it like that Kopo.

Her: (rolled her eyes) Well it sounded dumb to me.

Salani felt a hand on her waist and saw Tiro frown. She looked at the hand on her waist and looked up to see its owner. Her

throat instantly dried up as her eyes met with the thick due brows and long eyelashes of the man she had avoided speaking to at the salon.

Mogomotsi: Kante jaanong ne o ntshiela eng baby? {Why did you leave me behind baby?}

Salani's breathing was shallow and deep as she tried to keep herself calm amid all the turmoil that was taking place in her life.

Tiro: And you are?

Mogomotsi: (extended his hand) Mogomotsi wa ga Salani.
(Salani's comforter)

Tiro's girlfriend couldn't keep her eyes off Salani and it irritated her.

Her: Babe can we go?

She took his hand and walked away with him. Tiro glanced back one more time before they turned a corner headed to the parking lot. Salani finally found the strength to step away from Mogomotsi's hold. Mogomotsi stuffed his hands in his pockets and looked at her with his head clocked to one side.

Mogomotsi: Why would you let someone talk to you that way?

Salani: (took a deep breath) Why did you do that? What are you doing here?

Mogomotsi: I am waiting for someone. Didn't you see me seated on the bench?

Salani: No I didn't.

Mogomotsi: I don't blame you. You were too busy falling.

Salani let out a surprised chuckle.

Mogomotsi: (closed one eye) Too soon?

Salani: (pushed his shoulder) Too soon.

They both laughed and looked at each other.

Salani: I have to go.

Mogomotsi: Where do you live?

Salani: G-West

Mogomotsi: Ao? Le nna. Do you mind waiting for me just for a few minutes then we can go together? Are you walking?

Salani: Yes and it's getting late.

Mogomotsi: Don't worry. I will walk you straight home.

Salani: (sighed) Why?

Mogomotsi: Because I am trying to get to know you akere.
Don't you want to get to know me?

Salani: I don't think I do.

Mogomotsi: Okay do it on my behalf ee. Let's work with my
curiosity. Yours will catch up soon enough.

Salani: (chuckled) Wa re who are you waiting for?

Mogomotsi: (pointed) There he is.

He left her and walked up to a guy. They shook hands and he
handed him a plastic before bumping shoulders and parting
ways again.

Mogomotsi: Let's go.

Salani walked beside him as they left the mall.

Mogomotsi: So so you want to tell me more about the amazing hairstylist that has taken over the salon?

Salani: (smiled) Ao Rra.

Mogomotsi: I am telling you. I have never seen anyone have a first day like the one you had in that Salon.

Salani: Ah... It's all God I guess. I prayed that He helps me be the best at what I am good at if I can't be good at everything else.

He smiled at her and nodded his head.

Mogomotsi: Wow... So do you want to tell me who that douche is?

Salani: (shrugged) An ex-boyfriend.

Mogomotsi: Oh... Ehe...

He kept quiet for a minute before he spoke again.

Mogomotsi: So is that your type? Guys in suits?

Salani: (laughed) Not really. We dated from Firm one till we finished firm five. After he came to Gaborone for university, he would avoid seeing me when he visited the village. I would just hear people saying he is around. I finally saw him this one time at the shops and I watched the guy hiding behind shelves just so I don't see him. When I went up to talk to him

Advertisement

he told me that I wasn't his type anymore. (chuckled) So no. Tiro is not my type.

Mogomotsi: Well that's a relief for me then. (Salani looked at him) I mean, I am sorry he treated you that way. But I am probably one of those guys who will only ever wear a suit on his wedding day and I want to be your type nna.

Salani: (blushed) Ah ah...

She looked away as her cheeks started to heat up. Mogomotsi held her hand as they crossed the road. The last time anyone did that was when her mother would hold her hand when she was still young. She felt protected by the hand and her eyes were fixed on it and not the road. He let go of her after they crossed the busy road.

Mogomotsi: Mme hela do you have a boyfriend? I tried investigating and I was told that you said I can ask myself. (chuckled) Tebo almost killed me a re you will think she is nosy just because I asked her for a favor.

Salani: (scoffed) Wena how can you send someone at your age? How old are you even?

Mogomotsi: Twenty Seven. You?

Salani: I will be twenty-four in two weeks.

Mogomotsi: (smiled) Ah o my size ebile wena. {You are perfect for me}

She chuckled and looked away.

Mogomotsi: But you didn't answer my question.

Salani: I don't have a boyfriend. But I am not actually looking for one either.

Mogomotsi: Why?

Salani: Who doesn't know gore mjolo ke scam? I'd rather not repeat foolishness.

Mogomotsi: Ao mma. Will you be single for the rest of your life because of some cheese boy wanna be? People like him don't deserve to be counted as exes. Do you have any children?

Salani: Nope. You?

Mogomotsi: Not yet. I have an older brother who has two baby mamas and a wife. That guy's life is my biggest contraceptive. He drinks a lot because he is always stressed because his baby mamas and his wife don't get along. I want to have a child with a woman I know I will spend my whole life with. I don't want baby mama drama nna. And you? What has stopped you from having a child?

Salani: I haven't had a serious relationship since Tiro. Gape I am not in a hurry to mother children. I feel like I have to achieve a few things before I can become a mother.

Mogomotsi: Things like what?

Salani: (smiled) I want to have my own natural hair products.

Mogomotsi: (surprised) Wow. Such big dreams!

Salani: I know. Sometimes I feel like it will never happen because I can't even-Ah... But I believe that I will do it one day.

They continued to chat until they arrived at the yard Salani stayed in. There were five other rooms in the yard and the landlord had a thing about visitors so they sat on a drain and continued to chat until the sunset.

Mogomotsi: So can I pick you up on my way to work tomorrow?

Salani: Sure. Where do you live?

Mogomotsi: Behind G-West Secondary.

Salani looked at him and laughed. She threw her head back and laughed so loudly that he chuckled.

Mogomotsi: Tlhemma don't laugh at me.

Salani: Nnyaa kana you are basically telling me that you are going to leave your house, pass our workplace, cross over to Maikano to come and pick me up?

Mogomotsi chuckled and rubbed his hair.

Mogomotsi: I would do it even if it meant taking a kombi to go and pick you up just so I can spend more time with you.

She smiled and looked at the ground and the streetlights illuminated everything around them. Mogomotsi put his index finger under her chin and tilted her head to kiss her but Salani looked away and closed her eyes.

Salani: (stood up) Good night Mogomotsi. Thanks for walking me home.

Mogomotsi: (stood up) Are we still in for tomorrow?

Salani: (sighed) It's not necessary. I will find you at work.

She walked through the gate leaving Mogomotsi in a stew of confusion. He thought they were hitting things off so her sudden change didn't make sense to him as he walked home.....

.

When The Bough Breaks



At the Salon

Two weeks later, Salani walked into the salon and her eyes looked for Mogomotsi. When they found him, she smiled without meaning to. She quickly wiped her smile away when he looked up at her.

Salani: (to everyone) Dumelang.

They all greeted her as they got their stations ready. It had been a good two weeks for Salani and she had made more than she had estimated for herself. She had already made enough money for her salon and house rent so whatever mover she made the rest of the month would be for her groceries and other things. She unlocked her locker and took her combs out while the ladies chatted.

As usual, she could feel Mogomotsi's eyes on her. They had already been spending more time than she intended to and she didn't quite know where she wanted the whole thing to go. Trusting a man with her heart had left a bad taste in her mouth. It had taken her so long to fully trust Tiro because she had developed a fear for men. And when she decided to trust him, she trusted him with everything that concerned her life. He was the one person she went to when it got bad at home. Then he went and broke her heart. She had told him over and over that she knew he was going to forget about her. But she only said it so he could work at proving her wrong. She wanted him to be able to remember her words if he had the opportunity to cheat. But instead, he dropped the 'type' bomb on her and that was it. She couldn't see how she could possibly trust a man after that. Even if every other part of her body wanted Mogomotsi to bury himself in her, she wasn't going to let those parts win over her mind. Not this time.

A text notification on her phone popped up. She unlocked her phone and frowned wondering who it was because everyone who knew her knew they had to either call or send a voice note. Because of her inverted screen settings, the letters weren't bouncing around as much as they did on a white screen but it was still illegible because the words looked mirrored. She

sighed and put her phone back in her pocket and went about sterilizing her equipment. Receiving texts frustrated her and she couldn't imagine how many customers she had lost just because she couldn't make out a stupid message. She even had to start telling everyone to call and not text. But there are always those people who don't listen to instructions and do what they want to do.

She could still feel Mogomotsi's glare so she looked at him through the mirror. He walked over to her and stood behind her. Her breath hiked without warning. She closed her eyes feeling embarrassed about the reaction.

Mogomotsi: So o nchapa ka seen ke go lebile hela jaana? {Are you ignoring my message right in front of me?}

Salani looked at his reflection on the mirror. She was afraid she would find herself right under his face if she turned around.

Salani: Ke wena? {So it's you?} Where did you get my number?

Mogomotsi: A man has to make a plan if he wants to make progress in his life.

Salani: (chuckled) Ee mme you didn't progress anywhere because I didn't read it. If you want to talk to me

Advertisement

you either call me or send me a voice note. I have an eye problem.

Mogomotsi: (frowned) What kind of eye problem? I have never seen you wearing glasses. Gape your lines are so sharp when you are doing people's hair.

Salani: Just know that I can't see properly.

All the eyes of their co-workers were on them. Especially the female ones.

Aone: Janang once so we can get over this sexual tension between you two.

Salani turned and looked at her in shock. In her turn, she felt her butt rub against his groin and it sent shock waves through both of them. Salani suddenly choked on her saliva just as she was about to respond to Aone's remark.

Mogomotsi: (rubbed her back) Sorry.

What he didn't realize was that touching her was making things worse for her. She moved away and sat on the chair next to her station.

Edith: Are you dying?

Salani hit her chest and took a deep breath as the coughing stopped.

Salani: Ne ke baletswe ke mathe. {Saliva went down the wrong pipe.}

A customer walked in and went to Mogomotsi.

Her: Hi. You look like you might be the guy I am looking for. My friend described you to me.

Mogomotsi: (smiled) How can I help you?

Her: I want a nice Bob cut.

Mogomotsi smiled and pulled his chair out for her and gave her the price while Salani looked at them through the mirror. She felt annoyed at how the woman seemed to be laughing at everything Mogomotsi was saying. She knew he was funny but he wasn't THAT funny.

Salani: Mxm.

Tebo was in the station next to hers. She chuckled when she saw the look on Salani's face.

Tebo: (lowered her voice) Kana mme he really likes you. He isn't like this with everyone. I have worked with him for five years before we even came to this salon. He is a good guy.

Salani: (looked at her) Did you date him?

Tebo: (chuckled) No. He is just a guy I tell if I find a good spot to make money because I like how hard working he is. His problem is that he always seems to pick the wrong ones. Wena mme I can tell that you have principles. Other women throw themselves at him because of his looks. I have never seen anyone who treats him like you do.

Salani looked at him on the mirror again. He threw his head back laughing which exposed his fang like canines. She loved the shape of his teeth and how thick his lips were too. She could only imagine what they felt like. She looked at the veins on his forearms as they popped up with each movement he made. Her eyes dropped and looked at his butt. It looked so nice and firm in his jeans. She was a butt girl and a good butt on a guy was all she needed. But this man had more. His legs were slightly bowed and she found it so cute. Like most soccer stars legs were. She couldn't help but find herself imagining lots of

things as she looked at his shoe. He looked like he could be a size nine or ten.

Salani took a deep breath and brought herself back to earth when she started to feel the blood rushing straight to her lady parts. Tebo laughed at her.

Salani: What?

Tebo: (shook her head) Nothing.

A woman walked over to Tebo and sat on her chair.

Her: I am right on time. Akere.

Tebo: (chuckled) You are.....

Around lunch time, Salani opened the voice note she had received and held her phone against her ear. She took a deep breath when she heard Mogomotsi's voice. She looked around the salon and saw that he wasn't there.

Mogomotsi: Hi... I am sorry for sending the text. I didn't know you have an eye problem. You didn't tell me. (exhaled) I wish I knew everything there was to know about you because you are honestly all that I think about. Everything changed the day you walked into the salon and I feel like if I don't give us a try, I would be making a mistake that I would live to regret for the rest of my life. You are the kind of person I want to get to know and hopefully build a future with. I know we hardly know each other but these past two weeks have felt like... I don't know Salani. Nna Mma I want you to be mine and I don't see myself giving up until you agree. I am never the one to get attracted to colleagues because I know how complicated it can get. But for you, for you I would risk it. Please think about it and give me a chance. If you agree to it, you can come and join me for lunch by the restaurant. I am waiting for you.

Salani looked around as other people were busy with their work and completely unaware of what was happening in her

life. They didn't know that there was an epic war taking place between her emotions and her brain.

Emotions: Salani you deserve to give yourself a shot at this. Come on. He looks very delicious too.

Brain: Salani do I have to do this again? Okay.. TIROYAONE.

Salani took a deep breath, closed her eyes and stood up.

Aone: (blow drying a client) Are you going to the shops ne Mma? Ke batla Mageu. (I want Mageu)

Salani: No. I am going to the restaurant.

Aone: Oh okay. I will go when I finish here.

Tebo: I don't understand people who drink Mageu when they aren't sick.

Aone: Tsek!

They laughed while Salani took heavy steps towards the restaurant. She couldn't believe what she was about to do and she wished she had the strength to turn back and not turn her life upside down. She was fine being single. She didn't need to do this. Yet with every step she took, her chest filled up and she felt excited. She hadn't felt that way in years.

Seeing the back of his head made her heart skip. She had to remember to walk properly. The last thing she needed was another fall incident. Mogomotsi turned around when he felt her presence. Their eyes locked and then he gave Salani that pearly white smile that had her picturing their future children.

Mogomotsi: (stood up) I can't believe you came.

He hugged her before she responded.

Mogomotsi: (breathing heavily) Thank you so much for coming. I promise that you will never regret this.

Salani: (smiled) Can you feed me first before you make such declarations.

Mogomotsi chuckled and pulled a seat out for her.

Mogomotsi: What do you want to eat?

Salani: I tasted bogobe jwa lerotse maloba and I lie how they make it. You can get that with beef stew.

Mogomotsi: (smiled) okay. Please don't move. I am coming.

She giggled and nodded her head. She watched him as he stood in line. She found herself admiring his broad shoulders all of a sudden. He came back a few minutes later holding their food.

Mogomotsi: Here you go.

Salani: Thank you.

They started to eat while they chatted about everything and nothing until they were done eating. Mogomotsi bought drinks from the lady selling outside as they walked back to the salon.

Salani: Why didn't you just buy it in the restaurant while we were eating?

Mogomotsi: She also has to make some money. We are all hustling out here. How will she feed her family if I give all my money to the one who has already made it?

Salani smiled and nodded her head.

Salani: I like that.

They walked into the salon and their smiles spoke volumes.....

.

At Mogomotsi's house

Later that same week, Mogomotsi opened the gate so Salani could walk through. The two were excited to spend their first night together. Mogomotsi unlocked the door and stepped into the house.

Mogomotsi: Come in.

She walked into the spacious one room and she smiled. There were artificial rose petals on the floor and he had put pillows on the floor with some covered plates next to the pillows.

Salani: Wow... you did this?

He chuckled and sat on a pillow. Then he extended his hand and helped her down.

Mogomotsi: I just wanted to do something nice for you. I hope you like it. I am not romantic but I would like to learn so I can make you smile.

Salani blushed and leaned against the bed.

Salani: I like it a lot.

Mogomotsi leaned over and kissed her. She closed her eyes and took it in as her body came alive. She moaned into his mouth as he held her neck and deepened the kiss. Just as Salani was sinking deeper into the emotions she was feeling, Mogomotsi softly bit her lower lip and pulled slightly before releasing it. As her lips closed, she opened her heavy eyes and looked at him. Mogomotsi winked at her then he took the remote of the television and switched it on.

Mogomotsi: I got us some movies. (gave her the remote) You can choose what you like. I tried to add a variety so you can find something you would like.

Salani took the remote and looked at the screen. She closed her eyes and returned the remote.

Salani: You can choose.

Mogomotsi: Ao mma. I want you to choose.

Salani: I can't. Just pick the one you want and I will watch it.

Mogomotsi: (frowned) Ao mma. I am trying to be nice. Just pick a movie.

Salani: (snapped) How many times do I have to tell you that I have an eye problem? What? Do you want to call me dumb just because I can't read? Huh?

Mogomotsi: (raised his arms) Woah, calm down. I am not fighting with you. I was Judy trying to let you choose.

Salani felt tears burning her eyes. She looked away and took deep breaths trying to calm herself.

Mogomotsi: (touched her arm) Hey baby... I am sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. Come here.

He pulled her over and hugged her.

Mogomotsi: I am sorry. Let me just scroll through and we can choose together. Hmm? Sorry tlhemma.

Salani: (sighed) Ah.. I am not really in the mood for it anymore.

Mogomotsi: Ah ah..

Salani: I think I should just go home.

She tried to stand up then Mogomotsi held her hand.

Mogomotsi: Ao babe come on. Don't do that. I have apologized. I prepared all this for you and we can't let our plans fail just because of a movie choice. Look. We don't even have to watch a movie. I will just play music. Come.

She sat back on the pillow and looked at the rose petals in front of her while he chose music to play. He picked Rod Stewart's have I told you. He lowered the volume so it played softly in the background. He smiled and stood up as an idea popped up in his head. He took her hand and walked towards the door where there would be enough space for them to dance.

Mogomotsi: A re etse di movie motho wame. {Let's act like they do in the movies}

He held her waist and put her hand on his shoulder. They began to move from side to side along to the beat. Salani found herself smiling as Rod Stewart serenaded them.

♪♪ Have I told you lately that I love you

Have I told you there's no one else above you

You fill my heart with gladness

Take away all my sadness

Ease my troubles, that's what you do 🎵🎵

He spun her out so he could spin her back in and dip her but she lost her balance when she reached the bed. She fell over and screamed in laughter as she landed on the bed.

Mogomotsi: (laughed) I need to get a bigger house. What is this?

They both laughed then he tried to pull her back up so they could continue their dance but she pulled him on the bed and but her lip while looking at his lips. He gave her a side smile and climbed over her. He started to kiss her softly. Salani felt her body come alive again. They had never kissed in this position before. It felt different. It felt more exciting and she ached to pull his clothes off. But she had to act like a lady. She had already been too forward by pulling him onto the bed.

As Mogomotsi's kisses got deeper, his hands started to roam down her body while Bon Jovi's Bed of roses played in the background. He started to unbutton her shirt while her hand went inside his t-shirt and up the broad back she had always admired. Mogomotsi kissed her neck tracing down her collar bone and down to her chest. He kissed the small mounds of her breasts and the soft kisses brought a deep ache for more as Salani squirmed under him. He lifted himself up then pinched the back of tshirt and pulled it off. Salani gapsed when she saw the feint abs that graced his stomach. Then there was the finisher

the sex lines that pointed to what she hoped would be a piece of heaven. She bit her lip and watched him descend back over her. He pushed her bra cups off and exposed her brown nipples. He lowered his head and #EXPLICIT.....

Heaving and panting, Mogomotsi pulled his d**k out and walked towards his shower bucket in the corner of the room with the tip of the condom hanging from the weight of the sperm. He tied the condom then he threw it in the bucket. Salani sat up and looked around the room like she hadn't spent an hour in it already. Mogomotsi came back with a wet towel and tried to wipe her. Salani closed her legs and shook her head.

Mogomotsi: (confused) Don't you want to wipe?

Salani: (got out of bed) I don't know how many girls you have wiped with that towel.

She bent over and took her towel from her overnight bag and took her own wash towel. She put her face towel back in her bag and went over to the bucket. She washed herself while he watched her.

Salani: (looked at his hardening shaft) Ae Mo.. Ao..

She laughed and wiped herself.

Mogomotsi: (covered it with his hand) Sorry. Bra e le ene ha a reetse baby. {He has a mind of his own}. I didn't tell him to do that.

She laughed then took the t-shirt he was wearing and wore it. Mogomotsi pulled boxer breefs on and they sat on the pillows in front of the TV again.

Mogomotsi: The food must be cold now. I wanted to feed you first before we eat each other.

Salani: (laughed) WA re before we what?

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) Re ne re jana akere. {We f**ked each other}

She rolled her eyes and laughed before taking a bite out of the grilled chicken.

Salani: I hope you don't spend all your money on takeaways Mo.

Mogomotsi: (rubbed her thigh) First let me say, it tickles me when you call me Mo. Go monate gore. Ke yone d*ck? {It sounds nice. Is it because of the d*ck?}

Salani: (giggled) I have been wanting to call you that but I was shy. Akere jaaning I have seen you naked. Ha ke go tshabe jaanong. {I am not afraid of you anymore.}

He laughed and started to eat.

Mogomotsi: To answer your question, no. I don't eat like this everyday. I am just trying to impress you. I am building in Gabane so I can't waste money on food. If you weren't here, I would be eating bread and tinned beef.

Salani: (impressed) Wow o a aga? {Wow,! You are building} At your age?

Mogomotsi: (shrugged) As much as I hated my father, he taught us the importance of building a house before you get married. That way when you do get married, you don't take someone's child to a rented house. He gave me and my two brothers pieces of land before he died. My oldest brother has one in Kumakwane then me and my youngest are in Gabane.

Salani: Nice. (thoughtfully) Why did you say you hated your father?

Mogomotsi: (deep breath) he is just a man I never want to become.

Salani saw the look on his face change from joy to deep sorrow. He looked the way she felt whenever she thought about her own father.

Mogomotsi: My father was very abusive. I hated him my whole life until his dying day.

Salani: I.. I am sorry.

Mogomotsi: (shrugged) It doesn't matter. He has been dead for years.

Salani: how... umm.. How did he die?

Mogomotsi: He had a stroke.

Salani: oh... okay..

She found herself thinking about her own father and how he died. She found herself wishing he had died from a stroke. Maybe then it would be easier for her to talk about her own trauma. But she had sworn to herself that she would never tell anyone else about her father's death. That was a secret she had trusted Tiro with and she prayed he never said anything to anyone about it.

Salani: What about you? Have you ever beaten a woman?

Mogomotsi: (shook his head) I would never do that. I would rather walk away if I get angry. I don't want to become a monster. I don't want my children cursing me the way we cursed our father day in and day out. We were boys but we were all paralyzed by fear when it came to him. I don't want my sons feeling like failures the way we did.

Salani felt emotional as she remembered feeling the exact same way about her own father. But taking matters in her own hands didn't give her the satisfaction she thought it would. Instead it left her with a vet deep scar.

Salani: We just have to remember that we aren't our parents. That's all we have to remember. You are not your father and I am not my mother. We don't make the same decisions as them. Akere?

He looked at her and smiled. Then he kissed the top of her head and took the remote.

Mogomotsi: Thanks babe. Now you can't complain because you said I should choose a movie. We are watching A quiet place.

Salani: (frowned) Ke action?

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) nope. Horror.

Salani: Mo! It's already dark outside.

Mogomotsi: (laughed) You told Mr to choose. I want you to scream and jump onto my lap so I can get round two akere.

Salani: (laughed) Ke tshogile bathong? {Even though I will be scared?}

Mogomotsi: kuku ha e nke e tshoga motho wame. {A p*ssy sdoesnt get scared}

Salani laughed as he clicked play. She felt her stomach tense up as the movie started. The anticipation of knowing she would be scared at any moment left her completely uneasy as they finished their food.

Salani: Heish I am so scared.

Mogomotsi chuckled and kissed her cheek.

[TWO YEARS LATER]

At Mma Mo's house

The men sat at the kgotla talking about how the day went and what was coming. Mogomotsi sat quietly and looked at the men. He couldn't believe that he was waiting for his wife to be brought to him. It felt like he hadn't seen her in weeks.

Uncle: (looked at his watch) They will be here any minute. Let's go in the yard and talk to this young man.

.

.

At the neighbors house

Salani's family were all accommodated a few houses away from Mma Mo's house when they arrived from their home village the previous night. The drive was a long and tiring one after the wedding celebration but this had to be done.

Salani looked at the women in her family and tried to keep her emotions at bay as they all shared parting words with her. They made it sound like they would never see her again and it scared her.

Aunt: When we get there, his mother is going to remove mogagolwane wa rona {the shawl we gave you} And she will give you theirs. You will see that even the colors are different. You will become her daughter and that's the one you wear whenever you attend weddings at their home unless there is a set theme.

Aunt 2: You have to remember that you are no longer Salani Moeng. You are now Mrs Salani Mogomotsi. I like the fact that he has even given you his name and not his forefather's name. Respect that name and carry it with pride. You are now someone's wife.

Aunt 3: That child you are carrying is a symbol of your love for each other. Don't forget that love even when it gets tough. These days people tend to mock marriage and say people are struggling in their marriages. But the reality is that even single people have it hard. There is no relationship that I'd smooth.

You will face so many ups and downs and I have to tell you that the first two years are usually the worst! This is when you now see what exactly you have married. It's up to you to decide if it's worth it or not.

Aunt 4: That's true. You don't know the man you are married because he has been campaigning all along. You are now going to see the true Mogomotsi Moetsi. And he will be seeing the real you akere you are now Mrs. But if you can make it past the next two years my girl, you will enjoy your marriage. You can date a man for ten years before he marries you and I guarantee you that you will only see the real him when you are his wife.

Elderly woman: Ngwanaka, monna o a jeswa. {A man needs to be well fed.} Feed his stomach and his manhood. Men are not difficult beings. That's all they think about. Even if he is stressed, he still has that in his head. Never talk about serious things when you are standing up or in the car. Serious matters are discussed in bed while you are trying to catch your breath. That is how you avoid unnecessary conflict with a man. Feed him and you will have him wrapped around your pinky. And the most important thing is trust. Your husband needs go be able to trust you. That shawl you are wearing is a shield. It is a symbol of your duties as a wife. What happens in your house stays in

your house. You don't run and tell your mother if you and your husband have an argument. Dikuku di monate ngwanaka. Mme lenyalo le boima.

Mma Salani sat up straight and cleared her throat.

Mma Salani: My girl, I am very proud of you for the step you have chosen to take in your life. You are the one I was most worried about but you have grown up my girl and I am so proud of the woman you have become. Please go and respect that woman's house. Don't let it be said that I didn't raise you well. Like you heard, I am no longer your mother. I have given you to the Moetsi's and I pray that you never face the kind of challenges that require intervention. But if you do, remember that you have to take all your pleas to your mother in law. If you come to me

Advertisement

know that I will not forgive your husband for even raising his voice at you. Come to us only if you see that you are not getting any help from his mother and uncles.

Salani wiped her tears and listened as they spoke one after the other.....

.

.

At Mma Mo's house

The gate opened and a long train of women in ditjale walked in carrying different parcels on their heads while they sang

♪♪ Heela Matsale (Mother-in-law) '

Heela Matsale, tlogela dipitsa tseo, (Mother-in-law, please leave

those pots)

Mongwa tsone, Ke yo o etla. (The owner O(the pots has come!))♪♪

Salani was among them mat Jing their step even though she felt on the spot. She could hardly keep her face up long enough to see where Mogomotsi was seating. They stopped in front of the

Moetsi's and sat on the sack mats that were laid out for them on the opposite side of the groom's family.

Salani's Aunt: We have been sent by the Moeng's to bring their daughter to your home.

Aunt 2: Her uncle asked us to tell you that she is still a child so please correct her accordingly. But if you no longer want her, please return her to us the way we have brought her.

They said their goodbyes and left. Salani looked around at the men and women whom she had mostly met during the wedding process. She was surrounded by strangers who were supposedly her family. Just as she was about to get saddened by the thought, she saw the smile that had roped her into all this. Mogomotsi gave her an amazing smile as he walked over to her. She was his and he was hers. Just like that. Permanently too...

At Salani's house

A week later, Salani and Mogomotsi got out of the taxi and took their bags.

Mogomotsi: Baby you are carrying precious cargo. You really shouldn't be doing anything at all.

Salani: (chuckled) I am pregnant Mo, not disabled. (noticed her brother in laws car) What's Mothusi's car doing here?

Mogomotsi: He just needed to park it here.

They walked into the house and went on to their bedroom. Mogomotsi ran ahead of Salani and stood in front of the door.

Mogomotsi: Wait! Mrs Mo wait!

Salani: (startled) What? What is it?!

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) Wait! Put that bag down and go back to the living room. I will call you.

Salani smiled suspiciously and set the bag against the wall. She went to the kitchen to drink some water while Mogomotsi did whatever it was he was doing. She felt her baby kick and she smiled. Five months pregnant and living in a house she helped to finish.

Mogomotsi: Mrs Mo! Come!

Salani chuckled and walked back to the bedroom. She walked in and found Mogomotsi wearing a t-shirt printed paka di beke. {pack your bags}. Salani frowned and looked at the bed. It had another t-shirt with the same print but Salani couldn't quite make it out.

Mogomotsi: it says Paka dibeke motho wame.

Mogomotsi pressed play on his phone and Queen Jenny's Honeymoon started to play. Mogomotsi smiled and started

dancing his way to the closet while Salani laughed still unsure of what was going on. He came back holding a brochure of Goo Moremi Gorge. Salani took the brochure and frowned trying to read. She looked at the pictures and saw how beautiful it looked.

Mogomotsi: (paused the song) The reason I insisted that we leave Kumakwane early in the morning is because we are driving to Tswapong for our honeymoon. (held her waist) We are going to spend the weekend there and have fun re le two before we have to get back to real life.

Salani looked at him and smiled emotionally.

Salani: Is that why Mothusi's car is here?

Mogomotsi: (nodded) I took it so we can travel easier..

Salani hugged him and kissed him.

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) You will give me some more when we arrive. Let's pack up and go. Leave the old people's clothes and take honeymoon clothes.

Salani giggled and unzipped her bag. Mogomotsi pressed play and continued to dance. Salani laughed as he danced and threw things into his bag.

Salani: Paka sentle Mogomotsi! {Pack your clothes properly}

Mogomotsi: (singing and dancing) Paka dibeke re ya honeymoon! Motho waaka paka di beke re ya honeymoon

Salani rolled her eyes and continued to pack up.

On the road

Salani laughed when Mogomotsi repeated the honeymoon song for the umpteenth time.

Salani: (changed the song) Ae rra. Nna I am even tired. From Gabane to Dibete bathong? Ae baby.

Mo: Why are you jealous kante? Kana eblie I want to park the car so we can dance properly.

Salani: (laughed) Mo I could hardly dance at our wedding and you now want me to dance in the middle of the road?

Her phone started to ring as her boss called her.

Salani: It's Maggie. Reduce the volume.

Mogomotsi reduced the volume while she answered the call.

Salani: Hello

Maggie: Ao Salani. How is the newly Wed life treating you?

Salani: (smiled) So far so good. Thank yo so much for coming to the wedding.

Maggie: You are welcome. Akere you will be at work on Monday?

Salani: Ee Mma.

Maggie: Okay. I hope you don't think I am overstepping my mark or anything but tota nna I have been concerned about you since the day we met. It broke my heart to watch you struggling to sign your marriage certificate maloba and I spoke to my brother about you. He is a teacher. I was asking him how

it's possible for you to be struggling the way you are and he said something interesting and I was hoping you could meet him when you get back to work.

Tears welled up in her eyes as she thought about her wedding day. Mogomotsi had filled her names out for her and she had been so determined to sign and not use the ink stamp and have her illiteracy caught on camera. She looked at Mogomotsi who had no idea what was happening as he bopped his head to the beat of the song playing.

Salani: Okay.. Did.. Ummm... sorry. I am just a little emotional right now. Did he say anything?

Maggie: He says it might be something called dyslexia. Tota I was just excited when he said he has an idea. I didn't hear what he said. Hang on and talk to him.

Salani: Okay.

Salani heard some shuffling in the background before Maggie's brother spoke to her.

Him: Dumelang.

Salani: Ee rra

Him: My name is Reggie. I thought we would talk face to face but my sister is a very bossy person.

Salani chuckled. She couldn't disagree with him on that.

Reggie: So are you able to talk now or?

Salani: (quickly) No please. Its okay. We can talk.

Mogomotsi glanced at her then focused back on the road.

Reggie: Okay. What do you see when you read?

Salani: ah.. When I try to read something written on a white, the words split and I can't make sense of the words. Sometimes they move around. Then if I read something that has a dark background, the words mirror themselves. Like the letters face the opposite direction. It made it very hard for me in school. The only reason why I even got to senior was because many people had failed in our year because our teachers went on strike. Otherwise I wouldn't have made it. I understand very well when I am taught and I can explain concepts fluently. But writing is just...

At the point Mogomotsi had switched the radio off because of the seriousness of the conversation and he had signaled Salani to put the home on speaker.

Reggie: Okay. I am not an expert or anything but I have dealt with students with learning disabilities. You will have to get a proper exam from a professional mme hela I think you might have dyslexia. It's unfortunate because there are many people who have different learning disabilities and they are automatically called dumb even though they are actually intelligent. There is a way that dyslexic students are taught and

tested. Your teachers should have at least picked up the fact that you understand what you are leqrining but can't put t in writing. We help students like that by reading questions out to them then they give us the answer and we write it out for them. That's just one way of helping. But there are teachers who are trained to teach students with disabilities.

Salani felt her chest grow tight as she listened to a mna whose face she didn't even know tell her that her life could have been completely different if someone just picked it up early on her life.

Salani: Nna I grew up in the village. My mother just assumed that I was bewitched as her first born because the rest of my siblings are intelligent. I was the only onewho was failing.

Reggie: I am sorry you went through that. But it's never too late to get help for your condition. The first thing will be to actually get tested. I will introduce you to a teacher we have worked with.

Salani's mouth trembled and she looked out the window. Mogomotsi squeezed her thigh while he held the steering wheel with one hand.

Salani: Thank you so much. I don't even know what to say. I have carried this shame for so many years and I thought I would die illiterate. If I am dyslexic and I can be helped, I would... (sniffled) Thank you for giving me hope. Please tell Maggie that I want God to bless her for me. I didn't know that she cared about me to this extent.

Reggie: (chuckled) I will let her know. She is shouting at one of her children somewhere. Her in touch with me when you want to meet and I will talk to my friend.

Salani: Okay. Tanki tlherra. I don't even know what to say.

Reggie: The pleasure is all mine.

Salani hung up and covered her face as a dam of emotions broke and she found herself sobbing.

Mogomotsi: Ao baby don't cry like that. You are breaking my heart.

Salani: You don't understand Mo.. I have loved my whole life thinking that I am as dumb as a rock and now to hear that I might have a condition, that I could get help, (shook her head) I gave up on ever counting myself as knowledgeable. I have big dreams but I can't do anything if I can't make words out.

Maggie was telling me how she can help me sell my hair concoctions but I had to work on their shelf life. How when I can't read?

She covered her mouth and cried. Mogomotsi saw a rest stop a few meters away from them so he slowed down and got ready to stop. He parked the car under the tree and unbuckled their seat belts.

Mogomotsi: (hugged her) Come here. You don't have to cry like that. I am sorry you have struggled for so long and I have always wished I could help you but I had no idea how I can do it outside of writing for you or reading things out to you. I am so relieved that you can finally give this problem a name and

overcome it. You have achieved more than many in your position wouldnt have been able to. Yes you struggle to read but you work so hard at what you are good at that you have to have a phone for clients and your personal phone. Do you know how levels that is Mrs Mo? You are becoming a brand. This hasn't stopped you from becoming something. You are a fighter my love. tats what I love about you. You are going to come out of this even stronger. You know that right?

Salani nodded her head and wiped her tears.

Mogomotsi: (kissed her lips) I love you Mrs Mo.

Salani: I love you more Mo.

Mogomotsi's eyes curved and he started to laugh.

Salani: (rolled her eyes) Mxm. Soka!

He threw his head back and laughed. He always found it hilarious when she added 'more' in front of 'Mo'

Salani: Start the car rra. I want to swim before we have dinner.

Mogomotsi started the car and joined the road.

Mogomotsi: Nna I asked if you now how to swim hela first of all. Imagine hela week one of marriage and my wife drowns! What will I say to your mother? Gape do pregnant women swim Salani?

Salani: (Laughed) Your problem is that you don't know how to swim. Don't worry. You will watch me swim while you pretend to read a newspaper like old men.

Mogomotsi shoved her and chuckled before accelerating his speed.....

At the Lodge

Salani: Wow!

Mogomotsi and Salani walked up the stairs of the elevated lodge and it was breath taking.

Mogomotsi: Ntlha ha le a re Isa ko Kgosing Pele? {How come you didn't take us to the chief first?} I heard that you can't come to Goo More I and walk around without being presented to the ancestors of this land.

Salani looked at him wide eyed. She had never heard this before.

Guide: It's not as strict as it used to be.

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) I heard this other guy tried to go and pray on those hills and he almost died. Badimo ba lona ha ba na di break.

Salani smacked his butt and laughed as they were shown to their room. Upon entering the room, Salani could see a hot tub and she lost her mind.

Salani: Oh.... My..... God....

She ran to the sliding door of the balcony and slid it open.

Salani: Baby! Oh my God!

She could see the greenery and the view of the hills from their balcony. Mogomotsi shook the guide's hand and went over to Salani and smiled.

Mogomotsi: Amazing isn't?

Salani turned around and kissed him. Kissing him on a balcony made her feel horny and excited so she tried to undo his belt.

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) Wait. Let's go and eat first then you can come and eat me. My baby is hungry. You haven't eaten anything solid all day.

Salani: (scoffed) I am horny and you are telling me about your baby?

He chuckled as she walked out of the room.....

Later that evening, the couple walked back into the room. Salani had noticed that Mogomotsi's mood had changed and she couldn't understand why.

Salani: What's wrong?

Mogomotsi: Nothing.

He went into the bathroom and left her in her confused state. There was nothing more annoying to her than a grown person who was clearly upset claiming that they were fine. She could

see that he wasn't happy so all he had to do was tell her what was wrong.

She sighed and took her phone out of her pocket. She found a voice note from an unknown number. She sat in the bed and listened to it.

Reggie: Hi. Ke Reggie. This is my number. Please let me know when you want to meet my friend. My sister will kill me if I don't see to it that you get the help you need. You can save my number.

Mogomotsi walked out of the bathroom and found her smiling.

Salani: (recorded a voice note) Hi Reggie. Thank you so much for getting in touch with me. I will definitely save your number. Tota it's just that I am not in Gaborone right now. If I was, I would ask to meet tomorrow. So we can make it Monday when you knock off it you don't mind.. (thoughtfully) OH kana schools are closed. So you can let me know which day works for you.

She closed her phone with a big smile on her face.

Mogomotsi: Ka re o tsikitliwa le Nanna gompieno. {Men are amusing you today} Whsy us your problem?

Salani: (shocked) Ah ah... where is that coming from?

Mogomotsi chuckled while glaring at her through the mirror.

Mogomotsi: So you want to tell me that you think I am stupid?

Salani: (held her chest) Babe I am so confused right now. What in earth did I do?

Mogomotsi: I have eyes Salani. How could I miss you flirting with the man next to our table right in front of me? Ke gore I save for months to marry you and bring you here and the thanks I get ke you laughing and blushing with waiters? Week one of marriage Salani?

Salani: (pointed at herself) Me? Flirting? Mo I didn't flirt with him.

Mogomotsi: (closed his eyes) Salani you are my wife. I expect you to carry yourself like a wife. What kind of wife flirts with men in front of her husband? Ke gore this is probably why you insisted on leaving the G-West salon to go to Game City. You wanted to start your nonsense properly akere?

Salani looked at him as he went on and on. She tried to think about what she did that made him think tmshe was flirting with a man old enough to 8her father.

Salani: Mo please sit down so we can talk properly. I would never ever flirt with another man. Ebile in front of you babe? Ao rra?

Mogomotsi: (turned and looked at her) Aren't you the one who was blushing when he said you looked beautiful?

Salani's eyes widened. That was something that had happened while he had gone to the toilet.

Mogomotsi: Ee.. I heard you two. You giggled and blushed like you were ready to surrender yourself to him. Is this what you are? (frowned) Huh?

Salani: (chuckled) Mogomotsi Moeng, can I tell you this, I am not going to do this with you. I will not have a back and forth with you over something that meant nothing. I didn't flirt. I just don't get used to getting compliments from people. Am I wrong to smile? Please don't bring me here to come and bore me.
ljakg

She stood up and went to the balcony feeling infuriated.....

.

At Goo Moremi

Salani looked up at the night sky and took a deep breath.
Mogomotsi walked over and stood next to her.

Mogomotsi: I am sorry. I shouldn't have snapped at you like that. I don't know why I acted like that. (took a deep breath)
You are just so beautiful that I sometimes wish I was the only one who could see it. You walk into a room and all eyes are on you. It's a lot to take in when the person getting that kind of attention is your wife.

Salani: So what do you expect me to do? Scar my face so I am less attractive?

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) I know it's all the same but your makeup also adds to the attention. Maybe if you were more natural, you wouldn't get as much attention as you do.

Salani: (frowned) But I love doing my makeup. My face is how I market my business.

Mogomotsi: (smiled) I am just saying. I am sorry. I am not saying you shouldn't wear makeup. I am just saying that I wish you didn't get the attention that you get.

Salani: And I can't help you with that.

She walked back into the room and went to the bathroom. She stood in front of the mirror and looked at herself. She couldn't seem to calm her racing heart. She ran the tap and took her face wash and slathered the soap on her face. Mogomotsi knocked on the door and came in while she was bent over the sink washing the soap off her face.

Mogomotsi: Lani I am sorry. You know that I am not the controlling type. I just lost my cool and let that idiot affect me. This is our honeymoon. We have only been married for a week and I am sorry for spoiling our weekend with this nonsense. (rubbed her butt) Please forgive me.

Salani wiped her face and looked at him.

Salani : Mogomotsi, I love you. But I will not be bullied into being the person you want me to be. Not by you or anyone. I worked hard to get to where I am now and it took a lot to get here. What do you want me to do when you act the way you just did?

Mogomotsi: I am not a bully babe. I am sorry. I will never do that again. I promise.

Salani hung her face towel and lotioned her face.

Mogomotsi: (held her waist) Mrs Mo, I am sorry for ruining this night for us. I just lost my temper a bit. I will never do it again.

Salani sighed and looked at him.

Salani: If you lose your temper like that again, I will walk away. I am not afraid to be a single mother. I am bit the type of person to take abuse of any kind.

Mogomotsi: (rubbed her small bump) I would sooner die than become an abuser. You know that. Now, (kissed her) Ngalologa ke batla parcel yame.

Salani tried not to smile but and she chuckled.

Salani: mxm

Mogomotsi smiled and kissed her neck. He rubbed her butt and kissed her lips.

Salani: mmh

She wrapped her arms around his neck and deepened the kiss. Mogomotsi lifted her onto the counter of the sink and got between her legs. She wrapped her legs around his waist and their kiss got more frantic as they started undressing each other in a haste. Filled with passion, Mogomotsi held his shaft at her opening and looked into her hungry eyes.

Mogomotsi: I love you Lani.

Salani: I lov-

She sucked air in as his shaft slid into her without warning. The sensation traveled down her legs and she threw her head back with her arms holding onto his neck. Mogomotsi began to move in and out of her enjoy all of her as they made love.....

.

.

At Reggie's house

On Monday morning

Advertisement

Salani went to work where her boss was waiting for her. They drove to her brother's house and the whole way there, Salani felt nervous. She couldn't believe that she was about to hear more about her possible diagnosis. They arrived at Reggie's house and Maggie knocked once and entered.

Toddlers ran around the house screaming while a woman wiped furniture like they didn't exist.

Maggie: (laughed) Ao Sonia, ke gore you are no longer moved by your children's screaming?

Her: (stood up) Will I live long if I fight every battle with these children? I will die young my sister. Gape nna ke mokwerekwere kana. {I am a foreigner} If I beat Batswana children, I will probably lose my permit.

Maggie laughed and showed Salani to the couch.

Maggie: Salani, this is Sihle. She is my brother's Zimbabwean wife who never neglects to tell people that she is a foreigner even though she speaks better setswana than I do.

Sihle walked over and shook Salani's hand.

Sihle: How are you?

Salani: (smiled) I am fine thank you and how are you?

Sihle: I am perfect. Let me call Reggie. He told me he was expecting you.

She walked away and Salani's eyes were glued to her thick curly afro. The hair was so black, long and thick that her hands itched just so she could run her hands through it and style her.

Maggie: She has beautiful hair doesn't she?

Salani: (embarrassed) Was I staring too much?

Maggie: (chuckled) I don't blame you. Even their children have her hair. It's very rich. Yours is also very good. I don't know why God didn't give me that kind of hair tota. Nna puff yame ke monwana. {my puff is small in size.}

Salani: (smiled) That's why God gave us wigs.

Maggie laughed and pat her Wig

Maggie: No greater truth.

Reggie and Sihle walked back into the living room laughing about something only known to them.

Maggie: Reginald

Reggie: Magdeline

He shook Salani's hand and sat in his chair across them.

Sihle: Let me get you something. I baked your favorite this morning Maggs.

Maggie: (smiled) That's why you are my favorite sister in law.

Sihle: Owai! O bua o mpona? I will ask Katlego.

Maggie laughed while she walked away.

Reggie: Yes Maggie.

Maggie: Regg, this is Salani. You spoke to her in the hone and I wanted to bring her so you can see her face to face.

Reggie leaned against his couch and rested his elbows on the arm rests and put his fingers over his mouth.

Reggie: Okay. How are you?

Salani: I am fine. Thank you for agreeing to meet me.

Reggie: No deed to thank me until we actually get you help. I asked the friend I told you about to come over. She had some tests that she can run on you so she said she can come here so

we don't go from place to place. I think she will be here any minute now.

Salani: (exhaled) okay.

Reggie: I am just hoping that you can get diagnosed so that you can get help. There are techniques used to help you better understand what you are reading.

Salani: Thank you so much. I know you say I shouldn't thank you yet but I can't help it. Thank you.....

.

.

At Salani's house

Later that day, Salani arrived home and found her husband seated outside the house and shaving his beard. He stood up and got into the house.

Salani: Hi babe.

Mogomotsi: You weren't at the salon today. I tried calling you on your phone and you didn't answer my calls. Then I called the salon and they said you didn't come to work.

Salani: Baby did you forget that I was meeting bo Reggie today? I had put my phone on silent.

Mogomotsi: Who is he? The president? Ele gore you can't answer calls when you are with him?

Salani: But I tried calling you when I was done and you didn't answer my calls.

Mogomotsi: So wena when you call I have to jump and answer? Are you my boss?

Salani: (frowned) Naare Mogomotsi are you having a stroke?

She had hardly finished her sentence before her cheek turned hot from a backhand slap. She grabbed her cheek and she heard ringing in her ears while Mogomotsi breathed heavily while trying to calm himself.

12

At Salani's house

As soon as the slap landed on her cheek, Salani felt something break inside her. She couldn't begin to believe that she had just been slapped by her husband. She felt the walls around her shatter and she felt naked. The shock couldn't let a tear fall to relieve her pain. Upon realizing what he had just done, Mogomotsi threw his hands over his head with regret and closed his eyes.

Mogomotsi: I am so sorry.

Salani felt her whole body tremble and she sank onto the sofa as her childhood flashed before her eyes. Mogomotsi kneeled in front of her with tears in his eyes.

Mogomotsi: Mrs Mo, I am sorry. I swear I didn't mean to do this to you. You know me. This isn't me. You know I would never hurt you.

Salani stood up and walked past him heading to the bedroom. Mogomotsi ran after her and found her crying while she packed her bag.

Mogomotsi: Lani no. Don't do this. I love you. You know I do. I am sorry.

Salani filled her bag up while she ignored Mogomotsi.

Mogomotsi: Salani wait. Listen to me. I am sorry for slapping you. I don't know what came over me.

Salani felt rage build up in her and she looked at him with fire in her eyes.

Salani: Naare wena, are you possessed? You always have something coming over you. It's never on you!

Mogomotsi held her hands and knelt in front of her.

Mogomotsi: I am sorry. You are right. I can't blame anyone or anything for what I just did. I am sorry. I got worried about you and I didn't know where you were the whole day. I didn't know if you were fine or dead in a trench somewhere. I tried to remain calm but I lost it. I shouldn't have hit you. Please...

He hugged her thighs and rested his head on her stomach.

Mogomotsi: Mrs Mo, please... We are having a baby. Our baby. We need to give him a chance to grow up in a happy home.

Salani moves his head away and zipped her bag up while he held her legs tightly.

Mogomotsi: Salani please... you know I never beg. I love you

Advertisement

please. I am so sorry. I shouldn't have hurt you like that.

Salani: Mogomotsi, you know how I grew up. You know that I watched my mother get beaten up every day by a man who claimed to love her. That didn't do me any favors. I have deep

scars from their marriage and it's easy for you to apologize. What happens when you decide to close your fist and hit me? I am leaving you for the sake of this child.

Mogomotsi: (emotionally) Babe, please... Please don't leave me. I am fighting demons every day of my life. I know that I have a temper and it's all because of how I grew up too. I will go for counseling. I will do anything. Please. Just don't leave me. What am I going to do if you leave me? Hmm? What do you expect me to do? Don't let the demons of our past win. Please Salani.

Salani wiped her tears and pulled the trolley of her bag up.

Salani: Today was such a good day for me. I went to see a doctor who actually diagnosed me with dyslexia and I was excited to come and tell you all about it but instead, you slap me? I won't stick around for that.

She took her handbag and pulled her bag. Everything in her felt broken and confused. It broke her heart to see him crying but her brain had to keep reminding her of the fact that her mother

stayed and if she stayed too, it could get worse for her. She didn't even know where she would go but she felt that she had to leave.

Mogomotsi: (closed his eyes) Salani please! Ao mma! Why would you walk away from us like this?

That didn't stop her. She walked out all the way to the gate then she remembered the day she got married. She remembered all the advice that the women gathered there told her. Then she remembered her mother's words about talking to her mother-in-law when things got tough. Everyone had encouraged her to be strong for her marriage to survive. She began to wonder if she was being weak by walking away from a slap. She started to consider his words about how he grew up and how it affected him. Her own childhood affected her in adverse ways too. Maybe....

She took a deep breath and walked back to the house. A part of her made her feel like a failure for even thinking about forgiving him. But maybe she played a role in it. She started to think about how she would have felt if he had ignored her calls the whole day. She opened the door and stepped into the house.

Her heart dropped when she found Mogomotsi standing on top of a chair holding a rope.

Salani: (shaking) Wh... what are you doing?

He closed his eyes and looked at her.

Mogomotsi: I am sorry.

Salani: (tearfully) Jaanong o dira eng? Were you actually thinking about committing suicide Mogomotsi?

Mogomotsi: (tearfully) I can't live with myself knowing that I pushed you away. I can't do it. I can't live without you.

Salani took the rope from him with every part of her shaking.

Salani: You can't kill yourself Mogomotsi. What do you expect me to tell your child? Hmm?

Mogomotsi got off the chair and sat down. He put his hands over his head and cried into his hands.

Mogomotsi: Please forgive me. Please...

Salani : (sniffled) If you do this again, I will leave you. I promise you that.

Mogomotsi: I will never do it again. I swear I won't.

.

.

5 YEARS LATER

At Salani's house

Salani stood in front of the mirror and looked at herself. Tears fell down her cheeks as she looked at the shadow of the person she used to be. Broken and tired, she took her foundation and smeared it over her bruised face. A tear fell as she covered her whole face trying to hide the bruises from last night. She looked at her hand and the ring left her feeling nauseated. She couldn't even begin to understand why she was still there in that house.

She pat her cheeks to wipe the tears and more kept falling. She took a deep shaky breath and lifted her shaky hand to fix the blots on the foundation. The door opened and her heart sank. Mogomotsi walked into the room while wiping his hands. He stood behind her and looked at her reflection.

Mogomotsi: The kids are ready.

She nodded her head continued to do her makeup. He stood there and watched her. She could see the look on his face. The look he gave her when he regretted what he had done. Even

bathing the kids in the morning was his way of showing regret for what he did.

Mogomotsi: (walked over). I am sorry. Please forgive me.

Salani closed her eyes so she doesn't cry again. The old her would have told him to take his sorry and shove it where the sun doesn't shine. But that wasn't her anymore. She had become this timid woman who hardly ever smiled anymore. The outer corner of her eye had a red blot from the vessel that he popped one time. He bought her a new phone that time. Then there was a time he broke her rib. That altercation resulted in him buying her a car. Their family doctor had called her privately to let her know that she could open a police report and his records would be evidence that she had been abused. She thought about it for a few days and she told herself that if he hit her again, she'd report him. But months went by and he was the sweet man she fell in love with. Salani had realized that the abuse only ever happened when there was something she was achieving to better her life.

She may have been emotionally overwhelmed and stunted by how her life was but she had achieved a lot in her personal

development. With the help of professionals, Salani had managed to rewrite her form 5 and got 46 points. Her mother cried and apologized to her. She told her how her sister had once told her that she might have a learning disability but because Salani's mother didn't understand what she meant, she feared that her child would be stigmatized for not being normal. She thought it meant that her child was mentally unstable. So she chose to go with the normal notion of being bewitched and robbed her child of a better future than the one she wound up with.

After Salani got her form 5 results, she started to learn about hair products and how they are made. She even took an online natural hair products course where she learned how to make her own hair products and increasing their shelf life.

Mogomotsi hit her after he found out that she had paid almost P16 000 in tuition for the Diploma. She chose to pay it in full because she knew he might make her quit if she had to pay in installments. She could afford to do it because the salon they were renting made enough money for them to save thousands per month. But just the fact that she was trying to do something that would grow her, left him feeling threatened because his own life was stagnant. He had no drive to improve himself and she was wrong for doing it for herself. So whenever

she did anything that would tip the scales of their lives even more, he would hit her. Just yesterday, Maggie had helped her finalize a deal to get her hair products into five chain stores and she came home so happy about what they had done. She showed her husband the contract out of excitement and she hadn't even considered how he would react because she hadn't even told him about the deal in the first place for fear of how he would react. Seeing the contract and the kind of money she would be raking in while he managed a salon that had her name on the lease made him feel even more inferior. Salani never made him feel like he was less of a man because she knew that people are different. She loved how he loved their children and how helpful he was with them. She knew that she was more entrepreneurial than he was and all she wanted was for him to celebrate their achievements but instead, he put the contract aside and continued to help the kids with their homework.

Later that night while the kids were sleeping and Salani had just finished taking her bath in their ensuite bathroom, she walked into their bedroom and found him sitting on the bed with his back against the headboard and he had placed the contract next to him. She could feel the energy that came from him and it was negative. She looked at the bedroom door and the key

wasn't there. Her heart immediately started to pound in her ears and she tried to remain as calm as she could.

Mogomotsi: So which Indian did you have to sleep with to get them to put your useless creams into their store?

Salani's eyes fluttered. It had been months since he had behaved this way and she could smell the alcohol in the room so she knew he was drunk. She knew how this would end.

Mogomotsi: (raised his voice) I am talking to you dammit! Who did you sleep with? You want to infect me with diseases just because you are a money-hungry bitch? Huh?!

Salani trembled in her towel as her mind went where it always went when this happened. She would see her mother getting beaten by her father and she would become that scared child who witnessed it and couldn't do anything about it. She would remember how the last time she tried doing something about it, she ended up killing her father. This crippled her in two ways

Advertisement

she feared the result of trying to fight back for herself and she felt like this could be her punishment for killing her father. She felt that in some ways, she deserved it. So at that moment last night, Salani didn't know how to respond so he would at least calm down.

Mogomotsi: Is that child even mine? Hmm?

He stood up and Salani flinched. She held her stomach protectively even though there was hardly a bump there because she had just hit the twelve-week mark. This was her third and last child. Her son was almost five then her daughter was three years old. This baby was unplanned but she fell in love when she found out she was pregnant and she wanted to keep the gender as a surprise until he or she was born.

Mogomotsi questioning its paternity was a blow that she didn't see coming at all.

Mogomotsi: Naare o semumu? {Are you mute?}

Salani: (trembling) Mo I have never cheated on you in my life. Never. I love you and I can see that you want to pick a fight with me. Please don't do this. You know that I am pregnant.

Mogomotsi: (shouted) I DON'T CARE! WHOSE CHILD IS THAT?

Salani: (tearfully) Mo please... (put her hand together) don't do this. Just sit down so we can talk. Please. The children will hear us.

Mogomotsi glared at her and punched her so hard that she fell and hit her head against the wall. Just as she opened her eyes after the fall, he dragged her by her leg and pulled her to the center of the room.

Mogomotsi: You think you are the biggest thing since sliced bread. Who the hell do you think you are? Huh? Signing contracts your husband knows nothing about just because you now know how to sign on a dotted line? Hmm?

He pulled his belt from the drawer and started to hit her legs. Salani turned over to protect her stomach. The position felt uncomfortable but it was better than him resorting to hitting her innocent baby. Her towel fell off and he hit her all over her legs and back. She covered her mouth so her children wouldn't hear her screams. Tears wet the carpet as the pain from the lashes struck her.

Salani: (crying) Mo, please... Ngwana.. {the baby}

Mogomotsi: (hitting her) A swe! It's not mine! Do you want to bring an Indian bastard into my house?

He kicked her side and continued to hit her on the metal end of the belt. This went on for thirty minutes until he was tired and her tears had dried up. He had hit her black and blue and every part of her body hurt. He left her lying on the floor and walked out of the room breathing heavily. Salani heard the car drive out and she stood up and locked the doors before rubbing ointment on parts of her body that she could reach. Parts of her skin were broken and bleeding but he had hit her in places he knew would be covered by her clothes or make-up.

He had returned home an hour later and slept in the living room because Salani had locked the bedroom door. She had only seen him in the morning when she went to make porridge for the kids. He had tried speaking to her but her throat hurt from the thought of the animal he had become and she was tired of his explanations. So now that he was in their room and watching her do her makeup, she knew that she was sick of him and she wanted out. Nobody knew what happened behind the doors of her home but she was now fed up.

Mogomotsi's phone rang in his pocket and he answered the call.

Mogomotsi: Hello

Mma Mo: Mogomotsi, what have you done?

Mogomotsi: (frowned) Ma? Ka eng? {What did I do?}

Mma Mo: How can you put another woman through what your father put me through? Huh? You of all people? Tota Bana ba monna yo ba rileng? {what is wrong with this man's children?}

Mogomotsi's heart skipped a beat as he looked at Salani's bruised shoulder.

Mogomotsi: It's not like that.

Mma Mo: It's not like what? She sent me pictures of what you did to her. Her unless have called us and I told her to go home. You will not break another woman the way your father broke me. What is wrong with you?

Mogomotsi: Mama wa re you told her to what?

Mma Mo: I told her to go to her mother's house. You should come here and take me so we can go there with your uncles. We have to go and answer for your nonsense. Nxla! Don't even try to hit her for telling me because she kept quiet for too long.

Prepare to be single because I will make sure that she leaves you! Useless!

She hung up and Mogomotsi looked at Salani who had started getting dressed.

Mogomotsi: Ao mma. How can you report me when I made a mistake? Why would you involve our family when you know that they are going to divide our family? This is between you and me. I don't want my family to judge you for your mistakes. You know I don't just beat you out of nowhere akere Salani? I am not a mad man. I love you. I hate seeing you bruised up like this. But you make me hit. You make me angry and you give me no choice but to hit you. You keep secrets from me. Do you want your family to find out that you are cheating on me?

Salani: (closed her eyes) Mogomotsi, I am not cheating on you. We can have a DNA test done on this child. Believe it or not, I still love you. I love you because you treat me well when you have nothing to be jealous about. But when I do something good for our family, you become this animal who sees red and destroys everything in its path. Nna I am tired. (emotionally) My mother never left, I can't be her. I have allowed myself to

be her for too long. Our children are growing up and they see how we live. We are affecting them the way we were affected. It's not fair on them. I have to leave for them.

Mogomotsi: Baby look. I am sorry for accusing you of cheating. I just hate the secrets you keep from me make me think you live a double life. You do things without me and that angers me. When I question you, you don't answer me. You just stand there shaking like a deer. caught in headlights so that tells me you are guilty. That's why I then hit you. I don't do it because I enjoy it. I don't it because I love you and I don't want to lose you. U also don't involve families because I don't want you to be shamed for a mistake that I can correct myself. Just call my mother and tell her you were pranking her or something. Tell them it was a joke to see how they would react. Please baby...They are going to tell you to divorce me.

At Salani's house

Salani looked at Mogomotsi and his eyes looked glassy with tears in them.

Mogomotsi : Please babe. I beg you. Don't expose us to people who will force us apart. My parents won't be happy to hear how you secluded me from things and act like the head of this family. Akere each of us will have to tell their side of the story. So what happens when I tell my side? What happens when the idea of the picture-perfect daughter-in-law and wife they have of you is destroyed? What happens then Salani?

Salani: (frowned in confusion) what did I do Mogomotsi? What wrong thing have I done that will change people's perspective about me?

Mogomotsi: So ha o ipone? {Don't you see what you have turned into?} You aren't the woman I married. I am trying my best to learn the new you. It's hard for me to be the husband of a woman who acts like a man in my home. (took a deep breath) I know that you are an independent woman. But I don't know how to handle it all. You disappear and you don't tell me anything you are planning. You only tell me when you are done with whatever you are planning. You rented a salon without me. It was all you and Maggie. You see doctors without me, you enrolled in an online school and you were always busy with your books having no time for me and the kids. You are never home Salani. All you care about is money.

He sat on the bed with his hands over his head.

Mogomotsi: Do you even care about us? Me? Your children? Do you?

Salani: Mo you are being unfair to me. I love you. I love our children. Everything I do is for you and them. What do you mean by that?

Mogomotsi: (tearfully) When was the last time you and I made love? Ke raya hela gore when was the last time you let me touch you?

Salani: Mo I am pregnant. This pregnancy feels like the second pregnancy. I feel sore and it hurts when you try to have sex with me. What do you expect me to do? It hurts.

Mogomotsi: What do you think happens to me when I go months without sex? I am frustrated! Akere you were told that it is important to give me sex when we got married? I don't cheat on you. What do you expect me to do with all my sexual frustration? I am horny Salani! I get ideas when you don't come home and refuse to let me touch you. I get angry and it comes out in ugly ways! I am sorry for hurting you. Please Salani.

Salani's phone rang. She took a deep breath and answered the call from her mother.

Salani: Hello?

Mma Salani: Sasa,

Salani: Ma?

Mma Salani: Where are you?

Salani: I am still at home.

Mma Salani: Why? I expect you to be on your way already.

Salani: I... (looked at Mogomotsi) I am coming.

Mma Salani: You shouldn't have even spent the night in that house Salani. You could have taken your children to your sister's house. Hurry up. I have already arrived and wena you are still in your house. It takes me hours to arrive in Gaborone yet I have already arrived. It's already 10 am Salani. I expect you to arrive before your in-laws so I can hear your story.

Salani: (exhaled) I am coming.

She hung up and looked at Mogomotsi.

Salani: I have to go. My mother is already at Sesame's house.

Mogomotsi: Ao mma. Do you really want to do this? Kana I am trying to protect you Salani. Don't do this. They will force us apart over something that we can just fix.

Salani: Maybe it can't be fixed.

She took her bag and walked out of the room to get the kids. Mogomotsi remained in the bedroom and started to panic. The thought of their families convincing her to never come back home made him feel choked up. He listened to the car as it reversed from the garage. He stood by the window and watched her reverse out of the yard. This wasn't the marriage he imagined for himself. He couldn't understand why it was so hard for him to control his anger. His phone rang and he remembered that his mother was waiting for him. He took a deep breath and got his car keys.....

At Mma Mo's house

Mogomotsi opened the door and found his mother, uncles, and aunts seated in the living room.

Mogomotsi: Dumelang.

The look his mother gave him told him not to hold his breath for a response from her. His aunts and uncles greeted him back before he took a seat across them and pressed his lips together waiting for what was coming his way.

Mma Mo: (scoffed) Ke gore o rwala tlhogo hela o betsa mosadi o sena go Mo ntshetsa magadi? { How do you beat a woman up after paying bride price for her?}

Uncle: Mma M wait

let's hear him out. Let him tell us what he did and why he did it before we start to shout at him.

Mma Mo: (frowned) Heh? What did you say? Do you think that this boy can say something to me that will make me think that what he did was okay? I don't care if Salani climbs tables and calls him by his privates, he has no right to hit her. Not after the way he saw me suffering. Not this one who used to bring me ointments to rub on my bruises and wipe me when I was bleeding. Not him. Anyone but him.

She covered her face and cried into her hands feeling overwhelmed. Mogomotsi looked away feeling choked up as memories of his childhood flooded his mind.

Mogomotsi: I am sorry. I made a mistake. I will never do that to her again. I just want the chance to fix my family.

Aunt: Fix it how Mogomotsi? You have broken her and the fact that she has cried out shows that she has had enough. She has stayed with you for years and I know that this couldn't have been the first time you laid a hand on her. Abused women don't leave on the first slap. They forgive and forgive until they get fed up or leave in a body bag. So tell me, was that the first time you hit her?

He looked at his feet and clenched his jaw.

Mma Mo: He is just like his father. I am going to make sure that she leaves him if it's the last thing I do. I will not allow such nonsense to become a generational curse. I failed my children by staying with that animal. And if Mogomotsi wants to act like an animal, he should go and join a Bokoharam gang or whatever. He will not do that in my house.

She stood up and took her mogagolwane {checkered blanket} and walked out. The two aunts and two uncles also got up and walked out after her. Mogomotsi buried his head in his hands again. He felt like his head was going to explode but he had to be strong. He couldn't break down now. He stood up and walked out of the house. He locked the door and watched his mother walk into her brother's car. He took a deep breath and went to his car. He found his father's brother in the front seat. He got into the car and buckled in.

Mogomotsi: Mma Rangwane also didn't want to be in the same car with me?

Uncle: I think she just wants to comfort your mother. You know how women are. The fact that one has been abused now turns them into Protestants. Don't mind her.

Mogomotsi: (drove out) I honestly thought I knew how women are but I don't. Salani isn't going to forgive me if mama continues to treat me like the enemy. I made a mistake and I hate myself for hitting her. I hate myself every single day. I wish they knew that. I blackout when I get angry and the anger just takes over. The next thing I know, Salani is bruised and crying. I never know when to stop.

Uncle: The problem is you let your anger control you. Let's get through this meeting first. If she forgives you, I will advise you on how to do things in the future.

Mogomotsi looked at his uncle then focused on the road.

15

 15

At Sesame's house

Salani sat down opposite her mother, sisters, aunts, and uncles . Her mother clearly hadn't told her brothers what had happened because if she had, the two hotheads would have come.

Mma Salani: Okay. I want you to tell me the truth Salani. What has been happening in your marriage? How long has this man been doing this to you?

Salani looked at her mother and caught the same look she used to give her whenever her father beat her. The 'leave him' look.

Salani: I... (closed her eyes) When... I think I just got him angry. I am not doing things right and it affects him.

Sesame: (scoffed) if this is how we are starting this off then we are fighting a losing battle. How is she already giving excuses for his behavior instead of telling us what he did to her?

Salome: Sesa calm down. Give her a chance to speak.

Sesame rolled her eyes and folded her arms. Salani started to tell her story while her family listened in stunned silence until the Moeng's arrived. Salani wiped her tears as they made their way into the house. She dreaded having to tell her story all over again. She couldn't look at Mogomotsi so she just stared at the tissue in her hands as she sat next to her mother on the couch.

Her uncle: Bagolo, we called you here because our daughter called her mother crying in the early hours of the morning telling her how she was beaten last night. We thought this was the first time but today we have learned that this has been happening throughout their marriage. I would like to know if my message wasn't clear on the wedding day. I sent my wife to give you a message and I would like to know if she passed my message on to you.

Wife: Molaetsa ke o hetisitse. {I passed the message on}.

Her uncle: (looked at the Moeng's) Did you understand my message?

His uncle: (apologetically) We received the message my in-law. You told us that she is still young and we should correct her kindly. You also said that if we get tired of her, we should return her the same way we got her.

Salani's uncle looked at the bruise on her shin and looked at Mogomotsi. Mogomotsi pressed his lips together and looked down at his hands.

Her uncle: I want Salani to start over and tell you all how she has been living under your son's care. That's when you will understand why I am as hurt as I am.

He looked at Salani whose eyes were already bloodshot from all the crying she did earlier. Telling her story to her family had ignited this anger and disappointment in herself that wiped

away any thought of forgiving Mogomotsi for what he had done to her. The sound of her children screaming outside while they played with Sesame's children gave her the courage to do what her mother failed to do for them.

Salani : Mogomotsi has been hitting me from the second week of our marriage.

Mma Mo closed her eyes.

Salani: He slapped me for going to see someone who could help me with my dyslexia. I was so happy that I would finally be getting help but he hit me just because my phone was on silent when he called me. I tried calling him back after but he ignored my calls. That was the first time he hit me. He apologized and begged me not to leave. I forgave him and thought that he will change. He promised me that he would get counseling to deal with his anger, but he didn't go. He always came up with reasons why he hadn't gone. A year went by without any other issues with him and I even forgot about it. Then he hit me when I least expected it. Whenever I achieve something, he hits me. He doesn't even care that I am pregnant. He just beats me and I can't stay in such a marriage. I have children who need me. I

can't be with a man who tells me gore ha a tshabe go mpantitela. {that's he isn't afraid to go to jail because of me}

Mma Mo and the other women in the room shook their heads in disapproval.

His uncle 2: Mogomotsi, what do you have to say for yourself?

Mogomotsi: I was wrong for laying my hand on you. I am sorry for being the one to bring you all that pain. You didn't deserve it. I just didn't know how to deal with my anger for how you were treating me.

Her uncle: (frowned) How was she treating you to warrant this?

Mogomotsi: (dropped his head) it didn't warrant me beating her Malome. I just felt very insecure because my wife is very beautiful. I know that other men see it too and I knew that she could get any man that she wanted. I didn't believe that she could go out

Advertisement

meet men who could give her a life that is ten times better than the one I was giving her, and still remain faithful to me. Then she started getting into deals with people and excluded me from them. She would just come home and show me the paperwork and I would be expected to celebrate even though she made me feel insignificant. She made me feel like I was less of a man because she did everything on her own and shut me out completely. She is hardly ever home before six because she is always busy. I get frustrated because she and I hardly spend time together as husband and wife. It gives me ideas that she might be with other people out there. It all builds up in anger and it comes out in ugly ways. For that I am sorry. But I love my wife and I don't want to lose our family.

Eyes shifted back to Salani.

Salani: I have never cheated on this man a day in my life. He is using sexual frustration as an excuse. I am pregnant and it has made me sensitive. The only reason why I am always home after 6 pm is because I have a lot of work to do and it takes me longer to get things done than most people. I am not out there cheating. I wouldn't even know how to cheat even if I tried. I

wish Mogomotsi could understand that I love him. I truly do. Otherwise leaving him would have been easy for me. I do everything I do for us. I have always been a hard worker and when I work, I get consumed in it. I do everything I do for us. For our children. They are my motivation. Mogomotsi is just abusive and I am tired. I am covered in bruises. My face is bruised under all this makeup. I want to be able to walk out with a clean face and not have to cover bruises with makeup. I used to love wearing makeup. But now I hate it because I use it as a mask to hide my pain from the world. It's not to accentuate my beauty anymore. I use it to make people think I am enjoying my life. I have become so good at it that none of you knew for five years that I was broken. It hurts that a man who claims to love you can do this to you.

Mogomotsi's sister-in-law leaned forward and cleared her throat. Everyone looked at her.

Her: Salani my sister, I have been listening to you and I want you to know that I am someone who truly understands what you are talking about. I have been where you are and these things happen. (Mma Mo frowned) Mothusi and I have been married for fifteen years. The first seven years were the worst! He would beat me up and buy medication at the pharmacy just

so no one sees my bruises. I couldn't tell anyone because I was afraid for my life. He used to even point a hunting rifle at me and threaten to kill me. But nna ke lailwe gore lenyalo le a lwelwa ebile le a rapelelwa. {I was taught that you have to fight and pray for your marriage} I took it to God when it got hard. God finally answered my prayers and I am now happily married. He hasn't lifted his hand to me in eight years. He went for therapy and I am the happiest woman in the world. I wouldn't have gotten here if I gave up the way you want to give up now. Yes, it's wrong for him to beat you. But don't be one of these women who think divorce is fashionable. This is your husband. You know how he grew up. Those demons from his past won't just leave him like that. He watched his mother get beaten for years and he thought that is how anger is released. Don't give up when you are so close to the end of your pain. Mogomotsi loves you. He just doesn't know how to express his anger. Don't let that be the reason that you walk away from him. I forgave my husband over and over again and now I am reaping the benefits of being patient. It takes a strong woman to fight for her marriage. If all women are weak, there would be no marriages left.

Sesame: ah ah...

She chuckled and stood up when her mother gave her a disapproving look. Her mother had told them that they weren't supposed to attend the meeting because they weren't married. So that meant that they were to remain silent throughout the meeting but Sesame couldn't hold herself anymore.

Sesame: (walking away) Spineless woman trying to corrupt my sister? Mxm!

Salome followed her sister out of the house while their aunts scowled at Sesame.

Mma Mo: Wame please keep quiet. Please don't talk because what you are saying is shameful. I don't know what is wrong with you women of today. I like to imagine that women of today's generation are more liberated than our generation was. I am from a generation that was raised to stand the tests of marriage and divorce was seen as failure and shame to your family name. Nobody wanted to be called a returned soldier. Many women died at the hands of men that married them because they didn't have any financial stability. So I don't understand why women like you, women who have their own bank accounts are allowing themselves to be abused and they

even keep it a secret. You live in a time where a woman can report her husband for rape and it will be handled as rape. In my day, I would be sent back from the kgotla for being insane enough to think I can say no to my husband if he wants to have sex. You are too privileged to allow yourself to live like this. Is your life worth the fake life you post on your statuses? (shook her head) I am disappointed that I raised sons who think it's okay to beat women up. But I can't blame them. I am the one who chose to stay with their father even though he was beating me close to death at times. They think it's okay. They think that's how marriage works. Two out of three sons are abusive and they married secretive women who post a fake life for us to smile thinking that we raised good men despite the horrible environment they grew up in. I am very disappointed and I hope wena Salani you will do what I failed to do, what your sister-in-law failed to do. I hope you leave this man because if you don't, you will be repeating what I did. Your children will grow up and think this is how love looks. The worst part is that you have a daughter. What happens when she sees you forgiving her father for breaking your rib? How would you feel if she does the same thing when she grows up?

Mma Salani broke and sobbed. She cried into her mogagolwane {checkered blanket}. Salani's tears fell and she knew it had hit

home for her mother. Salani's aunt rubbed her mother's back as she cried.

Aunt: It's okay. Don't cry like that.

Mma Salani: No... I did this. It's my fault that she stayed. I did this to my child. I stayed for nineteen years. I stayed! And now look at her. Look at my child.

She stood up and went to the kitchen where she continued to cry. Salani's tears met under her chin. Then her daughter ran into the living room crying. She ran into her mother's arms. Salani wiped her own tears and then wiped her daughter as she told her that her brother had pushed her. Her son came running into the room too and looked at his sister crying.

Him: I am sorry. We were playing then I didn't see her. I pushed her by accident. Please don't cry Soso. I will never make you fall again. Come...

That's when it really hit Salani. These children were going to end up just like them. They were going to end up in marriages that looked exactly the way their parents had. Her sisters had chosen not to get into committed relationships because they were afraid they would end up like their mother. Her brothers were angry people who wished they could resurrect their father so they could hit him back for all the years that they couldn't do anything to help their mother. She looked at her children and realized that she really couldn't allow it to fall to their children too. She held both her son and daughter to her chest then she looked at Mogomotsi.

Salani: I want a divorce. I will speak to my lawyer on Monday.

Mogomotsi: Babe no.

She stood up and walked out holding her children's hands.

Mogomotsi: (desperately) Rangwane help me.

Salani walked into her sister's bedroom and found them talking she sat next to them and closed her eyes while they talked about a trending video.

Salome: Mme I am telling you. She is also involved. How does your husband sacrifice girls and you don't know? Apparently, she drives expensive cars ebile. Where does she think they come from? Heaven?

Sesame: So you still trust men? A gender that can date sisters without the other one knowing? Telling sister number two that he met the wrong sister first? Me I don't trust men. That's why I make children with my friend. No ties. I don't need the heartache.

Salani: I am getting a divorce.

They looked at her.

Salome: You mean it?

Salani: Yeah. I don't want my children to end up like us. I am leaving him. I would kill myself if I end up talking like Wame.

They hugged her tightly and they all started to cry. They started to imagine what their lives would have been like if their mother had left.

Sesame: It's the right thing to do. It's better to leave when the bough breaks than for the cradle to fall and crash with your children inside.

Salani: And the bough broke five years ago. The branch has been hanging on splinters and I am tired.....

At Sesame's house

Sesame and Salome collected the teacups and saucers after everyone had their tea. Mogomotsi and his family said their goodbyes and left the house. Mogomotsi stood by the veranda while everyone else walked towards the cars.

Mogomotsi: (saw Salome) Salome,

She raised her brows with her lips pressed together. She wasn't about to respond to him.

Mogomotsi: Can you please call Salani for me. I need to talk to her.

Salome: Unfortunately I will not be participating in that. As the father of my niece and nephew, I ask that you respect that and

leave. I will not be part and parcel of you trying to beg my sister to forgive you. If I go into that room and call her for you, she might think that I think it's okay to forgive you. Salani is in a fragile state and I am not going to confuse her by being affiliated with your begging for forgiveness in any way. Let her be Mogomotsi. You have hurt my sister for too long. If you love her, then you just have to let her go.

She walked away and left him standing there. Meanwhile outside, Mma Mo saw Mogomotsi standing at the veranda.

Mma Mo: Mothusi, go and call your brother. I don't want stories in people's yards. Akere you two believe in beating people's children, go and speak to him in your language so we can leave.

Mogomotsi's brother blinked and tried his best to hold his look of annoyance at his mother's words. He couldn't understand why his wife used their personal life as an example at that moment when nobody in his family knew that they had problems at the beginning of their marriage. He walked over to his brother who was still standing by the verandah and trying to get someone who could call Salani for him.

Mothusi: Mogomotsi, let's go.

Mogomotsi looked at his norther and shook his head.

Mogomotsi: I am not losing my wife. Not like this. I love Salani. She knows I do. She loves me too.

Mothusi: We have to go Mogomotsi.

Mogomotsi: (tearfully) She will leave me! She will take my kids and leave me! What don't you understand? I can't lose her!

Mothusi: But this isn't how you will get her back. Let her cool off first. You will talk to her when she isn't surrounded by all these people who are influencing her. This needs just the two of you. She Will forgive you if it's just the two of you. Not like this. Let's go.

He held his brother's arm and pulled him away.

Mogomotsi: I can't lose her.

Mothusi: You won't. They always come back. They act like they can leave but they can't. She is just on a power trip. You can't look weak because if you do, you lose. A woman is never supposed to see your tears man. Don't act weak like that. Wipe those tears and give her a day or two to calm down. She will listen to you.

Inside the house

Salani watched Mogomotsi leaving through Sesame's bedroom window then she looked at her children who were playing on her spare phone. She was worried that Mogomotsi would try to take them with him so she had to keep them in the room with her phone. She watched the cars drive off and relief washed over her body. She felt like she had just climbed up a very high hill and it had taken her years and so many falls to actually make it up the hill. Now that she was at the top of the hill and had conquered it, she looked around and realized that she needed to make some changes in her life. She unlocked her phone and opened her Facebook app to look for a house to

rent. A viral video caught her attention. She opened it and watched the news reporter.

Reporter: We are here at the police station where the wife of the man the nation has called the 'snake man' has just been taken into custody. As far as the reports we have received, the woman claims to know nothing about her husband's illicit behavior even though she can't explain how they have the money they supposedly have. The police have put out a nationwide search for her husband but so far

Advertisement

nothing has come up. We will keep you up to date as the story unfolds. My name is-

Salani rolled her eyes and left the video. Sesame walked into the room and she could hear another voice speaking about the same thing.

Salani: Kante is that all people can talk about today?

Sesame: Mma! Go seNigerianyana gore Mma mo Botswana today. It's Nollywood vibes up on this bish!

Salani chuckled and looked at her.

Salani: I am looking for a place to stay.

Sesame: Mid-month jaana sis? Will you find something tota?

Mma Salani walked into the bedroom and held her hips.

Mma Salani: My girl, I am very proud of you for what you did today. No one knows better than me and his mother how hard it is for you to leave that man. His mother even tried to pay for him abusing you but I refused because I didn't want him to think that it meant we are excusing his behavior. I just want you to know thy I am extremely proud of you for leaving for the sake of these two and the one you are carrying. God will see you through my child. You have made it this far by His grace and His grace will see you through to the end. I am telling you. You did what I failed to do and for that, I will always respect

you. I failed you all but you, your children will be proud of you one day.

Salani stood up and hugged her mother emotionally.

Salani: you didn't fail us mama. I used to think that when I was young but it took me walking in your shoes to see how difficult it is. I experienced the mid and emotional games first hand. It's not easy leaving a man you love when you have hope that he can be a better person. You did what your heart was telling you to do and until you were ready to leave, you wouldn't have left. I know that now.

Salome had walked into the room and found the emotional scene.

Salome: well luckily for us, you took care of it.

All the three ladies looked at her in shock. Nobody had spoken about the events of their father's death in twelve years. Salani looked at her mother and she gave her a reassuring smile.

Mma Salani: You were always the strong one.

The ladies gave each other a group hug while the kids ignored their family drama and played on the phone.

.

.

At Salani's house

The next day, Salani drove into her yard feeling overwhelmed to be back in the place that had served as what in hindsight felt like her torture chamber. She had left her children at Sesame's house after calling their salon to find out if Mogomotsi had come in to work. She had driven over after getting the confirmation that he had indeed gone in to check the books.

She opened the door and all the memories just came flooding back but she couldn't let them break her down when she had little time to get the things she needed. Sesame had insisted that she and the kids could live with her until she found a place at the end of the month. So she had to get clothes for herself

and the children. She went over to the bedroom and saw that the bed was unslept in. She knew that Mogomotsi could do anything around the house but make the bed so there was no way he slept at home. She rebuked the nagging feeling of wonder as to where he could have slept. She couldn't worry about such things if she was successfully going to divorce the man. So she packed her bags and the children's bags.

Just as she was almost done, her heart dropped to her stomach when she heard the gate open. She could barely move her legs as she walked out of the children's room to go and see if her fears had just been confirmed. The eyes needed to see it, but her mind knew that no one else had the remote of their gate. She trembled as his car parked behind hers. He had all the space in the world to park his car and by closing her in, she knew he was making a statement. She quickly locked the door and leaned against it with her chest rising and falling with fear that she couldn't explain. She tried to calm herself down then she looked out the window and saw that he wasn't outside. She had been waiting for him to try to open the door but he hadn't even come up to the front door. That's when she heard it, the sound that shook her entire being. The key turned on the back door and she felt like she had just lost at a game of chess in Harry Potter. The kind of chess that ends in death or grievous

bodily harm. She quickly unlocked the front door and ran out of the house. Mogomotsi ran after her and ran out into the front yard. Salani started to scream when she saw him running after her. The look on his face was one she had never seen and she didn't want to know why he had the look.

Salani: SOMEONE HELP ME! NTHUSANG!!!

The gate was closed and in her panic, she had left her keys in the door so she was trapped. Mogomotsi grabbed her neck when he caught up to her. Then he threw her over his shoulder and walked back into the house while she kicked and screamed. Most people weren't home. And those who were weren't about to get involved in things that didn't concern them. Salani screamed as loudly as she could hoping that at least one person would look over the wall and jump over. She just needed help. But no one came. Mogomotsi closed the door and locked it before throwing her on the glass table and causing it to shatter against her back. Salani let out a piercing scream as fear completely paralyzed her.

Mogomotsi: What do you expect me to do if you leave me?
Huh? Where do you think you are going? To the father of the
bas***d you are carrying and trying to pass off as mine? Hmm?

Salani was too afraid to move as she laid on the broken glass
with her legs over the metals bars that were holding the glass.

Salani: Baby please don't do this. Don't hurt me anymore than
you have. Let's just walk away and forget this happened. I will
never report you. I promise. Just let me go. Our kids need us.

Mogomotsi: (chuckled) Akere you think we screwed them up.
So we are better off dead don't you think?

A cold chill ran down Salani's bleeding back as she looked at his
eyes that looked like death.

At Salani's house

Salani's heart pounded as Mogomotsi pulled her up from the broken table by grabbing her hair. She winced in pain as her body followed her head up.

Salani: Mogomotsi you are hurting me!

He grabbed her neck and Salani tried to push him off as he pushed her onto the sofa aggressively.

Mogomotsi: I don't know where you think you are going. You are mine Salani! Mine! And if I can't have you, no one will.

He started to strangle her while she tried to gasp for air and push him off. His knee was also pressing down on her stomach causing so much pain as he pressed her small bump down. The

pain traveled down her thigh and fear from her child's life surpassed the fear for her own life as she choked and gasped for air.

Her hand reached down on the floor frantically until she felt a piece of broken glass.

Mogomotsi: (strangling her harder) Die! Do you think you can leave me? Huh? Nobody leaves me! No one!

Mogomotsi put one hand over her nose and Salani felt the pain of her lungs trying to get the last strains of oxygen for self-preservation but there was nothing. She lifted her hand in panic and stabbed the piece of glass she was holding on the side of his neck. Mogomotsi's eyes widened when the glass cut into his throat. Blood started oozing from the open wound and onto Salani who panicked when she realized what she had just done.

Salani: Oh God! Mo! Mogomotsi!

He got up from the couch while he bled out and the shock of what had just happened confused him completely then the fear of death crept in as he tried to pull the glass out while he choked on his own blood. He lost his balance and fell while Salani screamed frantically while looking for her phone. She realized she had left it in the car so she ran out and got it in a state of complete panic. She ran back into the house while dialing for an ambulance. She spoke to the operator and hung up.

Then she heard the sound of Mogomotsi drowning in his blood. She looked at him and his wide eyes told her that she had killed him. She slid down the wall and sank to the floor with her eyes fixed on his. He had stopped breathing. His body had stopped fighting to survive. He was gone. She had killed him. She could still feel the glass breaking his skin when she stabbed him. Her body went cold and she couldn't even feel the pain from her own injuries as she stared at his lifeless body.

She was completely zoned out and replaying what had just happened and she started to see her father. She killed him too. Her phone had been ringing but she hadn't heard it until the third time the clerk tried her number.

Salani: (dryly) hello

Sesame: I am done. Are you still at the house?

Salani stared at Mogomotsi's body and tears welled up in her eyes.

Sesame: Sasa? Are you still at the house?

Salani: (with a raspy voice) He is dead

She hung up and cried. She heard the sirens in the distance and she braced herself. She had killed him.....

At the hospital

Salani looked at her doctor as he tried telling her how to treat her cuts but she could hardly hear anything. Sesame is the one who kept nodding her head.

Doctors: Mrs Mogomotsi,

Salani: hmm

Doctor: I need you to take care of your wounds so they don't get infections.

Salani: mmh

Doctor: I am sorry for your loss.

He walked out and left the ladies. Salani looked at her sister and her mouth started to wobble.

Salani: I killed them. I killed four people. Three people died because of me.

Sesame closed her eyes and tears fell down her face. Their mother died of a heart attack after she heard Salani had killed Mogomotsi. Then the news that Salani's unborn baby hadn't made it either

Advertisement

it was all too much. The door opened and their brothers walked into the room.

Taolo: Where is mama? What happened?

Salani covered her face with her bandaged right hand and cried out. Sesame walked over and hugged her sister. They both cried while the guys stared at them.

Taelo: Salome called saying she is stuck at home with the children. What happened? We were with Mama yesterday and she was fine. No one just dies like that.

Sesame wiped her tears and looked at them.

Sesame: She was stressed by Salani's situation. Her BP was high from the time she found out Mogomotsi was beating Salani.

They both frowned and looked at her bruised face and bandages.

Sesame: Sasa went home to get her clothes today and Mogomotsi found her there. They fought and she stabbed him while he was strangling her. Hearing that he was dead sent mama over the edge and she had a heart attack. You know she has never really recovered from papa's death.

Salani's brothers sat down and kept quiet trying to process everything they had just heard.

Taolo: Why didn't you tell us you were getting abused?

Salani looked away with her puffy eyes. She couldn't even speak anymore. It hurt. Everything hurt. She had lost too much in one day and news had traveled around like a wildfire that she had killed her husband. Sesame refused to give her phone

back when her picture had started circulating on social media. She didn't know what was going to happen to her or her children and the police hadn't told her much after they took her statement. Sesame had also given testimony about the family meeting that revealed how abusive Mogomotsi was. Salani's doctor had also provided reports that proved that she was being abused for years. All she could think about was how all this had affected the people she loved. She didn't mean to kill him. She had just tried to survive but it had ended in death. Sesame had been giving their brothers the full details of the events that had taken place in the past two days while she cried over the loss of their mother. Salani couldn't even cry anymore.

Taolo, the more sensitive of the two stood up and hugged Salani.

Taolo: I am so sorry you had to go through that. I am sorry.

Taolo put one arm over his eyes trying to hide the tears that were falling from his eyes. He felt like they had failed their mother as children and went on to fail their sister even as adults. Their mother even died as a result of their failure. Salani was the one who always had to fight. She was the one

who always had to carry the burden of guilt while they lived their lives.

The door opened and two police officers walked in. They greeted them and looked at Salani

Officer: Mrs Mogomotsi, we have received new information that has changed the direction of our case.

Taelo: What information?

Officer: We were ready to handle this case as self-defense but new information came to light due to the news that has spread on social media about what happened today.

Salani just looked at him waiting for him to make his point clear.

Officer: How did your father die Mrs Mogomotsi?

All the siblings looked at the police officer with confusion and shock. Salani closed her eyes and let out a deep shaky breath.

18

🍀18

At the hospital

The police officers looked at Salani waiting for her response.

Taolo: Ele gore what does our father's death have to do with this?

Officer: We have received information from a character witness who claims that the details of your father's death were false.

Sesame and the guys looked at each other. No one out of their family knew about what happened that night so they were all asking themselves why any of them would do something like that.

Sesame: Whoever said that was lying to you. My father's death was an accident.

My mother -

Salani: Sesa no... (took a deep breath) It was an accident. Just like today. I was trying to help my mother then he tripped and fell over. I didn't try to kill him.

Taolo: Salani stop talking monna!

Officer: Well, we are going to have to hold you in custody so we will be notified when you are discharged.

Taolo: Arresting her for what? An accident? Are you serious?

Officer: Your sister has just confessed to killing your father. An accident like that happening twice is a rare occurrence. She was still under investigation because the stab wound on her husband's neck showed intent to kill. This new information highlights that even more.

Taolo: We are calling a lawyer.

Officer: of course. But in the meantime, she will be in police custody.

They walked out and went to talk to Salani's doctor. Salani gave them a smile of defeat and looked at her sister.

Salani: I guess it's time for me to pay for my sins. Every dog has its day. Will you take care of my babies? I have saved money for them so you don't have to worry about the finances.

Sesame: Stop talking like that. I don't even know why you said that to the police. There is no evidence that you had anything to do with papa's death. You should have denied it. Who even told them? Had you told Mo? I know none of us would do it.

Salani: I haven't spoken about that night since the day it happened.

Taelo: Are you sure you didn't tell anyone else?

Salani: (sighed) I told Tiro.

Taelo: Who is that jaanong?

Sesame: Salani Mma! Did you tell that idiot our family secret?
Why?

Taolo: Who is Tiro?

Sesame: The guy who was always shouting his name when he wanted to see Sasa.

Taelo: Ah-ah! From when we were kids?

Sesame: Yeah.

They all looked at Salani who just stared at the door.

Salani: I was freaking out and he knew everything about me. I was panicking and it was only natural to me to lean on him for a shoulder to cry on. It still doesn't make sense to me why he would do that. I haven't spoken to him in two years. I even blocked his number.

Sesame took Salani's phone and scrolled through the blocked contacts for Tiro's number then dialed it.

Salani: (with a drained voice) What are you doing?

Sesame walked away from the bed and waited while the phone rang.

Tiro: Sasa? Is that you? Are you okay? I saw your picture trending.

Sesame: How can she be okay when you lied to the police about something she told you in her most vulnerable state? How can you do that?

Tiro: Tell the police what?

Sesame: What do you mean? You lied to the police about my dad. Why would you make up stories about my sister or she was behind my father's death?

Tiro: (confused) Kana nna I haven't spoken to the police about anything. What do you even mean? I just saw things trending about her today and she blocked my number.

Sesame: (scoffed) Owai. You can't fool me. I hope you never have peace with the knowledge that you have signed my sister up for jail time which means her children will practically be orphans because of your lies. Your testimony makes today's accident questionable.

She hung up and clicked her tongue.

Taolo: What did he say? Where does he stay?

Sesame: He is denying it. It's not like he would admit to it. I didn't want to get into it in case he records our conversation. That's why I was calling it lies.

They continued to talk and speculate while Salani started at the door. She knew that her life was over. All because she was a fool to believe in love. In both counts of the two men, she fell for.....

.

.

At Tiro's house

Tiro tried Salani's number again but the number didn't go through. He couldn't understand why anyone would think he would do something like that to Salani. He sat thoughtfully while staring at his muted television. Then suddenly it hit him.

Tiro: Dammit!

He picked his phone up and dialed his ex-girlfriend. He stood up and started to pace up and down the living room.

Her: Uhu... so you even know how to call me?

Tiro: What the hell did you do?!

Her: Me? What do you mean?

Tiro: So you went to the police? How spiteful are you?

Her: Ahah! And you claimed that you two don't talk anymore. So how do you know that the police got some new information? (laughed) That's why they say nothing beats a woman's intuition. I knew that you will get excited gore her husband is dead and think you can now go and start your nonsense with her. I knew it! She is going to jail! I will not let you have peace!

Tiro: You are a horrible human being! I don't even know what I thought I saw in you! I was blinded by your thighs and left the love of my life. You are horrible. I hate you!

He hung up while she laughed out loud. He called his friend in IT and asked him how he can find out where Salani could be by tracking the last call.....

At The Prison

A few days later

Advertisement

Salani was transported to the women's prison along with other women who had either not been granted bail or were awaiting their bail to be paid. Her own case was that of someone who was transferred to the prison because there was no space in holding cells. Hugging her children goodbye before she was taken had broken her heart. She was also going to miss her mother's funeral which would have been her last goodbye.

The death of Mogomotsi had turned Salani's whole life on its head. Even Mogomotsi's mother couldn't face her after hearing how her son died. She had even made it clear that she didn't want any of her family members at the funeral. Not that they would have gone anyway. Salani couldn't judge her for that because she knew how painful it was to lose your child. She had lost a child too. A child she thought would wipe her guilt away so they could start on a clean slate as husband and wife. But the child only arose Mogomotsi's suspicion and anger. Nothing

went the way she thought it would. She didn't even know what karma she was paying for. Whether it was for her father, or her other many sins.

Salani got out of the prison car and the reality of her new life hit her hard. Tears formed in her eyes but she quickly wiped them away. The last thing she wanted was to seem weak. But the thought of possibly never being free for the next years, not seeing her children grow up, it all scared her so much that she could barely pay attention to the women who were trying to talk to her. They were all gossiping about the only other woman whose crime was more famous than hers. She looked at the woman they were pointing at and she looked as scared as Salani was. Salani couldn't help but wonder how she had the guts to watch snakes sleeping with girls if she couldn't even stop crying about going to jail. Or maybe she thought she would never get caught.

Female Gaurd: Salani Mogomotsi! Time for processing.

Salani took a deep breath and walked into the processing room.

Gaurd: Take off all your clothes and bend over.....

In Salani's cell

Salani laid in her bed and cried. Being in the prison cell made everything too real for her. The finality of it all was a lot to take in as she remembered the events that brought her here. She kept asking herself why she went to the house alone or why she stabbed his neck of all places in the body. She kept wishing she could turn back the hands of time so she could fix her mistake. Her mother would be alive if it wasn't for her deciding to go to her house alone. She was so worried that Mogomotsi would go back home and find her there if she waited for Sesame to finish her errands. She had lost so much due to her hastiness and it was nothing that she could take back. It was all gone. Her marriage, her husband, her mother, and her baby. All gone and she couldn't take it back. The pain of being judged for trying to protect herself from being killed by a man who claimed to love her, a man she had fought every feeling to forgive for his abuse. A man she had chosen over and over again despite his wrongs against her. That was the man whose life she wound up taking. A man whose life had brought her more pain than it was worth.

She had lost herself in different ways due to the abuse. She did things to cope with her abuse. Things she regretted and wondered if they were the reason the abuse never ended. Things that had landed her in jail and having to strip naked in front of a complete stranger so they can check if she smuggled something into the prison up her anus. The trauma of it all had her sniffing into her pillow.

Gaurd: Robalang!

The prison lights went out and Salani heard movement on her inmate's bed. Of all the inmates she could get, she had to be the one stuck with the snake man's wife. As relieved as she was that she wasn't in a room with someone who believed they ran the prison, she didn't know if she could even sleep in a room with a satanist.

Cellmate: My name is Masego.

Salani kept on crying.

Masego: I was crying like that too when I was wrongfully arrested. I kept on crying for my son all night.

Salani turned over and looked at her with puffy eyes.

Masego: Do you have a child?

Salani nodded her head.

Masego: Yeah mine is three months old. I have only known him for a short time but he owns my heart and it breaks my heart that I can't hold him and feed him all because I was wrongfully accused.

Salani: (Sniffled) So you didn't feed people to your snake?

Masego: (gasped) God! Is that what people are saying about me?

Salani: Yeah...

Masego: well that explains why people kept moving away from me. (shook her head) I am afraid of walking past frogs so I can't begin to imagine having a snake. I keep praying that God helps me out of here just for my son's sake. I don't care about anything else. I just want my son.

Salani: I am never going to see my children again. My mother-in-law will make sure of that. My sister says they want to apply for custody of my children.

Masego: Why? What happened?

Salani: (with a quivering mouth) I killed my husband.

The hair on the back of Masego's neck stood on end but she tried to compose herself and not react.

Masego: Why?

Salani: I didn't run when I could and it ended in me having his blood on my hands.

She began to tell her the story of how she met Mogomotsi until the day he died. Masego couldn't control her tears as she listened. She crawled over to Salani and hugged her crying.

Masego: I am so sorry.

She rubbed her back to comfort her and when she calmed down, Masego held her hands.

Masego: I promise that if I get out of here, I will do my best to help you. I don't have much to my name because as it turns out, my husband is a wretched human being but with the little that I do have, I will help you get out here. I promise.

Salani chuckled through her tears and wiped her cheeks.

Salani : I have accepted that I have committed a crime. It's my own fault that I am here. I should have left him when I could

but I didn't. I just want you to help me tell my story. I don't want another woman to go through what I am going through. For other children to go through what mine went through. They are emotionally scarred from how we have raised them. That's how I was raised too. When I finally decided to leave, my sister said something that has stuck with me. She told me it's better to leave when the bough breaks. I thought I did but the bough broke on my honeymoon and I ignored the small crack on the branch. I stayed in that marriage and when it broke all the way, the cradle fell with my children inside.

Masego: But who could have told the police about your father?

Salani: My ex-boyfriend. I know it's him. He has been trying to see me but I refused to see him. Because of him, two self-defense accidents now look like murders. I could spend the rest of my life behind bars if they don't kill me.

Masego: No. It won't come to that. I will do my best to help you. I promise I will.

A guard came with a flashlight and lit it into the cell.

Gaurd: Hey Iona! I said sleep! This isn't the time to start your prison life lesbian fantasies. Sleep!

Masego quickly got out of the bed and went to her bed. She got in bed and looked at Salani's direction. She realized that her own life was a fairy-tale compared to what she had just heard. She quietly said a prayer for her inmate and fell asleep. Salani closed her eyes and all she could see was blood. She said a prayer and asked God to forgive her.....

.

.

[A few days later]

Salani was in the prison garden with Masego. They were planting flowers and chatting.

Masego: You know that I have made you a social Parana right? My lawyer says I will be out any day. I don't know where he thinks he will get bail money of five hundred thousand Pula from but I am hopeful. So my question is

how are you going to be when I am gone? People are afraid of me and they think we are Satanists.

Salani: (chuckled) I don't mind them being afraid of me. It saves me a lot of grief. I have become an introvert so I wouldn't know how to stand up for myself if they bullied me. If it means telling people I drank my husband's blood to chase them off then I will do that.

They both laughed.

Salani: But I will miss you.

Masego: I will visit you once my case is over. I will be on house arrest for now so I won't be able to come and see you.

A few minutes later, a guard approached them.

Guard: (shouted) Dikae!

Masego looked behind her and stood up.

Masego: Maa?

Guard: Hurry up! I am calling you!

Salani: Uhu,

Masego: I am coming.

She ran up to the guard who turned around and walked into the prison. Salani remained with her thoughts for a few minutes. After a while, she realized that Masego had been gone for a while. The same guard from earlier came over to her.

Guard: You have a visitor.

She walked away. Salani put her gardening tools down and washed her hands before following the guard into the prison. They went to the visitation area and Salani saw Tiro. Just seeing

him made her emotional. She hadn't seen him in four years and this wasn't the way she wanted him to see her. She didn't even want to see him after he was the reason she was even arrested. Her legs walked in the direction her brain led them to, but her heart wanted her to run to her cell and cry. Tiro had betrayed her more times than she could count, yet she found herself seated across from him. Tiro let out a deep breath and watched as the guard walked away after warning him not to touch her.

Tiro: (softly) Hi...

Salani just glared at him. She didn't even know why he was here.

Tiro: Munchie I am sorry.

Salani's heart sank. He had been calling her that since they were teenagers. They had watched a movie at his house and some kids were getting high and kept saying they had the munchies. When they found out it meant wanting to eat because of the insane hunger, he would say he had the

munchies for her. Then he started calling her that to her annoyance until the name grew on her.

Salani: (closed her eyes) Don't... don't do that.

Tiro: Salani I didn't go to the police.

Salani: Sesame told me you say your ex did it. She didn't prophecy it akere? You told her. You told her something I told you in my vulnerable state. Something that I couldn't keep to myself because I was scared for my mother's fate and because you were my best friend. You were the only one I could tell. Even Mogomotsi didn't know about it. You were the last man I ever trusted and you betrayed me over and over again.

Tiro looked at the pained expression on her face and his heart sank.

Tiro: don't think I am giving you an excuse. I was completely drunk the day I found out you got married. I mean after seeing you at the mall that first time, all the fears I had that drove me

away from you just disappeared. It was easy for me to ignore my feeling when I thought you were five hours away back home. I acted like a coward when I left you. I got freaked out about what happened to your dad. My teenage mind didn't process things the way I do now. I couldn't find anything better to give as an excuse to leave you so I said you weren't my type. It was a lie. I have loved you since I was ten years old back in primary school Salani. I loved you when it was still puppy love and face love, I loved you then, and I love you still.

Salani: (impatiently) So telling your girlfriend was a sign of your undying love for me?

Tiro: No. I was stressed and drunk. You getting married meant it was over. It meant that I couldn't get another chance with you. I had been waiting to see you remove his picture from your cover photos so I could talk to you again. But instead, you changed your relationship status to 'married'. It broke me and I got so drunk that I started babbling about how I left you just because of an accident. I don't remember the details, but that's when I told my ex. It was an accident Munchie. (lowered his voice) She asked me the next day gore did you really kill your father and I denied everything. I stayed with her even though I

didn't love her. She started to notice the change in me when we started to talk again four years ago.

Salani's eyes dropped.

Tiro: I was ready to leave her but then you left me again. She was suspicious of us and I would deny everything because she was a loose Canon. I finally broke up with her two years ago. She called the police out of spite. They called me when she told them the source of her statements. I denied everything. I told them I had never heard anything like that in my life. I told them that your mother was defending herself and that's how your father died. The same way you were defending yourself against a man who claimed to love you. (took a deep breath) So did you lie to me that time when I saw a bruise on your hip and you said you hit the kitchen counter?

Salani's tears fell.

Tiro: (stretched his hand) Munchie no

Guard: No touching!

He pulled his hand back and looked at Salani as she wiped her tears.

Tiro: Why didn't you tell me? I would have gotten you out of there.

Salani put her hands over her face and sobbed into her hands.

Tiro: Is that what made you come to me? Was he hurting you all along? Then you stopped calling me a few weeks after I saw the bruise. Is that why you went cold on me?

Salani:(shook her head) No.

Tiro: Then why? I got so confused. You know I only kept dating Katlo so that we didn't raise any suspicions on your side. I was waiting for you to leave him. Then you went cold on me.

Salani: (exhaled) I found out I was pregnant.

Tiro: oh... So you have another child?

Salani: (sniffled) Yes. He took me to the doctor because I was sick. Then we found out I was pregnant. He would have killed me if I tried to leave him then. It would have been obvious so I had to cut ties with you so he didn't find out. I was scared and I knew you wouldn't allow me to stay with him if you knew I was pregnant. But leaving him then would have resulted in my death...

Tiro: (furrowed his brow) I don't understand... What do you mean? Why wouldn't I have allowed you to stay with him because you were pregnant? Akere that would have been a sign to me that you still want to work on your marriage. Otherwise, why would you have fallen preg-

He inhaled sharply as it finally hit him. Salani pressed her lips together and wiped her tears.

Tiro: You don't mean...

Salani: I am sorry I didn't tell you. I was honestly scared for my life.

Tiro looked at her and he felt a turmoil of emotions brewing in him.

Tiro: (voice cracked) I... (cleared his throat) Are you saying that I have a child Salani?

She nodded her head.

Tiro held his head and closed his eyes.

Salani: I called her Oratilwe.

Tiro felt himself breaking but he had to be strong and not shed a tear.

Tiro: You did?

She nodded her head emotionally.

Tiro: You always said you would call our daughter Oratilwe. I gave up on that when I broke up with you.

Salani: Well I didn't forget. I am sorry for keeping her away from you. I told my sisters the truth about her. You can see her if you want to.

Tiro: No. I Will wait for you to come out so you can introduce her to me.

Salani: But I might not get out of here.

Tiro: But you are. Your lawyer is processing everything. I am not sure how long it will take but you are getting out. The doctor's reports were evidence of the abuse you have lived in for years

and the only other thing that was changing things was my statement which I denied. Then the police said you admitted to killing your father. Your lawyer then said you were in a state of trauma after fighting for your life, accidentally killing your husband, then losing your mother and baby. The judge ruled in your favor.

Salani covered her face and cried.

Salani: Ao modimo wame.... {My God...}

Tiro stood up and hugged her.

Guard: No touching!

Tiro: Ako o iketle! Ao! {Can you relax}.

He broke the hug and smiled at the guard.

Tiro: I am sorry. I can't just watch her crying.

The guard looked away as they sat down.

Salani: Are you serious?

Tiro: You are coming home.

She smiled and wiped her tears.....

.

.

EIGHT YEARS LATER

At Salani & Tiro's house

Salani sat on the bed and held her phone up as she recorded her YouTube video.....

I never meant to kill anybody. I never even meant to hurt him at all. I thought he was my happily ever after. I truly did. I married him because I loved him. He was meant to be my happily ever after. The man I was to grow old with. But everything changed when the threats turned to slaps and the slaps turned to punches. All because he accused me of cheating on him.

It was like one of those things where a parent will keep accusing their child of dating. The child will keep denying it until a boy in school approaches them. The thought of their mother constantly accusing her late study hours for boyfriend visits her that thought that says, 'I might as well do it if I am going to get accused for it.' I was so tired of feeling unloved and beaten that

I gave in when Tiro spoke to me. I was wrong to chest on Mogomotsi and I was wrong to stay with him when I went happy anymore. But the thing is, I loved my husband. And there was that broken piece of me that felt that I had to be with him. I thought that since he and I grew up the same way, I was the one who could help fix him. I thought that if u walked away, I would have failed him and every other child who grew up like we did. In those moments, I wasn't thinking about our son. I was thinking about the little girl I was and the little boy he was. I wondered if we are so broken that we can't be loved. I shouldn't have stayed, but I couldn't leave either.

It's easy fro people to judge my actions. I did it to my mother and Mogomotsi did it to his father. It wasn't until we stepped into their shoes that we finally understood what they went through. The constant guilt for turning into the pathetic people that raised us. That's what it felt like for me. I believe that was how he felt too. He wasn't a monster, he was raised by one. Maybe his monster was raised by another monster and it was a whole bloodline of monsters who raised monsters.

His mother stayed just like my mother stayed and I also stayed. Maybe my grandmother stayed too. Maybe that's why my mother stayed. There is something I can't explain about the mid

of a child raised in abuse. It's easy for people to point fingers at me for staying with my abuser and choosing to sneak off with an ex than yo leave. Then accidentally falling pregnant from said ex. It's east to ask me why I didn't just walk away and be happy with Tiro. But I couldn't do it. I was afraid for my life. A single slap would cripple me and I had never fought back until the day I killed him. That was because I had finally decided to leave and that broken part of me wouldn't let him win.

They can all go ahead and pick stones to throw at me about deserving the beating because I cheated. He didn't beat me because I cheated. He beat me because he was broken. I stayed because I was broken. Tiro was a dose of possibility for me in the midst of all that turmoil. I used him because I was broken. I kept our child from him and passed her on as my husband's child because I didn't want to be judged. I knew that it would be said that I deserved Mogomotsi's insecurity and beating. Especially from women. Those are the people who judge me most. The ones who have no idea tmwhat it's like to go through what I went through or felt the emotions I went through before I decided to cheat on my husband. But they can go ahead and judge me. It won't change anything. It will still keep leading me back to the biggest lesson I learnt out of all this. I could have broken my children too. They would have also been raised by a

monster and a pathetic woman who didn't value herself enough. The cycle wouldn't have stopped. I just wish that I had left in time. Maybe Mogomotsi would be alive today and would be able to sit our son down and teach him the right way to love a woman. Maybe then I wouldn't have had to explain to my teenage son why the house his father built belonged only to him and not his sister. Maybe I wouldn't have had to sit and tell my daughter why the man she remembers from her childhood wasn't actually her father. None of that would have had to happen if I had just left him when I saw the signs of his anger issues. But I stayed. And now I have to live a life of ignoring people's judgements every day just so I can allow myself a dose of happiness. Just so I can feel like I deserve the love that this man gives me and my children. The only children I will ever have because again, I stayed. My womb was scarred because I stayed. But it's okay. Everything happens for a reason. Now I am able to be candid with you and tell you to run. Run as fast as you can. Not for your sake, but for your children's sakes. Picture them as abusers or abused. Then you will truly understand why you have to leave. I want to encourage every woman who is watching this video to take a stand this women's month to put their children first. Gender based violence will never end until our children are taught that it is wrong. It starts with us as their parents. Leave while you still can.

I wouldn't be putting my business out on blast like this if I wasn't trying to get to you all. I asked a friend of mind to tell my story and she did. She helped me start this channel for this very purpose. Let this be a movement this women's month.

#PACK4YOURCHILD. We have liased with former social worker, Nadia Van Graan who has assured us that she has room in her shelters all over the country to house anyone who nerds it until they are able to get on their feet. There are also a number of organizations that are waiting to welcome you with open arms in your area regardless of the country you live in or city you are in. Do it so you don't tunr into me. (smiled) Love yourselves this women's month. Don't forget to click that subscribe button so you can hear more from me as I work on my healing. Until next time, Love your children enough to run.

She waved then stopped recording and looked at Tiro who she hadn't even noticed before. He lowered the volume on the TV that was playing Nelisiwe Sibiyi's Mama Ka Bafana on repeat as her background music.

Tiro: (took her hand) Have u told you just how much I love you Munchie?

Salani blushed and looked away. He turned her head and kissed her so deeply that she almost forgot that she had to post the video.

Salani: (laughed) Babe wait. I have to post the video.

He held her waist as she posted the video.

Tiro: One thing I have to ask of you is to stop letting negative people overpower the strong message you are sending. You and I both know that you wouldn't have given me the time of day if you were happily married. You are doing a good job by sensitizing other women about the effect of GBV on their children. And because of you, many children will not grow up the way you and your sibling did.

Salani: (sighed) And we are all screwed up in our own way aren't we?

Tiro: (chuckled) I didn't say it.

He turned her around and made her face him.

Tiro: We have s punishment to administer. Remember?

Salani: Of course! How could I forget?

She giggled and wore her sneakers.

Salani: Let's go.

Tiro: The kids are already in the car.

They walked out of the house and got into the car where they found the 13 year old boy and his 11 year old sister seated in the car while waiting for their parents and completely unaware of the punishment that was coming their way. Salani and Tiro got into the car and buckled themselves in.

Tiro: (started the car) Seat belts.

Bryson: Buckled. Where are we going?

Tiro: Where so you guys want to go? Your mother and I don't feel like eating in today so we were thinking of eating your favorites today.

Oratilwe: (excited) ooh.. Could we get ribs daddy?

Bryson: (clamly) And burgers.

Salani: of course. We can get one of each. Akere babe?

Tiro: Sounds delicious. Let's do that. Then what else would you like to do? Bryson you have been talking about riding quad bikes for weeks now. Should we go there?

Bryson: Oh my God! Yes! Please yes!

Tiro chuckled and drove on to the restaurant. They arrived and all got out of the car.

Salani: I think the guys can go and get burgers while Rati and I go and get the ribs.

Tiro: Okay. Where will we eat?

Salani: I think we will join you guys that side. That restaurant has more space.

Tiro: Sure thing.

He kissed her cheek then they walked away. Salani and her daughter stood in front of the till to place their order.

Salani: Rati, what did you say you wanted?

Oratilwe: Well, I want ribs since we are having burgers too, I will just take the ribs.

Salani: Okay. (to the cashier) give me two orders of ribs please.

Oratilwe: (giggled) Aren't the guys having ribs too mama?

Salani: And which drink to do you want?

Oratilwe: the passion fruit juice.

Salani: Okay. One passion fruit juice too.

Cashier: Will that be all?

Salani: (gave her card) Yes that will be all.

Oratilwe: (whispered) Mama what are you going to drink?

Salani: I am covered. Don't worry.

She nodded her head then they went and sat for their order. A call came through on Salani's phone.

Salani: Hi Maggs.

Maggie: Ao mosadi. I wanted to find out if everything is ready for your trip. Kana you are doing big things here.

Sal: (smiled) it is all ready. I don't know how I am going to survive two weeks without my family while I am getting things ready in Atlanta but I believe it will all be worth it.

Maggie: Are you kidding? Of course it will all be worth it. This is huge for you! This had been ten years in the making. You are launching your hair products in the United States! We will all be coming to support you but it is important for you to go and oversee everything so that everything is perfect. You are putting Botswana on the map and I am so proud of you. You are the epitome of a conquerer. You overcame dyslexia and abuse to get yourself here. Don't let anyone steal your shine.

Salani: (giggled) I won't. And I wouldn't be here without you Maggs. I will never in my life forget it.

Maggie: Nna Mma I just want to see you growing even more because I have never seen a success story like yours. It shows that if God plants a seed in you

Advertisement

nothing and nobody can stop it from growing unless you let them. You fought for your dream girl and you have finally made it.

Salani: (smiled) You woke up with the mission to make me blush today.

Salani gave her daughter a signal so she can go and collect their order while wrapped up her phone call.

Maggie: My only failure was in getting the president to go and see you off.

Salani :Jeso!

They laughed then she hung up. She found herself thinking about her mother and smiled. Salome always made a point to mention how proud her mother was of them whenever any of them achieved something.

Oratilwe: Let's go mama.

They walked out of the restaurant and headed to where the guys were. She found Tiro and Bryson seated with two plates of burgers.

Bryson: Dad why do we have to wait I'd they are only eating their wings? I am too hungry to wait.

Tiro: Wait. Here they are.

Salani and Oratilwe walked over and took their seats in the corner of the restaurant. The restaurant wasn't full so they had a pick of the place they would seat.

Oratilwe: Ah ah. Why didn't you order a burger for me Bry?

Bryson: I don't know why dad only ordered two.

Salani took the plastic from Oratilwe while she slid into bench chair. She sat across her husband and they shared a naughty look before he slid Bryson's plate over to Salani who gave him one box of ribs. Bryson and his sister frowned in confusion and watched as their parents started to eat.

Oratilwe: Mama..

Salani: (chewing) mmh?

Oratilwe: You gave him my ribs.

Bryson: And she is eating my burger.

Salani: And it's so delicious my boy. You have great taste. Akere babe?

Tiro: Wait, these ribs slap. (licked his lips) I haven't eaten them in a while.

Oratilwe felt her throat get sore as she watched her parents enjoying their food.

Oratilwe: I don't understand. Why are you doing this? You said you were going to get us our favorite food but you are eating it without us.

Bryson: And even exaggerating how nice it actually tastes.

Tiro: Oh but it tastes like too good.

He opened the drink Bryson had chosen for himself and took gulps down.

Oratilwe: (tearfully) But we are hungry too. You told us not to cook lunch.

Salani: Ee akere all you guys do is cook and leave the dishes in the sink. Then you don't even clean up the house when you are home alone. We left you for one evening to go and celebrate our anniversary and what do you do? Turn our house upside down and leave it for us to clean.

Bryson and Oratilwe looked at each other.

Tiro: Then there is the issue of laundry. We told you that aunty will not do your laundry anymore. She will only iron it for you. But you are the ones to make sure it gets washed. Why is it so hard to load your clothes into a machine every weekend? You don't even have to hand wash it like we did growing up. But you still find it difficult to wash your clothes?

Oratilwe: It was a mistake. Is that why you have to exercise such cruelty and not share food with us?

Salani: There was no mistake there my girl. You don't take anything seriously. A buty knocks off in the afternoon because you are old enough to look after yourselves. So this is your punishment for not doing what we told you to do.

Bryson: But dad you said you are getting us our favorite food.

Tiro: no. I said we should get your favorite food. The we there meant your mother and I.

Bryson: Ao bathong... why don't you just beat us like normal parents? This is cruel. I am hungry and I can't watch you eating while you have me completely closed in.

Oratilwe: (sniffled) they are cruel.

Salani: Ee next time, we will go to the arcade room and you will watch us play for two hours. You will not even touch one thing.

Oratilwe: Okay mama. We understand. Please just let us have a taste. We are hungry.

Salani: A punishment is a punishment my love.

Bryson : (voice broke) Nna ke kopa go betsa ha re tsena ko lapeng. {Can you please beat me when we get home.} For now, I would like to eat.

Tiro: You know that's not how we do things. Violence isn't an option in this family. You are going to take your punishment like the good children you are capable of being and you are going to watch us eat and listen to us as we chat. Then when we get home, you will have bread and Oros.

Oratilwe: (sulking) I don't want Oros.

Salani: (chuckled) Then you will starve. Baby, if they give you trouble hmwhile I am gone, just leave them at your mom's place then fly to Atlanta so we can make it our third honeymoon.

He wiggled his eyebrows in excitement at the prospect.

Bryson: Mama no! Now he will just leave us for no reason because he will want to spend alone time with you. Please take it back. We will behave.

Salani and Tiro laughed then they continued to eat their food while the kids fought their cravings and tears.

At Salani's house

Later that evening, Tiro and Salani sat on the verandah of their backyard and chatted while drinking some hot tea. Oratilwe and Bryson came out of the house.

Bryson: (holding a speaker) I am not sure why I have been dragged into disrupting your alone time but if it ends badly, please know that I was an unwilling participant and I would really like to go to Atlanta. But if thjs goes well, then good going sis.

Salani chuckled and rolled her eyes.

Oratilwe: (scoffed) Judas. (looked at her parents) Mama, Daddy, there's a song I want to play for you guys. I have been listening to it for some time now and I really mean every word of this song. I wish I had played it for you yesterday on your anniversary but as mum always says, it's never too late to do what you want to do.

She pressed play on her phone and Jax- Like my father played on the speaker Bryson was holding. Salani couldn't help but smile. She had heard Rati playing the song in her room for weeks and she had started to like it too. She looked at Tiro as the song played and he stretched his arm out and stood up with her. They started to dance slowly as the song played.

♪♪ I wanna come home to roses
And dirty little notes on Post-its
And when my hair starts turning gray
He'll say I'm like a fine wine, better with age
I guess I learned it from my parents
That true love starts with friendship

A kiss on the forehead, a date night
Fake an apology after a fight
I need a man who's patient and kind
Gets out of the car and holds the door
I wanna slow dance in the living room like
We're eighteen at senior prom and grow
Old with someone who makes me feel young
I need a man who loves me like
My father loves my mom
I want a road trip in the summers
I wanna make fun of each other
I wanna rock out to Billy Joel
And flip our kids off when they call us old
He'll accidentally burn our dinner
And let me be the scrabble winner
And when my body changes shapes
He'll say, "Oh my God, you look hot today"
I need a man who's patient and kind

Gets out of the car and holds the door
I wanna slow dance in the living room like
We're eighteen at senior prom and grow
Old with someone who makes me feel young
I need a man who loves me like
My father loves my mom
And if he lives up to my father
Maybe he could teach our daughter
What it takes to love a queen
She should know she's royalty
I need a man who's patient and kind
Gets out of the car and holds the door
I wanna slow dance in the living room like
We're eighteen at senior prom and grow
Old with someone who makes me feel young
I need a man who loves me like
My father loves my mom 🎵

The children smiled widely as their parents danced and laughed as Tiro spun Salani out and tipped her. Salani squealed in excitement as he lifted her and spun her around. She took a glimpse at her kids as he put her down. The look on their faces told her that she had finally made a good choice in her life. The cycle had finally been broken.....

.....**The End**.....

For daily latest books please visit <https://novelsguru.com/>

**And also visit my Facebook page, and like and share it
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3345453369055623>**

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.