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Prologue

Proverbs 21:20; "Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it."

The church is a place where we were raised to believe that you will find solitude, grace, forgiveness and most importantly, the love of God. Over the years, generations have changed and evolved and many started questioning the Bible and some churches. Some churches still are operating on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ while others are something else. I married a man thinking that he was a man of God, and most importantly I thought that he loved me, but little did I know. I had no idea what lay ahead of me. Little did I know that once I said those vows, my life would no longer become my own. My own husband became my worst enemy, and I could hardly recognize him as the years went by. It took me so long to forgive and it took me even longer to forget. From the only

wife, to a battered wife; to a sister wife and then to the most hated wife. My name is Ziphora Mokoena and this is my story.

1

Ezekiel 11:16 – “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove them from their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”

Today is my graduation day; a day my mother had long awaited. I am the last born of three girls; Charisma, is my 30 year old eldest sister, Keorapetse is my 28 year old elder sister and then there's me, Ziphora. I have just turned 26, I have been working as a Doctor from January, but now I'm officially graduating. I specialize in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. I have delivered quite a number of babies ever since I started my study days and I must say, what a time to be alive. My mother always says that I have always showed an interest in being a doctor, as I'd always choose that on career day at school. Even while younger, I'd be the doctor while my sisters would pretty much bully me around. Charisma is married to a rich mogul, but as a qualified unemployed Nurse, she didn't and still doesn't see the need to work. She is the one who followed in our grandmother's footsteps. Keo is a lawyer.

Both of them are married, although I am not so sure about the happily part. I however, am saving myself for marriage. I did

not have a choice, as my mother was always strict with me. Even during my res days, she'd pop up unannounced just to see what I was doing. Nonetheless, she is my best friend. I treasure her so much and I owe my life to her. She was married to my father, whom I have no recollection of. Charisma and Keo were lucky enough to be blessed with his presence, but I on the other hand have never even seen him. I've seen a few pictures, but that's it. Funny enough, he doesn't even stay far from our house. We grew up in Orange Farm, and then mom moved to Pretoria, so we have been living in Pretoria East ever since. She has come a long way since her days as a miserable wife as she called herself. A lot of people at school and work talk about how their fathers are always there for pretty much every milestone in their lives, but then, I don't really think I am missing out since I have never known what having a father is like.

I have tried to build a relationship with him, but after being told to fuck off by his wife, I let it go. Nonetheless, I am very excited. I can't wait to officially be recognized as a doctor by profession and to celebrate this day with my family and friends. Seven years of studying is not child's play. I was getting dressed in my new outfit bought by my mother, staring myself in the mirror when she walked in.

Susan: (puzzled) “Hao (Goodness) Ziphora. O sa le mo (you’re still here)? E le gore why o sa apare pura pura re kgone go tsamaya (why aren’t you wearing your robe so we can leave)?”

Ziphora: “Ma, relax. The ceremony starts at 10am. I was just taking a moment to think of my life thus far.”

Susan: “Oh, ngwanaka (my child). I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking about that dead beat of a father that you have. Unfortunately, we can’t choose our family, but I did try my best to be both your father and mother.”

Ziphora: “Ma, I told you to relax. I’m just thinking of how far I’ve come fela (only). Believe me, he didn’t even cross my mind.”

I had to put her mind at ease because she always gets teary whenever she talks of my father. I guess she still hasn’t healed from that yet. Try raising the issue of therapy with black folks and you’ll be labeled an oreo; black on the outside and white on the inside.

Susan: “Anyway, a re tsamaye (let’s go) before we get late. Charisma o rile o tlo tla ka koloi ya gagwe e ntshwa (Charisma said she’ll be coming with her new car). We’ll be driving in style today.”

Ziphora: “You mean her husband’s new car.”

Susan: “Don’t be like that. I don’t need another one of your petty fights today. You know she hates it when you make comments like that.”

Ziphora: “Askies (Sorry) then.”

As we walked out, my grandmother appeared, dressed in style as always. I don’t get how a 65 year old can still wear high heels and Prada.

Koko: “I hope you weren’t planning on leaving without me.”

Susan: (rolling eyes) "Hello Mama."

Koko: "Wa tseba (You know), Susan. I gave up so much for you, basically got blood, sweat and tears for you, empa (but) okare (it seems as if) you don't even love your own mother."

Susan: (sigh) "Here we go again. Can today not be about you, though, please, Mama. Kao kopa toe (I'm begging you)."

Koko: "Fine. But you could have at least called Frank and told him that his last born is graduating today. It's a special day. Just my two cents."

Susan: "I'm not doing this with you."

Koko: "No matter what you feel or think, he's still her father, you know."

Yep, that's daily life with my grandmother and mother. They never agree on anything. She is the only child and always

complains of how overbearing her mother is. The similarities between them are so surreal, yet she refuses to agree.

Susan: “I trust you to say that. What kind of mother agrees to include a man in her daughter’s life when he left her with three kids, heh (huh)?! Or o lebetse gore o nsile ke sa imile Ziphora (did you forget how he left me while pregnant with Ziphora)

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Mama?!”

Koko: “Ska nhlabela leshata, Susan (Don’t raise your voice at me). I was just giving you some advice.”

Susan: “I didn’t ask for it. Now, let’s go before I lose my patience.”

Koko: (raising hands) “Alright geh (then).”

Thankfully, as we walked out we found Charisma driving in with a brand new Mercedes Benz SUV. It’s brand new because it doesn’t even have a number plate. I chuckled to myself. Yep,

that's my sister, always the centre of attention. I don't get why my mom named her Charisma, but well she's definitely owning up to her name. She stopped at the gate and hooted at us. My grandmother was her usual self, ululating and chanting clan names.

Koko: (ululating) "A riye riye riye! Ngwanyana waga Mokoena (A true Mokoena)! Ja (Yes)! Ke nna ke re Modimo o nale mabaka a gae (I always say God has his plans). Le ge mma lona a palletswe, lena le tlo nyalwa la phomella (Even if your mother's marriage failed, you all will get married and stay married)."

Susan looked at her mother in annoyance.

Susan: "Charisma, a re tsamaye (let's go) before ke tenega (I get annoyed)."

Mama got in at the back right next to me. I had to get in the middle and Koko on the left next to me. Keo was in the left passenger seat, next to Charisma.

Susan: “Keo, ngwanaka (my child). O kae na (How are you)?”

Keo: “Ke siame (I’m well), Mama and you?”

Susan: “Ke tla siama ge nka thola glass nyana fela e one ya wine (I’ll be fine if I just get one glass of wine).”

Koko: “Ja (Yes), Frank o go hlaletse tsona tse (Frank left you just for that).”

I could feel my mother tense up. There is just never any peace with her mother around. She was about to explode. I could see it in her face and in her eyes. It doesn’t take much to see a very yellow woman when she’s angry. They all become red.

Susan: “Waitse keng (You know what)?”

I intervened very quickly.

Ziphora: “Koko (Granny), ka kopo hle (I beg of you). Please behave or else I’ll personally get out of this car with Mama. What you’re doing is not right, especially on my day.”

Koko: “I was just trying to – “

Ziphora: “I mean it, Koko (granny). You can’t keep saying things like that to Mama all the time. You just need to learn your limits.”

Keo: “I agree this time, Koko (granny). Go lekane hle (it’s enough now).”

Koko looked at all of us and she noticed our mood.

Koko: “Okay. I’m sorry.”

Ziphora: “Good. Now, where are we going after the ceremony?”

Mama was still trying to control her breathing while I held her hand. She was trying so hard to fight back the tears.

Charisma: “Well, I have booked us all a table at Kream Restaurant. Your friends are invited as well.”

Ziphora: “Kream vele (Kream of all places), Charisma? Isn’t that a bit too posh for my liking?”

Charisma: “Dan’s friends will also be there. I have to maintain the standard, Zee.”

Of course, it was about her. It’s always about her.

Keo: “We could always cancel and go elsewhere if you don’t like the place, Zee.”

Charisma: “Eng (What)?! Cancel?! Ka tshetele ya mang (With whose money)?! Hayi wena (No man), o itse eng ka style anyway (what do you know about style anyway)?”

Keo: “I know enough to make my own money,
Charisma. Unlike some people.”

Charisma: “Wa bolela Keo (Do you want to say something)?”

Keo: “Nope. It won’t make any difference anyway.”

Charisma: (angered) “O nagana gore just because o lawyara
(You think that just because you’re a lawyer) and you have kids
and I don’t – “

Keo was just not in the mood to argue with her sister.

Keo: (interrupting) “Oh, look, re fihlile (we’re here). Zee, let’s
go. I’d like to take a few pictures before the ceremony.”

She hardly waited for Charisma to park properly. That was my
queue. Any moment away from all of them was a moment of
peace. I walked out with my gown on and I held Mama’s hand

firmly. We got to the grass area, just behind the guests and Keo started taking pictures. I took a few with Mama next to me, and then with Koko. Charisma finally came along and was about to complain yet again.

Charisma: "You didn't have to leave me alone in the parking lot, you know."

Keo: "Here. Re tseye dinepe (take a few pictures of us)."

She handed the camera to Charisma, who took a few pictures of us. We then asked one of the parents who was walking by to take a picture of all of us.

Keo: "Zee, there are your friends. Go to them, we'll get seated. See you later."

Ziphora: (smiling) "Okay."

I kissed mama on the cheek and bid them farewell. I could clearly see she was masking the pain of Koko's harsh words, but

it was my time to shine for a while. It was her moment to be happy. Her last born made it. I ran towards my two best friends Faith and Desiree.

Ziphora: "Hey guys."

Desiree: "Hey, o hlagella kae (where did you appear from)?"

Ziphora: "From back there. We were taking a few pictures."

Faith: "Is your granny here?"

Ziphora: "Yep and we've had drama ever since she arrived at the house."

Desiree: "Is your dad here?"

I shook my head.

Faith: “Bathong (Goodness), Desiree. Why would you even ask such a stupid question?”

Desiree: “Askies (I’m sorry), I just assumed that he’d have a change of heart. It wouldn’t hurt for him to make an effort, you know.”

Ziphora: “I doubt his presence would even make a difference. Let’s get seated.”

The ceremony started. The Chancellor and all other members of the board appeared on stage and started with their usual speech. Then, the moment we have all been waiting for, our names were being called out alphabetically, as well as our specializations and distinctions. I felt so excited that I said a little prayer. Desiree was called first, she specialized in Oncology, while Faith has always loved Neurology. I must say, it isn’t everyday you find a squad of doctors, but these two bitches were my ride or dies. We have been friends since Primary school. I’m truly blessed to have friends for that long. My name was called out.

Chancellor: “Ziphora Destiny Mokoena, Doctor of Obsetrics and Gynaecology, graduating with Cum-laude and top of her class.”

I was so happy and I could hear my mother screaming out of pure joy.

Susan: (shouting) “Yes! That’s my girl! Ke nna mola (That’s my girl)!”

I smiled as I got on stage and faced them so that the Chancellor could put my belt on me. My mother’s proudest moment was ruined when the least expected person appeared right next to her.

Frank: (shouting) “That’s my girl!”

How did he even get there? He wasn’t even on my guest list.

2

Job 4:8 – “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”

The ceremony was over and we finally had to do what everyone does after graduating – throw our hats in the air. I did that, but something in me kept dwelling with the burning question; “What was Frank really doing here?” My friends and I took a few pictures together, and well, even though they were invited to the restaurant, their families had their own plans for them. So, we decided that we’d have our own celebration later on in the week. We said our goodbyes and I headed back to my family. Mom was really displeased – annoyed rather and she failed to hide it. She was even more pissed at the sight of Koko playing happy family with Frank.

Koko: (smiling) “Frank, I’m so glad you came. I asked Susan to call you, but she didn’t want to. Anyway, a father always knows.”

Susan: (annoyed) “Frank, how did you even get here? I mean Zee didn’t add you on the list.”

Frank: "Oh, I came to see my baby graduate. Why else would I be here?"

For a moment I thought that he had come to see me graduate, but then reality struck. A woman who looked exactly like the young girl, possibly my age along side her walked forward.

Girl: "Papa, kgale re go nyaka (Dad, we've been looking all over for you). Where did you disappear of to?"

The shock in me. I couldn't dissolve what was transpiring in me. That was Dineo Mokoena. How possible was it that she was my sister?

Frank: "Oh, I was just looking for some advice from the Gynae. I mean, since your sister Phelo is pregnant, I thought I'd use all the advice I can get."

I was a little hurt and I could tell that both my sisters were hurt too. Mama was raging from the inside, but she hated public embarrassment, so she didn't make a scene.

Dineo: "Ao, bathing (Oh, goodness). You're such an awesome father."

Woman: "After two daughters and you still ask for advice? What have I done to deserve you?"

So, the fucker raised two more daughters and still left us?
Wow.

Susan: "Well, then let us not keep you and your family waiting. It was lovely to meet you guys once again."

Without hesitation, Mama grabbed me and we all walked past. Each one of us gave him a death stare and just walked away silently. We got the car and Charisma took a few minutes before she started the ignition. She put the car on and burst into tears.

Keo: “Ao (Oh), Charisma, hle. Ska Ila (don’t cry). Come on, you’ve made it to 30 years without that man and now you want to fall apart? Don’t give him the satisfaction.”

I couldn’t help but feel a bit of pain as well. I along with my sisters and mother were the recipients of rejection.

Ziphora: (teary) “He raised two other children and not once did he ever ask about us. Dineo was born in the same year as I was.”

My mother was in pain. Seeing her daughters in pain made her feel helpless. She could handle herself crying, but not her children.

Susan: (crying) “The next time you want to start acting like mother of the year, Mama, think of this moment. Let this moment be ingrained deep within that head of yours as you constantly think of the pain my own children had to endure. “Frank is her father.” Frank wa masepa (Fuck Frank). Charisma, my baby, pull yourself together, we have guests expecting us. A

re tsamayeng re tlogele mpya e la (Let's go and let that dog be).
Modimo ga se setlaela (God is no fool). Dikeledi tsa ka ga di ele
fela (My tears never go to waste).”

Charisma wiped her tears off, and drove off. It was a rather
silently loud drive to Brooklyn, all the way from Menlyn. It's not
such a long distance, but it felt like a lifetime. By the time we
got to Brooklyn, my sisters and I went to the toilets to pull
ourselves together. Not once did they ever tell me about Frank,
perhaps today was going to be a different day. We powdered
our noses, fixed our make-up and headed out. No one pretends
better than Charisma. She hates embarrassment like my
mother and we – the Mokoena family are very good at hiding
our pain. I have never seen so many presents from people I
don't even know. It would have been better to have my friends
or someone I know there, but not one of them was there.
Charisma was too busy entertaining everyone, but at least Keo
was there to keep me company. I looked around and saw
someone really unfamiliar. He was tall, dark and oh, so
handsome. He was dressed in a suit that screamed expensive,
and his cologne hit your nostrils all the way from the entrance. I
have never really been charmed by anyone before. I've never
even really had a boyfriend. I don't think I even know how to

converse with people of the opposite sex on a romantic level.
Whenever I looked at him

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I just felt a weird feeling in my tummy.

Ziphora: “Keo, ke mang o la (who’s that)?”

I pointed at him without trying to look obvious.

Keo: “Oh, that’s the pastor’s son. They recently moved here from somewhere. I don’t really know, but I know that his parents are friends of Koko and Ntate Mogolo (Grandpa).”

Ziphora: “Oho.”

I couldn’t help myself, but I just kept staring at him. Whenever he looked my direction, he smiled and revealed his cute dimples and perfectly cut teeth. Can God really make such perfect human beings?

Keo: (chuckling) “Keng o kare o charmegile bjana (Why does it seem like you’re really into him)?”

Ziphora: (blushing) “Me? Don’t be insane. I’ve never dated in my life.”

Keo: “Yep, that’s because Mama ne a go tshwere styf (Mama was too tough on you). Look at you, you’re even blushing. Eh, banna (oh my goodness).”

I ignored her and asked the waiter for another glass of wine. Koko sat next to Keo and being the lawyer she is, she started bashing Koko with questions on my behalf.

Keo: “Koko (Granny), who’s that?”

Koko: “Oh, that’s David. He is the first born son of Julia and Mack.”

Keo: “I’ve never seen them before. Ba tswa kae (Where do they come from)?”

Koko: "Oh, Julia is a friend of mine from way back in Orange Farm. They recently moved to Silverton and opened a new church that side."

Keo: "Which church, Koko (Granny)."

Koko: "Agape Church of Christ. Why so many questions? I hope you're not planning on cheating on Clive. David is handsome, but you're taken."

Keo: "Yoh (Oh), Koko (granny), ka botsisa fela (I'm just asking). Besides, Zee wanted to know."

Ziphora: "Thanks, Keo. Thanks a lot."

Keo: (smiling) "You're welcome."

Koko: (smiling) “Well, in that case, I’ll introduce you. It’s high time you got yourself a husband. By your age ne ke le busy (I was busy). David! Please come here.”

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “Koko (Granny), man. No.”

David turned around and gave Koko one of his million dollar smiles. I swear if anyone could get paid to smile, it would be him. He reminds me so much of Idris Elba. That body – my goodness. He walked up to us and smiled.

David: (smiling) “Yes, Ma?”

Koko: “I’d like you to meet my grand daughters. This is Keo, she’s married. And this, is Mrs. Party Ziphora – unmarried and untouched.”

And she just had to put it out there. I found myself getting flushed of embarrassment and looked down.

David: (chuckling) “Nice to meet you, Keo. What an honourable pleasure to be in the presence of such a beautiful, young woman.”

He took my hand and kissed it. I swear, if I didn’t become wet right there and then, then I don’t know.

Koko: (smiling) “I hope you two will get to see one another again soon.”

David: “Trust me, Ma. The next time I see this beautiful creature, it will be when my uncles bring a heard of cows. See you soon, Ziphora Mokoena.”

He winked at me and left. I was speechless and felt as if I was going to pass out.

Koko: “Ayeye (Yes)! That’s a marriage promise, Ziphora! You are lucky, my baby.”

Keo: "I must say, he is handsome for real. It's just unusual that a man of his stature and age is still not married. I just don't know."

Susan walked towards them.

Susan: "And then? Why does it seem as if your friend's son is interested in my daughter, Mama?"

Koko: "Oh, relax, would you? I've known Julia for years."

Susan: "I don't know about him. Something is just offish ka ena (about him)."

Koko: "Oh, relax, Susan. Not everyone is like Frank, you know."

Susan: (annoyed) "Wa nthoma akere (you're starting again), Mama."

Koko: "I'm just saying. You can't keep this child on a leash forever. She might go out there and get pregnant. Just let her explore and find a man who is willing to love and marry her."

I didn't mind fantasizing about the idea of marriage. I just couldn't help but stare at David all damn day. Maybe he is my knight in shining armour. I don't know about become a church wife, though, but hey. If he is a pastor's son then surely he must have been raised well, right?

Chapter 3

2 Corinthians 7:10 – “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”

My party was great. Overall, I had a great time and my sisters and I managed to forget about our “father”. Keo was by my side the entire time. I’m guessing she didn’t want me to slip into a brief depression where I’d end up thinking about Dineo. I mean, sure every now and then there’d be a quiet moment where I’d wander off into deep thoughts. That man left us – all three of us and went on to father two other children. I know, there’s nothing wrong with us, but that can scare a person for life. He is probably busy with Dineo and her graduation, not even thinking of me. I won’t lie and say it doesn’t hurt, because it hurts a great deal. At least the hunky David. I managed to dig a little deeper and my grandmother told me that his surname is Mosue. Imagine me being Mrs. Ziphora Mosue. It’s not everyday you get a Dr. Mosue, so I must say it kind of does have a ring to it. Anyway, apparently he’s an architect by profession and runs a few NGOs.

No wonder he isn't married at age 33. Sure, he's 7 years older than me, but show me a girl who has never dated an older guy. It's not like he would be my sugar daddy or anything. He really seems like a really sophisticated guy. We finally headed home after quite a few drinks. Grandpa had a thing he couldn't postpone, so he came by to give me my gift and picked up my granny, which left my mother in pure delight. Charisma's husband Daniel drove us home and had his friend follow him with his car. Charisma asked him if she could sleep over, of which he didn't mind. They didn't have any children. Keo's husband, Kenny is a prosecutor. They fell in love in law school and have been together ever since. They have twin girls, and he is always more than happy to stay with the kids. So, the three of us headed to our mother's house to spend the night there. Mama really seemed rather depressed, so I have a feeling she didn't want us to go anywhere. We freshened up and changed into our pajamas and found mama in the lounge, staring at the tv. I could tell she wasn't even focused on it.

Ziphora: "Can we join you, Mama?"

Susan: (smiling) "Of course. I could never say no to my girls."

We smiled and squeezed alongside her on the couch. Of course, Charisma took out another bottle of wine with four glasses. She wasted no time and opened it.

Susan: (frowning) "That's Ziphora's gift, you know."

Charisma: "Oh, I'm sure hunky Dave won't mind us drinking it. I had no idea baruti (priests) even touched alcohol."

Susan: (laughing) "Then you haven't been to church."

Keo: "Kenneth's uncle is a priest and he sips like nothing else on earth."

Ziphora: "The Bible doesn't oppose drinking, it just states that you shouldn't get drunk."

Charisma: "Ai, nna ke re dankie (thank goodness) Mama taught you the Bible inside out. It could never be me."

We all laughed.

Susan: “O reng na (what do you mean), Charisma? I taught all of you the value of the Bible.”

Charisma: “Yes, but let’s face it, Mama. You taught Ziphora the ins and outs of it. It’s only by God’s grace she didn’t become Mma Moruti (A pastor’s wife).”

Ziphora: (laughing) “Charisma bathing (my goodness).”

Keo: “Well, maybe Mama prepared her for something bigger since MDeva is in the picture now.”

Susan: (frowning) “Hayi (no). I don’t trust that guy. He just doesn’t look very churchy to me.”

Ziphora: (chuckling) “Hao (Goodness), Mama. What do churchy people look like?”

Susan: "I'm just saying, I have an odd feeling about him."

Ziphora: "Hao (Goodness), Mama. You haven't even met him nor spoken to him."

Susan: "All I'm saying is that I'm a good judge of character, that's all. If you really like him that much, I'd like to meet him should things become serious between the two of you. I can't stop you from loving someone, but I can only be open and honest with you."

I really love Mama. She has always been strict, but she gives us her blessing. She says it is important for us as people to make our own mistakes, otherwise we'll forever be dependant on her. At least Charisma and Keo found the love of their lives. I on the other hand, am yet to walk down that path.

Charisma: "Mama, pardon me for asking this. Empa (but), you've literally always been such a good judge of character, yes. But, how come you never saw the signs when it came to papa?"

I could see her face tense up immediately. I hope she doesn't start crying.

Susan: "Believe me, the signs were always there. I saw them."

Keo: "Then why didn't you leave?"

Susan: "The same reason why battered women stay with their abusive husbands for years – for love and hope. I loved him so much and I had hoped he would change. One day, he cheated on me with the very woman he left me for. I had had enough, and decided to leave him for good, but he begged me to stay. I went home for a week. My own mother told me *gore mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bogale* (a woman holds a knife by its sharp edges). Imagine that. A whole mother, telling me to hang in there instead of telling me to leave him. He came knocking on my parents' front door and he begged them to ask me to forgive him. That very same day he paid *lobola* for me. I was convinced he was happy. From then onwards, he played his cards right. So right, he didn't even show me any suspicious activity at all. I had you Charisma, and he was on top of the moon. He'd disappear every now and then claiming to be on a

business vacation and his family and friends would always cover for him. I honestly didn't see anything wrong, but my gut feeling told me otherwise. Eventually I had you, Keorapetse and then, when I fell pregnant with you Ziphora, and I told him. He didn't even hide it. That very same day he packed his bags and left me. He left. Imagine that. No phone call – nothing. I told myself I'd never beg him for child support. That's probably why I was so strict with you. I felt so horrible for bringing you into this world without a father. I just didn't know how you'd feel knowing your sisters had a chance to grow up with your father briefly, but you didn't."

The tears fell down her face silently, and it made us cry. My heart was aching for her. He had a chance to leave her so she could find someone who loved her, but he chose to damage her – to damage us.

Ziphora: "Did you know? That he had moved on with her?"

Susan: (nodding) "Yes. The asshole filed for divorce and since we were married in community of property, he demanded half my assets. Of course, my father was livid, but my mother still insisted that I give our marriage a try. She even opted that I let

the other woman become the second wife. I'm not about that life. I didn't want to drag the divorce further, so I have him what he wanted."

Ziphora: "So, that's why we moved from Orange Farm?"

Susan: (nodding) "Yes. Also, I just needed a clean start. I took my pension that side, gave him half of it without even arguing and started a fresh, clean life. The other woman doesn't even remember me. As far as she is concerned, she doesn't even know about you guys. He never told his wife and his children about you, but I know, his time is coming. God is watching him like a hawk, waiting to strike."

Ziphora: "I'm so sorry you had to go through all that, Mama."

Susan: "It's okay, that's why I made an oath to myself and to you three. I'll always be on your side – no matter what. I'll correct you when you're wrong and I'll try my best to steer you into the right direction. No matter what kind of man you choose, don't ever allow him to change you. Don't you ever allow him to turn you into something you're not. Do not ever

bend over your values for a man. He will embarrass you and leave you hanging when you least expect it. That is why I strive for you to become independent. I still hope that you will do something with your life, Charisma. Dan is a wonderful man, but you can never confirm a person.”

The three of us sat in silence, processing everything she had told us.

Susan: “I’ve had a long day. Let me leave you three to gossip. No matter what time it is, know that I am here for all of you.”

She hugged us and bid us goodnight, and retreated to her bedroom. That was the most intense and the most emotional conversation we’ve ever had with our mother together.

Charisma: (crying) “I remember my wedding day. You were still a bit young, Ziphora, but wow, that man stood me up. I called him and told him I’m getting married. The fucker demanded that the lobola be sent to him. He didn’t even have the decency to pitch up and at least act like a father. Mama refused obviously and I never agreed to that, so he punished me on my

wedding day. He acted all nice the weeks approaching my wedding and when it was time for me to walk down the aisle, he stood me up. I remember calling him that very morning and asked him where he was. He was so calm and loving. He said; "I'm on my way, sweetheart. I'd never miss this day for the world. I'll be there soon. I love you, okay?" Can you believe that?"

That was the very first time I saw Charisma so vulnerable. She doesn't cry very often. She's always prim and proper.

Charimsa: "Dan's dad felt so bad for me, he offered to walk me down the aisle. I'll never forget that day. It still haunts me even now."

Keo: (teary) "A few months ago, he called me and asked me for money. Imagine that. Just a simple, "Hello, my baby. It's your dad, Frank. I need R10 000. I promise, I'll pay you back."

Ziphora: (shocked) "Did you give him the money?"

Keo: “Well, I was tempted to

but then I remembered how he fucked us all over. So, I sent the money and as soon as he called to say he had received it, I reversed it all.”

Charisma and I laughed through our tears.

Ziphora: “You did what?”

Keo: “Yep. No one will mess with me and my family and get away with it just like that. He wasn’t going to pay it back. I just know it.”

Chrisma: “What did he do after that?”

Keo: “He blew up my phone, and when he realized what I had done and that I was deliberately ignoring him, he started sending me messages swearing at me and cursing me of course. I don’t care much. I blocked him and moved on with my life.”

Ziphora: “Wow, I honestly don’t know how I’d react if he had done that to me.”

Keo: “There’s room for manipulation on your side because you don’t know him at all. It’s only normal and people should understand. No one has the right to judge you should you help him. You’ll see for yourself what kind of a person he actually is. You just wait and see.”

We had such a good talk and no matter what happens, I know that my sisters will always be there for me. We got to bed at 2am. For some reason, I wasn’t sleepy at all. I kept thinking about David Mosue. So, I decided to do some of my own digging. I googled him and I found amazing facts about him. He studied in Cape Town and he was recently named Architect of the year. He also has a lot of NGOs, so Koko wasn’t lying. One of his most prominent non-profits is The Agape Foundation for underprivileged girls, which also happens to be the name of their church. Agape is one of the types of love we find in the Bible, meaning unconditional “God” love. I love just how Christian he makes everything about him. Even his company is called Jehova Jireh Constructions. What makes me fall for him even more is that he is so involved with helping young girls especially. His brother on the other hand, Jacob Mosue

happens to be a doctor – a Neurologist in fact. What a small world. He on the other hand seems to be rather involved in the community and has taken a liking in helping young boys become better men than their fathers. His NGO is called Philia Foundation for young men; Philia meaning friend bond type of love. I must say, this family is rather impressive. Their parents are diplomats so it seems. It is rather odd since they come from Orange Farm. I haven't heard Koko telling us that they had been traveling much. I guess it comes with being in the ministry. I decided to read one of his articles which was published a week ago by one of the prominent Newspapers.

“I pride myself in helping young women in South Africa. A lot of them have to struggle and when you're poor and disadvantaged in our country life is hard, but when you're a young woman, life is even harder. With so many men taking advantage of helpless young girls and abusing them for their own benefit, I just had to take initiative and do my part. I wasn't raised with a silver spoon in my mouth, and God has required me to do this work. I was called for this. Not only is it my dream, but it is my purpose. For Phillipians4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

I swear, I couldn't get enough. I even had to find his profile on Instagram and browse through his photos. I didn't even realize I had been on my phone for hours when Faith texted me.

Faith: "What are you doing online at this time? You value your beauty sleep and awuna indoda (you don't have a man)."

She had to go there.

Ziphora: "Lol, did you really have to go there chomi? Anyway, I'm looking at a potential's pictures and social media history."

Faith: "Heh (huh)?! Did you just say potential? Send a pic. His best one."

I couldn't even choose. He had so many, so I chose one of him where he was topless on a beach in the Caribbean. Faith was so chuffed, she called me immediately.

Faith: "Hao (Goodness), chomi (friend). Kanti usho umntwana ka Pastor (You're talking about the pastor's son), aka, Rich kid?"

Ziphora: (frowning) “You know him?”

Faith: “Not really. He’s a friend of a friend. Back in the day when I used to party and you couldn’t, I’d see him at a few parties. He was wild let me tell you. But I’m sure he is all grown up now.”

Ziphora: “What do you mean, wild?”

Faith: “Ag, I mean wild, you know, like party sex wild, orgies, a few sniffs here and there and drinking himself into a stupor.”

Wow, that is so not what I expected to hear. She could hear from my immediate silence.

Faith: “But he is a good guy yena from what I have seen and been told. I haven’t seen him in years, Zee, so I bet he has changed. Don’t judge him before meeting him. Give him the benefit of the doubt.”

She's right. I guess I have to try.

Ziphora: "I guess you're right, babe."

Faith: "Sleep. You have morning shift tomorrow. You'll be a dead woman walking."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Alright then. Good night. Or good morning rather."

Faith: "Sharp, Future Dr. Mosue."

I like the sound of that. I dozed off almost immediately after our call. My alarm rang at 7am and I was so tired. I couldn't even believe that I had stayed up until 4am. Three hours of sleep is not what a doctor needs. Faith was right, I'm going to be a dead woman walking today – not to mention the headache. Luckily, I have the perfect remedy for that. I got into the shower and felt a bit better afterwards. By 7:30 am I was done. I have always been punctual and I'm not about to be late today. Luckily the hospital where I work is just 15 minutes

away. I found Mama had cooked up a storm for all of us. She left us a note as she had to get to work on time. She works a bit further than I do and has no reason to transfer closer.

Keo: "Morning. You look gorgeous today."

Ziphora: "Ha, ha. Very funny. I'm so tired."

Charisma: "I can tell. Plus after I heard you on the phone at 4am, there's no way you could focus today."

Ziphora: "Eish..."

Keo: "Who were you talking to on the phone at 4am?"

Charisma: "Rather ask her what was she doing until 4am in the morning? Were you fickling your bean?"

Ziphora: "Eew, man. Charisma, no man."

She and Keo both laughed.

Keo: “You act so surprised. No wonder you’re a virgin. I swear, the first man you’ll fuck you’ll be putty in his hands. There is really nothing wrong with masturbating, you know.”

Ziphora: “I know, it has many benefits, but I’ve just never tried it.”

Charisma: “Hayi, Keo, o mo rekele vibrator (Buy her a vibrator) before o tsamaya (before you leave).”

Keo: (laughing) “You’re the expert in that department. Akere wena le Dan (You and Dan) have a lot of sex.”

Ziphora: “Hayi (No), I’m leaving. See you guys.”

They both laughed at me as I walked out. I started my car and off I was. This car has been so good to me – ever since my first

year of varsity. Mama surprised me with it straight after Matric. My very own Polo vivo 1.4 Trendline. Seven years later, I doubt I need to change it. I put on my favourite CD by Sands and played my favourite song – “Vuma”. One day, I’ll find a man who will sing that song for me, I guess. Within minutes, I arrived at work after stopping at the garage for some energy boosters. I found Desiree there, but Faith was not there. I wasn’t surprised, she’s always late.

Ziphora: “Hey, Des.”

Desiree: “Hey, how was your day yesterday?”

I really didn’t want to get into my dirty laundry with my dad, especially not this early in the morning.

Ziphora: “Ag, this needs a proper lunch date. You on for today?”

Desiree: “I can never say no to food.”

And she was right. She is the foodie amongst the three of us. She is a bit chubbier than Faith and I, but her bums make all the men cry.

Ziphora: "Where's Faith? Is she late as always?"

Desiree: "Today, she is on time. Le nna ke maketse (I'm also surprised). But, I am guessing it is probably because she has to show the new doctor the ropes."

Ziphora: (frowning) "What new doctor?"

Desiree: "The New Neurologist, Dr. Mosue."

I nearly fainted right there and then. Could this be a coincidence or are these men following us around everywhere?

Ziphora: "Dr. Mosue as in Jacob Mosue?"

Desiree: “Yes, he’s a hunk. Pity he’s married. I wouldn’t mind snacking on that.”

Ziphora: “I wouldn’t know.”

Desiree: “You seriously need to get laid, Zee. Ga e je bogobe (your pussy doesn’t eat pap).”

I felt embarrassed and blushed instantly and then my heart skipped a few beats when I heard a familiar voice behind me.

David: “Ms. Mokoena, so we meet again.”

I slowly turned and indeed, it was who I thought it was.

Ziphora: (blushing) “David. What an odd surprise.”

David: (chuckling) “I could say the same for you.”

I don't know why he'd even say that. Doesn't he know I'm a doctor.

Ziphora: "I work here."

David: "Oh, right. You're a doctor. I didn't know you were employed like immediately. Especially with the way things are in this country. Lucky you."

His statement sounded rather condescending, but I brushed it off. Desiree being Desiree cleared her throat. Yep, that is a sign for "hey, I'm still here."

Ziphora: "Oh, David, this is my friend, Desiree. She is an Oncologist."

David: "Pleasure to meet you, Desiree. Lovely name."

He kissed her hand and Desiree flirted with him as always.

Desiree: "The pleasure is all mine, hot stuff."

David: (chuckling) "Well, if she is an Oncologist? What are you?"

Ziphora: "I'm an Obstetrics Gynaecologist."

David: "Oh, you deliver babies. It seems like it's not much more than what a normal midwife does."

Wow, just wow. Does he even know what that title means?! I have worked so hard for someone to just speak to me like I just don't do shit.

Desiree: (frowning) "Eh."

Ziphora: "Excuse me?"

David: (laughing) "Come on, I was just being honest. I didn't mean to step on your toes."

Ziphora: “Well, actually, you did, David. Is this how you treat the young girls you sponsor? Telling them they are no good than midwives? Oh, wait, how would you feel if I told you that you don’t do much other than draw houses?”

David: (frowning) “I didn’t mean it like – “

Ziphora: “Never mind. I’m not interested. It was not so nice to meet you, David Mosue. Have a lovely day.”

I found myself feeling irritated by this guy. I said goodbye to Desiree and walked away. He was rather shocked to see my reaction, but wow. He seems a bit rude and rather condescending. I don’t know, maybe Mama was right about him. Something does seem rather off.

4

Jeremiah 4:16 - "As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."

I carried on with my day, but I was so distracted. I tried my best to do what I always do, but David really got to me. I don't even know why because we weren't even together or anything like that. I hate men who feel the need to talk down to women like that. Honestly, he is hot, but he isn't all that. I didn't even realize it was lunch time until Faith knocked on my door.

Faith: (knocking) "Hawu (Goodness), Dr. Mokoena, ke wena o leng depressed so (is it you who is so depressed)?"

Ziphora: "Me? Niks (Nope)."

Faith: "Do you really think you can lie to me? Besides, Des already told me about your little outburst with David."

Ziphora: "Oh, great. Everyone knows."

Faith: “It’s a small world, and besides, everyone hates the guy for belittling Obgyn’s – not to mention doctors as a whole.”

Ziphora: “Just great.”

Faith: (laughing) “Don’t take everything to heart like that. You did good. He’s an asshole – his own brother confirmed it.”

Ziphora: “Are you friends with his brother now?”

Faith: “Not really. He will be working with me, and damn, what a waste. I can’t believe he is married.”

Ziphodra: “Please tell me you bought lunch.”

Faith: “Yep, we’d better head down to the cafeteria before Desiree finishes it all.”

We both chuckled and headed down there. I told them briefly about David and what I found on him. I managed to forget

about him for a little while. Perhaps he is just not meant to be mine. While eating with my friends, I saw a tall and very handsome, dark chocolate doctor heading towards our table. He really looked so much like David, just a lot younger, but way taller.

Jacob : (smiling) “Ladies. You must be the famous Dr. Ziphora Mokoena. The one and only woman who could ever manage to stand up to my asshole brother.”

I felt myself blush immediately out of embarrassment. I wasn't planning on being famous for such at this hospital. I just started working here.

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “Hello. I assume you are Jacob Mosue. The Doctor Mosue.”

Jacob: (chuckling) “The one and only.”

Ziphora: “So everyone knows about it? Really?”

Jacob: (chuckling) “You shouldn’t be too worried about what people say. In fact, you should be worried about my brother right now.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “I’m lost.”

Jacob: “He feels like shit right now. He has been texting me about you all morning.”

Oh, really? Nice strategy. He probably saw me roll my eyes as he took out his phone.

Jacob: “See for yourself.”

He handed me his phone and I looked at Faith and Desiree who hinted at me that I should take it. I took it and scrolled through their WhatsApp messages. Guy has legit been talking about me all morning.

David: “Bro, I can’t believe she spoke to me like that. No woman has ever done that to me before.”

Jacob: Lol, you mean no woman has ever put you in your place before, right?"

David: "I have never met such an opinionated, strong-willed woman before. To top it all off she is so beautiful. I think she has stolen my heart."

Jacob: "Don't you say that about every woman?"

David: "She is different, bro. I seriously think she is my missing rib. Perhaps you could talk to her for me."

Jacob: "I'm here to work, and it's my first day already. I can't be playing the Love fairy."

David: "Please, bro. You remember what it was like when you met Jeannette, right? I'm begging you."

Jacob: "Fine. You owe me."

David: "Thank you."

I was a bit chuffed. So, he actually thinks I'm beautiful? What if this is a part of his strategy to prove his manhood to me?

Jacob: "So? What do you say?"

Ziphora: "About what?"

Jacob: (chuckling) "You're one stubborn lady. He has asked me to personally ask you out on a dinner date. For him of course."

I won't let him have me so easily.

Ziphora: "Tell you what, I'll come to your church on Sunday and see the mighty David in action. If he is as good as I think he might be, then I'll go out on a date with him. Provided he tell me himself – the same way he insulted me earlier on today."

Jacob: “Ja, neh. The last woman whom I met that gave me such a run for my money was my wife. It seems as if David has met his match. My father will really like you, Dr. Mokoena. See you soon.”

He flashed his gorgeous teeth as he gave us a smile.

Jacob: “Ladies.”

He bowed a little before us before he left. He is such a gentleman. I can’t say much for David. Maybe there is hope after all.

Faith: (smiling) “So, are you going to give him a chance?”

Desiree: “Ai, he is hot, mntase (sis), I’ll give him that. But there’s just something weird about him. I just don’t know it yet.”

She is literally the second person to say that about him, but maybe I am blinded by what could be. I really like him. Or

maybe I like the idea of him. I just don't know how I feel about him yet. He has to prove to me that he actually likes me and doesn't want to make me one of his little challenges.

Ziphora: "I don't know yet. I think I'll know right after Sunday."

A few days passed and it was finally Sunday. I was a bit bummed that I didn't get any message or phone call from the mysterious David Mosue. I don't even know why I expected any communication when I never even gave him my number. Matters of the heart are quite funny I tell you. I managed to get through my busy days without thinking about him much. Mama had to go to work, so she couldn't come with me to church. Keo and Charisma were busy as usual, so Faith and Desiree decided to tag along with me. We drove together in Faith's car for a change and the minute we drove into the church yard, we were stunned. The yard was so big, it felt like we were at some revival. So many people were there – so many cars – great machines even. When we walked in I was even more stunned. Never in my life have I ever seen a church that enormous. It could probably host 500 people if not a thousand. It reminds me a lot of those American churches you see on tv shows such as Greenleaf. We walked in amazed and filled with so much awe. I decided to choose seats in about the

fifth row, and I was stunned when the least expected person walked towards us.

David: (smiling) “Hello, ladies. Welcome to Agape Church of Christ.”

I felt a bit numb immediately, as I was captivated by his amazing voice. His striking scent hypnotized me along with his attractive smile. Gosh, I can never get over those perfectly aligned teeth. Faith and Desiree greeted while I was still in a trans, staring at him.

David: “I got you guys VIP seats, you know, to make up for my horrible behaviour towards the most beautiful woman on earth.”

Ziphora: “Flattery will get you everywhere, mister.”

I thought he was joking, but it turns out he was indeed serious.

David: "Shall we?"

He showed us the way with his arm. As soon as Faith and Desiree walked out, I was the last one to get out of the chair. He put his masculine, soft hand on my lower waist and gently whispered in my ear.

David: (whispering) "You look so beautiful."

I looked at him and believe me, all I could see was my knight and shining armour. I have no idea why this guy does what he does to me. The effect he has on me is simply odd. For that moment he had his hand on my waist, I didn't even notice the stares from the women and the shock from the older women as well. He led us to the front row and indeed the chairs in that whole row had "Reserved" on them – all ten chairs.

David: "A little birdy told me you don't like feeling crowded, so I reserved the whole row for you and your friends."

He sounded like he knew just who was going to be there. I couldn't help but feel that perhaps Faith told a certain doctor about our plans to come here.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Thank you."

David: "See you later."

He winked at me and greeted Faith and Desiree goodbye. My heart skipped a few beats, the butterflies were fluttering in my tummy. Not once did I move my eyes from him until he disappeared from the stage to the back.

Desiree: "Seems like you have already made a few enemies, Dr. Mokoena. Go sa tlo nyewa (It's about to go down)."

Ziphora: "What do you mean?"

Faith: (chuckling) "Don't tell me you can't see the stares and glares from all these women in here."

Desiree: “She was all focused on the Pastor’s son. Come on now.”

I ignored them as soon as the choir members descended onto the stage in their beautiful red gowns. The choir conductor led them and they started singing Bucy Radebe’s famous gospel song “Impilo Yami”. They sang it so beautifully, so elegantly and so gracefully. While they were singing, people were rejoicing and I could really feel myself being filled with the holy spirit. Ntate Moruti (Pastor), came out from the back walking alongside his wife Mma Moruti, with Jacob and a heavily pregnant woman walking beside him, whom I assumed was his wife. She looked so beautiful; her skin is so flawless and she didn’t look like she had gained a kilo. Ntate Moruti looked like any other Pastor, although he was wearing Bishop attire. Mma Moruti looked really classy; she had high heels on and wore a Prada dress. She looked like she had expensive taste written all over her. Her weave screamed Peruvian and her make up was flawless. I don’t know if I could ever match up to such a woman. Listen to me talking as if I am already David’s potential. David walked out after all of them and I could hear how the women in the church started clapping and rejoicing a little louder than they did when the others walked out. Damn, I

have never seen a man look so gorgeous in a Turkish suit. He honestly doesn't do it any justice. I know it is a Turkish suit because one of our Varsity lecturers used to wear them day in, day out. The choir was done singing and the congregation started clapping hands. David walked up to the pulpit that had about three microphones in front of him. That is how big the church was.

David: (smiling) "A re lebogeng choire bazalwane (Let's thank the choir once again, my people)."

The congregation gladly clapped hands again. While the rest of his family sat on those big white chairs behind him

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he started preaching.

David: "Today is a very special day to me. I know, you hardly see me standing on this pulpit, but God spoke to me. In fact, he has been speaking to me for quite some time now."

Congregation: "Amen."

David: “As you all know, my mother named me David because she wanted me to be a fearless warrior just like David in the Bible. Whenever I had trouble, she would remind me how David defeated Goliath. He was a King; the King of Israel. He has shown us – many of us that you can do whatever you set your mind to. A lot of you know that I am single and my brother Jacob got married first – before me. I believe in the perfect timing. My mother has been nagging me to get married, but I kept telling her that the timing was just not right.”

The congregation started laughing. I found it rather amazingly odd how these women would occasionally laugh at David’s rather humourless jokes, but I figured they all had hopes that he would marry them. Well, before I tell you why I am actually standing before you today, I’d like to talk to you about two things: Love and Respect. You see without respect, you can forget about love.”

I heard the women shouting another amen. I suppose the elder women like him for their daughters while the young ones come to church with the hopes of catching him. Some of them were

dressed in a rather ghastly manner for church, but who am I to judge?

David: "I'd like to start with respect. You see, when you do not respect people – any kind of people, then it means you lack serious respect for yourself. Now, what kind of impression does that give people about the way you were raised? When you go around disrespecting especially those you don't even know, you bring shame upon your parents. Proverbs 22:6 says; "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Now, we all become obedient until the terrible teens, when we get ruled by worldly things. But in all honesty, what your parents teach you sticks in your mind even when they are gone. Even when you get to my age. Proverbs 1:8-9 says; "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck."

I could see how the women were so interested in this guy. I actually felt a bit pained, my mother would call that jealousy.

David: "James 2:9 says; "But you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." I wronged someone a few days ago. A beautiful, intelligent woman whom I never thought I'd ever cross paths with. Someone I never thought God would ever spare for me and someone I didn't and still don't know very well."

Oh, boy, I thought to myself. Is this man talking about me?

Desiree: (whispering) "He's talking about you, boo. Imagine, a whole meal like him making a whole sermon about you. I'm jealous."

I was stunned, shocked, rather. I had no idea how to feel. Immediately I could hear the women murmuring and talking beneath their breath. I saw his mother look around trying to see who this mysterious woman was. Something about her look, her face in general just told me she was not one to mess with. I can't think what would happen to me should I ever double-cross her.

David: “Now, with respect comes love. I can go on all day about love. We all know God is love, hence our church was named after God’s love.”

I felt a bit flustered as he went on. The cameras were flashing and the video camera kept going around. There were about five men who were recording the congregation and one woman filming the whole sermon. This church business must be huge.

David: “One of my most favourite verses about love in the Bible is from 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 5; “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

People were getting more and more anxious as to why David was suddenly preaching about love. Jacob was smiling on the stage, while both their parents were stunned. His father was clueless, but he was smiling with awe as he stared at his son. His mother, however, was not very impressed. She could barely hide her irritation.

David: "I have met a wonderful women in the past few days. God spoke to me and He revealed to me that she is indeed the one he had been saving for me all this time."

He looked at me and I could feel his eyes sting right through my soul. If only he knew just how much I hated attention. I could feel my palms become sweaty, while my heart was racing at the speed of light.

David: (smiling) "Dr. Ziphora Mokoena, you have shown me that you are the dynamite I need in my life. You feel like a Goliath to me, but a very good Goliath. Not one I have to overcome, but one I have to love and succumb to. I have tried fighting off these feelings, but the heart wants what it wants."

Oh, great. Everyone was shocked, murmuring words of surprise and deep seated shock. The camera started coming towards my direction and I had no idea what to do. I have never been on tv before. Oh, goodness. What's my mom going to say about all this? Who does this guy think he is claiming me before he even asked me to be his?

David: "I leave this song just for you – for the whole world to see my great love for you. Song of Solomon 8:6 – 7; "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised." Forgive me ladies, but I am gladly taken by the beautiful Dr. Ziphora Mokoena."

I was left speechless with my palpitating heart. I almost felt like I was going to die right there and then. It literally felt as if all the eyes in the room were staring at me. His mother's eyes in particular, felt like a dragon's eyes. She was staring at me with pure hatred if I should say the least. I didn't know what to do and leaving was not an option. Everyone would notice that something just was not right. David smiled at me as he went to sit back down. The choir started singing again. I couldn't even hear the song they were singing. I felt like I had zoned out right that instant. Everyone around me didn't exist, but just that very man. I was overwhelmed with mixed feelings. I felt confusion, hatred, disbelief, shock, and what I dreaded most – love. I think it is love, I am just not sure. His eyes never left mine as I stared at him with my sweaty forehead. My soul

cringed at the thought of what he had just done. Putting me on the spotlight like that? My mother always said a man who likes attention is a thoughtless man. He didn't think to ask me about what he had done. We hardly even know one another and yet he had to claim me right in front of nearly 1000 people! What if I hadn't felt the same? What if someone in there was trying to wife me and he stood in the way of that? A million thoughts were racing through my head. I felt so displaced and confused, but something drew me to him. Could it be that love is just a little more different than the old days now? I mean this is the 21st century after all, right?

1 Corinthians 16:14 – “Do everything in love.”

His father took to the stand and started preaching. He went on and on about how David had started to worry them when he just didn't seem like he even thought of the prospect of marriage, but he was happy that he had chose someone as wonderful as I am. Goodness, these people don't even know me. I don't know how to feel right now and I just want this sermon to be over. His mother's piercing stare never left my sight. She was pissed – I could tell. Perhaps David overstepped his mark by announcing his “undying love” for me in front of everyone. She is probably a part of some elite society and had promised one of her prim and proper besties that her eldest son would marry her virgin daughter. I am not fit to be a pastor's wife.

I doubt I could ever fit into such a family. Imagine having to live with so many rules. It could never be me, but I think I love David. It is strange, but I think I do. What if he is the one for me? Would I have to bend over backwards for him? Before I knew it, the sermon was over – 3 hours later. Thank goodness. As soon as the Bishop greeted us goodbye, I stood up and

didn't even think of Faith and Desiree. I ignored the stares and glares of everyone I didn't know and I stormed out of the church. I walked out and stood right behind Faith's car and I felt as if I had taken my very first breath of relief in 3 hours. What the hell just happened? Are we a couple now? I was breathing in and out, when I saw those Turkish shoes as I was staring at the ground. His scent couldn't miss me – not in a million years. I looked up and it was him. I felt his soft touch on my back and felt numb all over again.

David: (worried) "Hey, are you okay?"

Okay? Is he seriously kidding me?

Ziphora: "What just happened in there, David?"

David: "I don't understand. I was showing you how I feel."

Ziphora: "You don't even know me and now you suddenly confess your undying love for me in front of everyone I don't

even know! In front of cameras even. I might be on tv today and you never even warned me.”

David: “I’m really sorry, Zee. I was trying to be original – romantic as your generation calls it.”

There he goes with his condescending attitude.

Ziphora: “My generation?”

David: “Pardon me. I didn’t mean it like that. I haven’t felt this way about a woman in a very long time, Zee. I am so sorry for putting you on the spot like that, but I felt like I had to act before someone claimed you before I could. It’s not a competition or anything, but I’d really hate to lose out on marrying someone like you.”

I felt so numb, in a good way. I could see Faith and Desiree staring at us from a distance. Everyone around us was looking at me in annoyance, while his mother and father walked out of

the church. His dad proceeded to the car, while his mother stopped and stared at us.

Mma Moruti: "David! Are you coming?"

David: "I actually asked my father if you and your friends could have Sunday lunch with us today right after church. I asked him before the sermon because I knew you'd be here. I know it's short notice, but what do you say?"

I looked at Faith and Desiree and they just signalled for me to nod. Ai, those two.

Ziphora: "Okay."

Mma Moruti: "David!"

David: "Go ahead, Ma. I'm coming with Zee and her friends."

He calls me Zee. Very few people – special people call me Zee. Faith rushed towards the car along with Desiree. I have a feeling these two knew about all this by the way they are acting. Faith got into the driver's seat, while Desiree got into the passenger seat next to Faith. That was part of their plan I bet, to get David and I to sit alongside one another at the back of the car. I don't know about him, but there is just a weird aura around him. He just seems like a mystery to me. He was smiling at me all the way, holding my hand. I felt electrifying sensations. I wonder if sex feels like this. It sounds stupid coming from a doctor, but I have heard it feels even better than a mere stroke or touch. David was making conversation with my friends, while gently stroking my hand. I tried removing mine from his, but he gently pulled my hand right back into his. He doesn't strike me as someone who's very affectionate, but I guess time will tell. That is if I give him a chance. We didn't drive very long as he was directing Faith where to make the turn to their house. Yep, as I expected. Their house is one huge mansion. We don't have a lot of these in Silverton. It was so big, it probably had eight or ten rooms or something.

Ziphora: "Wow, this house is so beautiful."

David: (chuckling) "You haven't even walked in yet. Come."

He got out and rushed to my side to open the door for me. Faith and Desiree were really impressed. I got to see him upfront and actually noticed how tall he is. He isn't that dark; he has a well-trimmed beard and his biceps were protruding right out of his suit. He does look like he exercises quite often and he is rather tall. I also noticed a very unusual birthmark on the side of his left temple. We walked into the house and we were immediately greeted by a butler. It seems as if they have a whole house full of helpers. I don't call people servants. Not in my book. As soon as we walked in there were about two people who were setting the table. His parents were not in the dining area yet, but we found Jacob and his wife there. His wife looks absolutely beautiful. She smiled and stood up as soon as she saw us.

Jeannette: "You must be Ziphora. My word, I have heard so much about you in just a few days. David has never spoken about a woman like that. Whatever you are doing, you're doing it right. Keep it up, babe."

She smiled and gently hugged me. She and I were about the same height. I don't know what it is with short girls and tall men, but hey. She greeted my friends along with Jacob.

Jacob: (smiling) "Dr. Mokoena, we meet again."

Ziphora: "Likewise, Dr. Mosue."

David was smiling at us as he kept staring at me and gently placing his hand on my back and stroking me. I really don't know what this is. I mean, this man and I have barely had a conversation and I am meeting his family. His father was first to walk down the beautiful staircase. The floors and walls were all draped in marble. They must be really rich. I hope it is not the church money. He doesn't look very old at all and he looks quite fit in fact. He smiled as he walked towards us with his arms open. I assumed he was going to hug David, but no. He went straight towards me.

Ntate Moruti: (smiling) "My future daughter in law."

He gave me one long hug leaving me really dazed. This can't be right, can it?

Ntate Moruti: "You know, when this boy of mine told me about you to be honest, I thought it was just one of those little projects of his, but as soon as he told me about you the second time. I knew that he had found his wife. Pardon me, my name is Mack. Please, call me Papa."

He hugged Desiree and Faith as well. He seems like a really loving father. He doesn't strike me as a very strict father figure.

Ntate Moruti: "Please, let's sit. My wife will probably take another decade before she comes down."

Mma Moruti: "I know you're not talking about me, Mack."

She walked down the stairs in a whole new outfit from the one I saw her in at church. This time, the first lady was dressed in full Versace – gold high heels and a very gorgeous long sleeved

Versace Maxi dress. My goodness, she looks like she breathes designer air with no wrinkle in sight.

Ntate Moruti: (chuckling) “Oh, Julia. I was just bluffing. You know me.”

She gave me a fake smile. I know one when I see one. I mean, I’m a doctor. A part of my job is to be able to read people.

Julia: (fake smiling) “You must be the girl that stole my David’s heart. Please, stand up so I can take a good look at you.”

I don’t know what it is about this woman, but everything she says seems condescending. I’m a girl now? And why do I have to stand up?

David: “Ma, please.”

Julia: “Sit down, wena (you).”

Amazingly, he sat down without even saying a word further. Could he be a mama's boy? I stood up because I had no idea what else to do. I can't possibly defy a woman in her own house. She looked at me from head to toe. It's not like I wasn't dressed to the occasion, I mean I was dressed in a Burberry dress. I am not poor, but there is no way I can possibly buy a R50 000 dress for myself. I refuse. She looked at me like I just didn't even matter. It felt like she did that to break my spirit or something. I was a bit hurt by that, I mean, for a woman of God.

Mma Moruti: "Well, there's nothing we can't fix here. You have a great body, I'll give you that and my grandchildren will most certainly not look like charcoal."

Wow, is she really trying to say that I'm just light and not that pretty? What a consolation prize.

Ntate Moruti: (unimpressed) "Julia, we have guests. You promised to behave yourself."

Mma Moruti: “Pardon me, my husband. I tend to get carried away.”

Ntate Moruti: “You’d better behave yourself or else I’ll have to excuse you. I can’t have you embarrass me in front of guests. Don’t do that. Not ever again.”

He was firmly reprimanding her right in front of us. Wow. She seemed really unhappy – in general, but at that moment she felt really unhappy with her husband. It was clearly visible. I am just a bit shocked that David didn’t even stand up for me in front of his mother. What kind of man is this? Maybe she is the reason why he isn’t married at all.

Mma Moruti: “It won’t happen again.”

Ntate Moruti asked that we hold hands and close our eyes to pray for the food. I had a strange feeling, so I decided to open my eyes. I was stunned to find Julia staring at me so coldly. I stared right back at her because if I had closed my eyes immediately, it would be a sign of weakness, she would have thought that I was scared of her and I’m not about to let her

win. I already sound like a daughter in law against her evil mother in law. As soon as Mack said Amen

Julia faked smiled again. I was in disbelief. This woman could win an Oscar for her performance. She was trying to be funny, but I never allowed her to do that to me.

Mma moruti: “So, Ziphora, I hear you’re a doctor. It must really be a tedious job dealing with blood and staring at women’s private parts all day.”

Hehe, this woman is the pits.

Ziphora: “Actually I’m an obstetrician gynaecologist. That simply means that I deal with women’s pregnancies up to when they give birth. It is more than just staring at women’s private parts all day and dealing with blood. I give life; I help and counsel women who go through a lot. For instance, a lot of women go through traumatic births. I had a woman in her 20s who was dealing with an incompetent cervix. That simply means that her cervix was not much able to carry a baby to term. I had to monitor her from the moment she found out she was pregnant. It was a huge step for her and things got worse when she found out she was carrying twins. To make matters

worse, she had placenta previa, which is a lot common than people think. That simply means that a woman's placenta splits from the womb which could result in potential death. I was there to help her throughout the whole process. After constant monitoring and bed rest, I had to perform an emergency c-section when she was just 6 months pregnant. I safely delivered her twin babies. It was a miracle for her and I was part of it. She named the girl after me because I helped her deliver safely – after she had lost hope when she lost 3 babies. Faith here is a neurologist, which I am sure you know just how important her job is because your own son is one too. Desiree here is an Oncologist; she saves a lot of patients from cancer and sees a lot of them pass on. It can't be easy being a doctor, the same way it most probably isn't easy being a pastor. So, it means more to me than that.”

I could tell I had irked her but I felt good about myself. No one will trash talk me and get away with it. I didn't give a fuck being in her house at that very moment. She had to know her place.

Jeannette was smiling and I could tell she didn't like her mother in law much. Ntate Moruti was impressed, and so was David, but he was just so quiet. He literally watched his impudent mother try and lynch me right there.

Mma moruti: “Well, I am sure it is a hectic career. Pardon my ignorance, my dear.”

I just fake smiled and decided to play along.

Ziphora: “This is such lovely food, Mma Moruti.”

Julia: “Please, call me Julia.”

Ziphora: “I could never. My mother taught me that I should always respect elders. I love this stuffed chicken. I’d love to have the recipe of course, so I could also cook like this for my own husband one day.”

She was irritated by the word elders.

Ntate Moruti: “Oh, my wife doesn’t cook, child. She hasn’t cooked in decades. She only knows how to boil an egg.”

Jeannette and Jacob laughed so hard, along with Ntate Moruti. I played along and Faith and Desiree as well as David laughed as well. I was having a good time, believe me.

David: “Hawu (Goodness), Zee. Why does it seem like that husband isn’t me?”

Ziphora: “I don’t remember you asking me to be your girlfriend to say the least.”

David: (chuckling) “Well, will you be my girlfriend?”

Jeannette: “Come on, David. You can do better than that. Charm her; sweep her off her feet.”

They all laughed except for the dragon in the room.

Mma Moruti: “When I was your age I was already married. Romance is just something written in books. Men would just tell you they’re sending a letter to your uncles and that’s it.”

Ziphora: “Well, isn’t it lovely how times have changed? I mean men today know a woman’s worth. They know that they have to sweep them off their feet. Marriage has to be consensual and not a matter of racing with time. I don’t mind getting married at 40.”

She was annoyed as hell while the rest of them were seeing past that. We ate the rest of our meal until she decided to just shut up and let the rest of us talk. I must say, after one glass of wine, I was already the talk of the table. Faith and Desiree were so impressed with me and Mma Moruti was staring at me throughout.

Ziphora: “May I ask where the bathroom is?”

Ntate Moruti: “Oh, you go up the stairs and take the – “

Julia must have taken that as a chance for her to give me a piece of my mind.

Mma Moruti: "Oh, it's okay, darling. I'll show her."

David: "Don't kill my wife, please."

She let out a ridiculously evil and fake laugh.

Julia: (laughing) "I would do no such thing."

She walked me up the stairs smiling at me and as soon as we were out of the people's eyes, she decided to show me her true colours.

Mma moruti: (irritated) "Listen here, girly. I don't know what you're playing at but you won't win."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Excuse me, Ma? I don't know what you mean."

Mma Moruti: “Don’t you fuck with me. You’d better ask the last girl what happened to her when she tried to fuck with Julia Mosue.”

She can swear like that? What a foul mouth. I probably knew I was playing with fire, but how many men have lost out on good women because of evil mothers? I wasn’t going to let a good chance like that slide.

Ziphora: “With all due respect, ma, I am not fucking with you as you say. I am simply enjoying my lunch with you and the family. I have no desire to fuck with you. I thought we were getting along.”

Mma Moruti: “Keep going, girly and you’ll get burnt. David does whatever I tell him to do. You won’t win him over like that. Besides, you’re not fit to be a Church wife with your fake Burberry.”

She gave me a filthy look and walked back down the stairs leaving me in pure shock. Excuse her, my outfit is real. How can a pastor’s wife be so evil? I went into the toilet fuming but I

decided I would not let her get the best of me. I wasn't raised like that. I went back downstairs and she was all fake.

Mma moruti: "Oh, you made it back down. We were getting so worried about you."

Ziphora: "Mma Moruti, I had a funny recollection in the bathroom, and I wanted to ask you something."

Mma Moruti: "Go ahead dear."

Ziphora: "You must be so familiar with the Bible, but so am I. My mother taught me so well. What does Genesis 2:24 say?"

I saw her slowly lose her smile and I was smiling right at her. Everyone around the table was looking at her, awaiting her response.

Ntate Moruti: (chucking) "Don't tell me you don't know, my wife."

Mma Moruti: “Of course I know! “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”

I smiled and nodded at her.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Correct.”

Mma Moruti decided she could also be funny, but I was one step ahead of that old hag.

Mma Moruti: “Do you know what 2 Corinthians 6:14 says?”

Ziphora: “Of course. Do not be equally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

She was instantly annoyed. I know my Bible, shem.

Ntate Moruti: “You sure do know your Bible, Ziphora.”

Mma Moruti: “Oh, hush, Mack. It’s only a few verses.”

Ziphora: “Well, my mother always taught me that a lot of people are not what they seem. Proverbs 13:7-17 says; “A pretentious, showy life is an empty life; a plain and simple life is a full life. The rich can be sued for everything they have, but the poor are free of such threats. The lives of good people are brightly lit streets; the lives of the wicked are dark alleys. Arrogant know-it-alls stir up discord, but wise men and women listen to each other’s counsel. Easy come, easy go, but steady diligence pays off. Unrelenting disappointment leaves you heartsick, but a sudden good break can turn life around. Ignore the Word and suffer; teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, so no more drinking from death-tainted wells! Sound thinking makes for gracious living, but liars walk a rough road. A commonsense person lives good sense; fools litter the country with silliness. Irresponsible talk makes a real mess of things, but a reliable reporter is a healing presence.”

They were all stunned – except for Faith and Desiree of course.

Ntate Moruti: “Very profound, Ziphora. I must say, you are one exceptional lady. You will make a very good church wife indeed. Don’t you think, Julia?”

Mma Moruti: (annoyed) “Well, she tries.”

I knew right there and then that I had hit the nail on the head. I have made an enemy of my future mother in law and she didn’t like me at all. There is something really fishy about this woman. A whole woman of God acting like that? As Mark 4:22 says; “For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light.” I will find out what this wolf in sheep clothing is hiding. I can tell it is already darker than what I think.

6

Matthew 23:28 – “So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

The lunch was pleasant amongst other things. I got to see different types of David, to be honest. He didn't seem to want to stand up to his mother, like his father and Jacob. At least Jeannette was covered, her husband was always ready to defend his wife against any injustice by his mother. After dessert, it was finally time to go home.

Ziphora: “Mr. and Mrs. Mosue, I'm very glad you welcomed us into your home. I do hope to see you soon.”

Mma Moruti: (fake smile) “Well, we can only hope, dear.”

Ntate Moruti: “I for one can't wait to see you again. David, o berekele nakong (don't waste time with her), please.”

We all laughed except the she devil.

David: "I'll walk you out."

Faith and Desiree walked out ahead of us, leaving David and I behind them.

Ziphora: "I had a really great time. Please do send my apologies to your mother if I somehow ruined lunch."

David: (smiling) "Nonsense, don't be silly. There is absolutely no need for that."

Ziphora: "Okay then. I guess I'll see you around."

David: "Wait a minute. I was wondering if I could take you out tomorrow night?"

That was music to my ears.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Sure. I knock off at 7."

David: "Okay then. I'll be in touch."

He kissed my cheek and hugged me. I got into the car full of smiles as I sat in the back.

Desiree: "Bona (look) Faith, someone o maratong (is in love)."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Haai suka (stop it). I'm not."

Faith: "All I am saying is you have made a serious enemy out of your future mother in law."

Desiree: "Ag, she deserved it anyways."

Faith: "I'm just saying that you just need to be careful around her. Something just isn't right about her."

Ziphora: "She cornered me when I went to the toilet."

Desiree: (shocked) "What did she say?"

Ziphora: "She just said that I shouldn't think that David will marry me. That he does whatever she tells him to and that I'm not fit to be a church wife."

They both kept quiet and became instantly numb with shock.

Faith: "I still don't think it is a good idea to pursue this relationship, though, Zee."

Desiree: "Perhaps Faith is right this time."

Ziphora: "Come on, guys. Whatever happened to believing in God and placing everything in His hands?"

Faith: "I'm just saying that I wouldn't risk my life if I were you. She basically threatened you."

She had a point right there, but it's easy for them to talk. They have boyfriends. What about me? I've never even had one.

Ziphora: "I really appreciate your concern, honestly guys, but I think there is no need to panic. I honestly don't want to punish David for his mother's sins."

Faith: "If you say so babe. Just be careful."

I appreciate them being so concerned for me, but I honestly think I am old enough to make my own choices, just as they are. They dropped me off at home and I greeted them goodbye. I must have lost track of time, but Mama was not home yet. I went into the house and checked my phone. I was rather alarmed to find so many notifications. So many people have mentioned me on Twitter and Facebook. I decided to log into Twitter first because all the drama happens there. People were talking about me. Since when am I a celebrity?

"Pastor David Mosue's new girlfriend." "David Mosue, Pastor and son of the Bishop as well as prominent businessman and

architect professed his love to newly graduated doctor Ziphora Mokoena. Here is the video below.”

I couldn't believe it. I had become famous in just a few hours. It didn't really sit well with me. I like my life the way it has always been – private. I played the video and it was a snippet of David when he talked about me. The camera was faced to me and man, I looked horrible. I can actually see myself shaking and drowning in my own sweat on the video. What a way to break through as my first appearance on tv. So many people were suddenly Dming me, even people I have never spoken to on in years – since high school maybe. I ignored them as well as all the other nasty comments by people who don't even know me. Social media trolls are not my focus right now. As I was about to get on Facebook, Mama called me. Oh, dammit! I forgot about all her missed calls – all 15 of them. I answered the call dreadfully.

Ziphora: “Hello, Mama.”

Susan: (angered) “Ziphora Mokoena! Go thoma neng o sa arabe di phone calls tsa mmao (Since when do you ignore your mother's calls)?”

Ziphora: “Askies (Sorry), Mama. Sale e le (it’s been) on silent from this morning.”

Susan: “Jah (yes), akere o hlagela mo tv ke sa tsebe selo (you even appeared on tv whereas I know nothing. Ke utlwa ka batho ke nursa balwetsi mo (I heard from others while I was busy nursing patients).”

Eish, I knew that I was in for it.

Ziphora: “Askies (Sorry)

Advertisement

Mama. I honestly had no idea he was going to do that.”

Susan: “E le gore ne o le kae (Where were you) after church?”

I could never lie to my mom, not even over the phone.

Ziphora: (shaky) “We.. nna le (Me and)...”

Susan: (annoyed) “Bolela o nsenyetsa nako (Speak, you’re wasting my time)!”

Ziphora: “Faith, Desiree and I were invited over to eat Sunday Lunch with the Bishop and his family.”

My mom paused for a while. I could tell she was not impressed.

Ziphora: “Mama? Are you still there?”

Susan: “Tell this boy I’d like to meet him for dinner tomorrow night.”

Ziphora: “But mama, I – “

Susan: “I’ll see you later.”

She hung up and didn't even let me explain myself. I felt myself panic. I don't even know why, but one thing I know is that my mother fails to pretend, so she doesn't even bother. I already know she's going to give me lip about David and she doesn't like him already. I was about to scroll further on Facebook, when Koko called me.

Ziphora: "Dumela (Hello) Koko."

Koko: (ululating) "A riye riye riye! Ga o sa mpotsa ditaba tse monate, ngwana ngwanaka na (you don't even bother telling me the good news, my grand child)?"

Ziphora: "What good news?"

Koko: "Hao (Goodness), why o iketsa bhari (why are you acting stupid)? I saw the video of you and David in church. Hehe, ngwanaka (my baby), God is good. Saving yourself up to now did not go to waste."

Ziphora: "Koko bathing (Goodness, granny)."

Koko: "I'm just saying fela (only). Julia called me earlier on. She says she is so delighted to have met a strong-willed woman like you."

Jah, neh. That woman is so pretentious, it just isn't funny.

Ziphora: "She said that?"

Koko: "Oh, yes. She even wants you to meet the women's church league this coming Sunday."

Wow, is she setting a death trap for me already?

Ziphora: "Oh, I see."

Koko: "I already told her you're coming."

Ziphora: “Koko, you don’t even know if I’ll be working or not.”

Koko: “Make a plan, Zee. This is your future we are talking about. You don’t want to miss out on a great opportunity like this. Anyway, I have to go. Your grandpa sends his regards. Goodbye.”

She hung up leaving me so frustrated. Mama won’t like this. Not one bit. I surely can’t tell her about what Julia did to me today. She’ll never let me marry David. What am I even saying? I shouldn’t be counting my chickens before they hatch? I moved on and decided to play music and cook before Mama comes back home. Perhaps I should move out and find myself a place to stay. I was finally done and decided to take a shower. Once I was done, I was interrupted by a call from an unknown number.

Ziphora: “Hello?”

David: “Hi. It’s me, David.”

I felt those goosebumps all over again.

Ziphora: "Oh, hey. How did you get my number?"

David: (chuckling) "I'm a man of many ways. Did you get home safely?"

Ziphora: "I did, yes, thank you."

David: "I was just calling to check up on you. I can't wait to see you tomorrow."

Ziphora: "Speaking of which. My mother would like you to join us for dinner tomorrow night."

David: "But we have our own plans, isn't it?"

Ziphora: "She is not happy with what she saw today on Youtube, so basically she didn't make it a request."

David: "So, basically I am trouble."

Ziphora: "Something like that."

David: "Damn. I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to make things difficult for you like that."

Ziphora: "It's alright. She just wants to meet you since I have already met your parents."

He kept quiet for a short while which kept me wondering. Surely it shouldn't be a problem for him to meet my mother. I mean, I have already met his parents before we even started dating. I'm not even sure what it is we are doing now.

Ziphora: "David? Are you still there?"

David: "Oh, yes, yes. I am. It's not a problem. I'll be there."

Ziphora: "Thank you. I really appreciate it."

David: "I'd do anything for you. We'll talk tomorrow. Have a good night."

Ziphora: "Goodnight then."

He hung up and I sighed in relief. I don't know why, but I had a strange feeling deep within me. It kind of felt like he was ready to call it quits before it even occurred. Maybe we are just taking things way too fast or something. I found myself dozing off to sleep before I even knew it. All I can say is that better days had better come. It's high time I also receive my dose of happiness.

7

Matthew 7:15 – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

I woke up right after my morning alarm rang and I realized I dozed off right after my call with David. I didn’t even get a chance to speak to Mama after she came back from work. She must be very mad at me right now. I slowly dragged myself to my ensuite bathroom and I took a shower. I put on some make up and looked at my hair. I have always had a big afro – my entire life. Perhaps it is time for some change. I mean, I’m a 25 year old soon to be 26, I have a full time job and it is high time I look like a proper doctor. I put on my jeans and a blouse and headed out of my room. I was hoping not to find Mama in the dining area, but as expected, she had made us a whole feast for breakfast.

Ziphora: (nervously) “Dumela (Morning) Mama.”

Susan: “Dulema (Hello) Ziphora. O robetse jwang (How did you sleep)?”

Ziphora: "Very well, thank you. Wena (You)?"

Susan: "Ah, I've had better nights."

I knew she was referring to me."

Susan: "Sit down."

Ziphora: "I wish I could Mama, but I'm going to be late."

Susan: "You drive like a maniac, I'm sure you won't be late. Sit down."

I sat down reluctantly, while she dished up for me. She handed me the food, I thanked her while she walked back to her chair. She deliberately sat right across me so that she could eye me well. I felt rather uncomfortable and a bit scared.

Susan: "I know what you're thinking."

Ziphora: "You do?"

Susan: "What kind of man is David?"

Ziphora: (smiling) "I don't really know yet, Ma. But all I can say is that he is intelligent, humble and has a great sense of humor."

Okay, I lied about the sense of humor part. He is not really that funny, but he is sweet.

Susan: "I know you think that I am a harsh person and that I am still too strict with you, but to be honest, Zee, my baby, you don't have the best experience with boys. You basically have no experience at all. If I throw you into the lion's den right now, that would be me making the second biggest mistake of my life. I don't want to see you get hurt the way I did. I just want the best for you. I don't want you to have a bad day thinking about tonight. I want to meet him so that I can know what kind of man I am giving my daughter away to. And only then, will I be able to give you my blessing. I cannot choose a

man for you and I'd never want to be the kind of mother my mother ever was to me."

Finally, my mother had given me her semi-blessing. I'm glad she was honest with me.

Ziphora: (excited) "Thank you so much, Mama. It really means the world to me."

Susan: (smiling) "Alright. Now go before you really become late."

I hugged and kissed her cheek, took my lunch bag and left. I had a really good drive even though I love driving in speed. I made it to work in ten minutes and I met my girls as usual. Upon walking to my office, I bumped into Dr. Jacob Mosue.

Jacob: (smiling) "My future sister in law."

Did he really just call me that?

Ziphora: (chuckling) “Future sister-in-law? We’re not even dating.”

Jacob: “Let’s just say he hasn’t asked you yet.”

He winked at me and left. I laughed all by myself as I walked to my office. I had my very first patient; an eighteen year old girl named Luvo. I didn’t ask much, but apparently she slept with her very first boyfriend and once he found out she was pregnant, he wanted nothing to do with her. She is a very bright girl and apparently lost her nursing bursary because of her pregnancy. She wanted to abort the child, but her mother forced her not to. So, here she is – 8 months later. I walked into my office and found her mother alongside her bed. She was already on the bed waiting for me.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Hello. And how are we today?”

Luvo: (smiling) “We’re doing just fine today, thank you.”

Luvo's mom: (smiling) "She has been sleeping so much, doctor. Please encourage her to exercise more especially now that she is nearing her due date. Otherwise, she'll have a very long labor."

Ziphora: (laughing) "Well, Luvo, exercise is important, but in your case, I'd suggest that you do some mild walking. Don't overwork yourself, otherwise you will go into pre-term labor."

Luvo: "You heard it yourself, ke Mama."

Luvo's mom: "I'm just trying to help. I need my grand baby alive and healthy."

From the outside, it seems as if Luvo's mom is one of those supportive mothers, but Luvo sometimes feels so overwhelmed by her. It seems rather odd, but it is as if she forced Luvo to actually have this child. They remind me a lot of my grandmother and my mother.

Ziphora: “Well, you know the drill. It won’t be painful, just a little cold, okay?”

She nodded as I proceeded with the sonar scan. As predicted, her baby did not turn.

Ziphora: “As you can see, the baby’s heart beat is just fine, he is still a bit big, hey. The father must have some really strong genes because you’re so tiny.”

Luvo: “Well, the father is – “

Luvo’s mother: (interrupting) “The father is quite tall and a bit chubby, you know. These small boys from the village with hectic genes.”

She let out a slight, nervous laughter and I could tell she was hiding something. Luvo stared at her with displeasure and I knew that something was not right.

Zipho: “Anyway, the baby hasn’t turned. You’re 35 weeks pregnant and by now, he should have turned.”

Luvo: “So what does that mean?”

Zipho: “Well, it means that you need to prepare yourself for a C-section. You can’t give birth naturally in your tiny frame to a baby who’s going to weigh about 4-5kg.”

Luvo looked a little worried, while the mother just seemed as if she didn’t understand me. She looked as if she refused to understand what I was saying.

Luvo’s mom: “Oh, that’s nonsense. I mean my family is made of strong women. My grandmother had her first child at 14, my mother had me when she was 16 and I had Luvo when I was Luvo’s age. We all had natural births – none of us had operations.”

Zipho: (sigh) “Mama, I understand what you mean, but we are talking about Luvo here. Your genes don’t play a role here. If I

don't perform a C-section, she will die. I don't think you want that on your hands, because as her doctor, I refuse to take chances with her life."

She kept quiet for a second and her phone interrupted our discussion.

Luvo's mom: "Excuse me for a minute. I have to take this."

She walked out promptly. It was the very first time I had a chance to speak to Luvo alone ever since she became my patient.

Ziphora: "Luvo, is everything okay? Seriously okay?"

Luvo: (nervously) "Ye... yes, doctor. Everything is fine."

Ziphora: "You do know that you can talk to me about anything, right? And that whatever you say to me remains just between the two of us. I am not obliged to tell your mother anything."

Luvo kept quiet for a while. I could tell she was hiding something – something big. I decided not to pry and make her feel uncomfortable even further.

Ziphora: “Here. This is my number. If you ever feel the need to talk. You can call, WhatsApp or even send a please call me.”

Luvo: (smiling) “Thank you.”

I helped her up and decided to walk her out. I have no idea what kept her mother out of the room for so long since she is forever by her side. Something is strange, but whatever it is, I hope she is not abused. As we walked out, I found Luvo’s mother talking to David. He was dressed in a suit, holding a Kream Café doggy bag. They were talking to one another like they knew each other. It was just odd. Once they saw me they became a bit nervous, while Luvo became instantly stiff.

David: (smiling) “Zee, hey.”

Ziphora: "Hey. What brings you here?"

David: "I came to bring my lovely girl some lunch."

Luvo had her hand in mine, but as soon as David said that, she instantly removed it from mine.

Ziphora: (chuckling) "You two know each other?"

Luvo's mom: (nervous) "Oh

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I mean everyone knows Pastor David. He is a man of his word."

Ziphora: "A man of his word?"

Luvo's mom: "Oh, Luvo is one of the beneficiaries of the Agape foundation. He has been so good to us."

Well, it makes a lot of sense. What doesn't make sense is how Luvo immediately tensed up as soon as she saw him. I don't get it. Maybe I am reading too much into things.

Luvo's mom: "Anyway, we should get going. Luvo, masihambe (let's go)."

Luvo: "Bye Dr. Mokoena."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Bye."

They walked out while her mother was dragging her out of the hospital in such haste. It felt as if something weird was going on.

David: (smiling) "I thought you'd be hungry."

Ziphora: "My friends won't be too happy if you only brought food for me. We always eat together."

David: “Well, in that case, I’ll make it up to them. No doubt. I bought enough for three.”

Ziphora: “Thank you, but you still haven’t asked me to be your girlfriend yet.”

David: (smiling) “Well, in that case I had better make it up to you very fast.”

He kissed my cheek and everyone was staring. It’s rather embarrassing that I have become some sort of celebrity now. I hate it. I like my privacy.

David: “I’ll see you tonight.”

He winked at me and left. Mosue men and winking at women. No, man. I blushed and tried to maintain my composure as I walked to the cafeteria. Within minutes, Desiree and Faith came rushing as if they were dodging something serious.

Desire: (frantic) "Where is he?"

Faith: "Is he gone?"

Ziphora: (frowning) "And then Iona (you two)?"

Faith: "We heard that your boyfriend is here."

Ziphora: (sigh) "He's not my boyfriend."

Faith: "He is. He just hasn't asked you yet."

Ai, these two.

Desiree: "Anyway, what are we eating?"

Ziphora: "We're eating food from Kream. Apparently he bought enough for three."

I didn't really look into the bag yet, as I felt it was a bit heavy, though. Desiree being herself opened it and indeed there was so much food – fit enough for three. Oxtail, lamb shank and Asian seared tuna salad.

Desiree: “Ooh, I’m going to enjoy this meal.”

Funny enough, he got a few of my favourites. What bothers me is how he found out because I never told him. Come to think of it, we have never even held a conversation that long to even talk about our likes and dislikes, interests and so on. Yet, he knows so much about me while I don't know half of anything to do with him. I took it as if someone told him; someone meaning Desiree or Faith or perhaps the two of them combined.

Desiree: “So, how does it feel being the most wanted and the most hated women in South Africa right now?”

Faith: “Phela your Insta has raised some serious bars overnight, girl. You have gone from 250 followers to 20 000! Isn't that fantastic for a loner like you?”

Ziphora: (laughing) “Wa bora, waitse (you’re so boring, you know), Faith.”

Faith: “I’m boring, but very honest, babe. You know what I always say.”

Desiree: “Honesty saves time. We know.”

Faith: “Exactly.”

Ziphora: (sigh) “Believe me, I don’t like all this unnecessary fame. You know how I love my privacy. I am even thinking of deleting all my social media profiles.”

Desiree: “Don’t be insane. You have never let anything get you down.”

Ziphora: “I know, but because of that, Mama was so angry. She even asked to meet David tonight for dinner. I mean, everything just feels a bit weird.”

Faith: "If it feels weird, it might be a sign."

Ziphora: "What sign?"

Faith: "Nothing. I'm just saying be careful. Your mother has no filter, so good luck."

She was right. I needed that luck most definitely.

Desiree: "Oh, nna I'd love me a man who could bring me lunch to work. Thabiso is so predictable, ai. Makes me the same lunch everyday, gives me head the very same way all the time."

Faith: "I'd die. It could never be me, boo."

Desiree: "Sometimes I just wish he could be a bit freaky."

Faith: "Then tell him. Like I said, honesty saves time."

She was right. Honesty does save us a lot of time. I just started feeling a bit anxious about tonight. What if Mama ends up hating him or I'd have to choose between the two of them? I don't really know what to do right now. Time passed and it was finally time to go home. I was about to get into my car when I found David in the parking lot.

David: (smiling) "Hey."

He looked so gorgeous in a black Turkish suit. It seems as if he is a man who takes much delight in Turkish attire.

Ziphora: "Hey. I didn't expect you here."

David: "Well, I thought we could drive to your house together."

Ziphora: "What about my car?"

David: “You could leave it here. I can have someone bring it over to your house or I can fetch you tomorrow morning.”

I guess it’s okay, I mean I am so tired.

Ziphora: “Okay then.”

I walked towards him and he opened my car door for me. He is such a gentleman. His car smells so fine, it is so neat and there is not even a piece of dirt in sight. His beautiful Mercedes Benz is covered in leather seats and he does not even seem like he smokes at all.

Ziphora: “Nice car.”

David: (chuckling) “Well, one day I’ll buy you one like this – a better one even. When you become my wife.”

David is a really nice guy, but the way he just likes confirming things without asking me is just odd.

Ziphora: "Can I ask you a question?"

David: "Sure. Anything."

Ziphora: "How come you always just assume or state things. You never really ask."

David: (frowning) "I don't understand."

Ziphora: "I mean you have never asked me what kind of food I like or anything like that, yet you managed to bring me food that I like. Don't you find that odd?"

David: "I'm really sorry. I honestly wanted to surprise you. I did a little digging on you by asking your friends about the kind of things you like. I haven't really been in a relationship in so long, Zee. The last woman I dated just made my life pure hell. I don't like talking about it and thinking about it is even worse. I seriously just wanted to make you think that I'm romantic, you know."

Oh, now I feel like shit.

Ziphora: “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make it seem as if you’re not making an effort. It’s just that, you’re not direct with me. You just call me your girlfriend, but I don’t recall you asking. We haven’t even gone on a date and yet you professed your love to me in front of hundreds of people and now thousands of people saw it. I am trending as your future wife when I am not even your girlfriend. It’s a bit frustrating and confusing, that’s all.”

David: (chuckling) “I see. I am really sorry. I can make a deal with you. From now on, I’ll make sure I communicate with you no matter what. I’ll try to surprise you whenever I can, though. Is that okay?”

Ziphora: “Yes, it is. But then, I don’t even know what we are. According to my understanding we were just Ziphora and David.”

We entered our complex and he started laughing.

David: "Well then."

He switched off the ignition and stared me right in the eyes. Oh, his eyes are so beautiful, hazel brown in colour and so seductive.

David: "Ziphora Mokoena, will you please be my girlfriend?"

This is just not very usual and ideal. He told the world he loves me and a day later he asked me to be his girlfriend.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Yes, I will."

He kissed my cheek and I just wished he could kiss me. Not that I even know how. Wow, I'm actually 25 and I have never kissed a man. A whole 25 year old. We walked out and headed to my house. He had a paper bag with a bunch of lillies in his hand. This is going to be interesting. The aroma of fresh herbs and mixed spices hit my nostrils immediately when I opened

the door. Mama was dishing up into our dishes on the dining table.

Susan: (smiling) “Ao (Goodness), Ziphora ngwanaka (my baby). You are finally home.”

She rushed to hug me. Oddly, she was dressed to impress. Is she planning something? She wasn't too keen on meeting David, but yet she is so friendly. She looked at David and smiled.

Susan: (smiling) “You must be David. How lovely to meet you.”

Oddly, she hugged him as well.

David: (smiling) “Thank you, Mme (Ma). These are for you.”

Susan: “Oh, thank you.”

She opened the gift right there and then. According to what she taught me, opening a gift right after you were given it is a bit rude. She opened it and found two bottles of Flagstone Writer's Block Pinotage. They are a bit expensive. Ai, he is trying a little too hard if you ask me.

Susan: (frowning) "How do you know if I even drink?"

David: "Well, you're a Nurse and it is one of the most demanding professions in the world. So, I assumed you might like a nice bottle of fine wine or two every now and then."

That is not what he told me the first time he met me. Perhaps he has changed his mindset.

Susan: (laughing) "I like you already. Come, let's sit down. Ziphora weh, tsamay o changer (go change)."

I couldn't help but feel a bit odd. I mean, she didn't like him and now he bought her some expensive wine and said a few good words about her profession and suddenly she is all over him? I don't know. Yes, I want her to like him, but I just don't know. Am I missing something?

8

Ephesians 2:8 – “For it is by grace you have been saved.”

While I was in my bedroom changing into something more comfortable, I couldn't help but feel peculiar hearing my mother laughing out so loud with David. Perhaps I am reading too much into things. I headed out and found them laughing together.

Susan: (smiling) “Oh, Ziphora, David was just telling me a funny story.”

From what I know David is not someone who is very funny, so I am rather surprised. Maybe she is trying to make him feel at ease. I sat down and dished up for the three of us.

Susan: (smiling) “Moruti (Pastor), please pray for the food, won't you?”

David: (smiling) “I'd be delighted to.”

He started praying.

David: “Father God, Modimo wa rona yo a rategang (Our loving God). I thank you so much for this wonderful day. Thank you for sparing us, for it is by your mercy and your Grace we have made it this far. Not many people can vouch for food on their table tonight, but we have that now. Bless this meal for it has been prepared with so much love and tender care. I pray it in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen.”

Susan: “Amen.”

I opened my eyes and saw him smiling at me. I couldn’t read my mother at that time. She is always an open book, but tonight, she is unpredictable – beyond.

David: “Mmm, Mrs. Mokoena, this is honestly the best creamed spinach I have had. No lies.”

Susan: (chuckling) “Surely your mother cooks for you.”

David: (shaking head) "I have never seen my mother cook in my entire life. We have always had a chef cook for us."

Susan: (surprised) "Such an odd life you live."

David: "Yes, which is why I desire a wife who'll be a great cook. I love home cooked meals."

Susan: "I see. And how will you cope when she is working night shift?"

David: "I'll manage cooking. Don't get me wrong, Mme (Ms) Mokoena. I'd really love to marry Ziphora, but only when the time is right. I want her to get to know me and to be sure that I am the one for her. I don't want her to find herself in a very awkward predicament where she ends up regretting the choice she makes. I know, I'm a bit older than her, but that doesn't change the fact that I would like to love her the way God intended a man to love a woman. I can honestly tell you, Mma (Ms) Mokoena, that I haven't felt this way about another woman in my life before. I'd like your blessing to pursue this relationship of course."

What a moving speech, to be honest. He had me smiling from deep within. I kept staring at Mama and not once did she stop looking at David. She stared at him for a while and looked down and then returned a smile to him. I knew right there and then that he had sold it. Perhaps there is light at the end of the tunnel after all.

Susan: (smiling) "I'm sure you are aware David, that a mother would do anything for her children, right? I mean, your own mother would do the same for you."

David: "Of course, Mme (Miss)."

Susan: "Before I give you my response to your request, I want to ask one thing and one thing only from you."

David: "Yes?"

Susan: "Protect my daughter – even against your own family if need be."

David: "I give you my word."

I smiled as I sighed in relief. Mama looked at me with so much seriousness.

Susan: "Ziphora, my baby, ga o sale ngwana (you're no longer a child). It is time for you to experience life on your own and I respect whatever decision you make. All I need you to know is that I'll always be here for you."

I smiled and nodded.

Susan: "David, I give you my blessing. Don't hesitate to ask me for anything, just treat her right. That's all I ask."

David looked a bit nervous, but it is expected surely. He agreed and Mama hugged him, which I found really surprising. She isn't one to open herself to someone like that. We had a great meal and a good conversation, but ever since Mama spoke to David and gave him a heartfelt lecture, he was a bit tense. I

could see it as he was occasionally wiping the sweat off his face and his fingers were fidgeting. Surely

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he is supposed to feel even more relaxed after their pep talk, right?

David: "Mma (Ms) Mokoena, that was such a lovely meal. I thank you so much, but I should get going right now. I don't want to keep you both up since you get up really early."

Susan: (smiling) "Of course, child. Zee, walk your boyfriend out, please."

I blushed as she said that. Does this now officially mean that David and I are a couple? I walked him out and he didn't hesitate to hold my hand. It felt like he could finally breathe in relief once we were outside.

Ziphora: ""You seem so nervous, David. O shap (are you okay)?"

David: (nodding) “I’m just a bit overwhelmed, that’s all. God knows our relationship has only just started and I don’t want to mess anything up.”

That’s so sweet, honestly.

Ziphora: (blushing) “Does this now mean that you and I are officially a couple?”

David smiled as he took both my hands in his. He stared me deep in the eyes and there they were, those hazel brown eyes.

David: “Ziphora Mokoena, would you do me the honours of being my girlfriend?”

Ziphora: (smiling) “Yes, I’d love that.”

David smiled and he did what I least expected. He leaned into me and I assumed that it was time for the big moment – our first kiss. I leaned in as he placed his lips on mine. I closed my eyes and went along with the rhythm. I haven’t really kissed

anyone. The last person I kissed, or rather attempted to French kiss was Themba during my first year of varsity. I felt something move in me. I have never been kissed in such a sensual way. It is the very first time a man's tongue has massaged mine within my own mouth. He pulled out of the kiss and I felt my breathing escalate as I was trying to catch my breath.

David: (smiling) "I should get going. I'll see you tomorrow."

I just nodded as words failed me to be honest. My heart was beating right out of my chest from pure joy. That was one of the happiest and most memorable moments of my life. I found myself walking back into the house with a bounce in my step and a new humming in my throat.

Susan: "Someone is happy."

Ziphora: "Yoh (Wow), Mama. I can't even believe gore ke nna o (this is actually me)."

Susan: (smiling) “Okay. You can wash the dishes while I go take a nap.”

Ziphora: “With pleasure Mama.”

I kissed her cheek as she headed towards her bedroom.

Susan

I can't recall seeing my daughter this happy in her entire life. The first love is always the most memorable; it can either be your best or your worst. Seeing David reminded me a lot of Frank when we first met. I know men like him; wolves in sheep's clothing. I have lived long enough to know when a man is bullshitting me. I have no doubt that he has some sort of feelings for my daughter, but I can tell it will end in tears. I cannot shield her forever, sadly, but I can try and show her the way. I can't possibly tell her what I really think of that man – more especially after everything I have heard about him. It's too dark for me to even think about. That entire family is just gruesome and I don't know how to tell my daughter. I can only hope that God sheds light to her and she sees the truth before

it is way too late. I'll just have to be there when she falls. I don't have much of a choice.

David

I felt really weird speaking to Ziphora's mother tonight. That woman just knows something about me – I can feel it. I don't know what I have gotten myself into, but the more I spend time with Zee, the more I even think about her is the more I am drawn to her. I know that the kind of monster I am is not someone she needs in her life, but I am selfish enough to pursue a relationship with her. I think I am falling for her and it scares me. I have gotten myself into a very deep hole and I don't even think she can take me out of it. I drove home and found my mother waiting for me. Everyone else seems to have gone to bed.

Mma Moruti: "Look who's finally home."

David: "Hello, Mme (mom)."

Mma Moruti: "You could have at least told me that you wouldn't be here for dinner. I mean I made you your favourite meal."

David: "You mean the chef made it for me."

Mma Moruti: (frowning) "You were with that girl, weren't you?"

David: "Is it a problem if I was?"

Mma Moruti: "Don't you see? She is driving a wedge between us. And you're not even married yet. I hope you're not even thinking of marrying her, David. She's not right for you."

David: (angered) "Mma weh (Mom, please)! All my life you have wanted me to be someone I just didn't want to be! At least Jacob found love, but what about me, Mma (ma)?! When will I get a chance to be with the woman I choose to love not the one you choose for me."

Mma Moruti: "I just want the best for you, David."

David: "You mean the best for YOU. Have you forgotten what happened the last time you interfered with the woman I fell for? "

Mma Moruti: (sigh) "Look, David. She is not the one for you. You have gone too deep into this business. If you marry her, she'll expose us."

David: "Then so be it. I love her, Mme (Mom), but I am guessing love is not something you're very fond of."

Mma Moruti: "Just think about this, David. Do you want to lose everything you have worked so hard for?"

David: "Papa (Dad) doesn't even know about all this shit we have been doing and he is still fine. He is a man of God. We don't need to keep doing this. My conscience is eating me up from within and there is nothing I can do about it."

I just left her standing there. Looking at her just sickens me. I have become a monster because of her and I just can't help it. How do I reverse all the damage she has done to me? I rushed to my bedroom and locked the door behind me. I found myself rushing towards the Bible next to my bed and opening it. I came across a verse I didn't expect. Acts 3:19 – "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out." God help me for I need Him during this next phase of my life.

1 John 4:1 – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Ziphora

Two weeks had passed and I was officially David Mosue’s girlfriend. It was a bit annoying because no matter where I went and what I did, I’d be referred to as either future Mrs. Mosue or David’s girlfriend. Whatever happened to Dr. Mokoena? The title I have worked so hard for? Faith, Desiree and I have decided that it is high time we found ourselves our own places to stay. I think Mama needs her own space now even though she won’t say it out loud and I most definitely can’t keep visiting David at his parent’s house. I don’t get why he still lives there, but he has hinted that it has to do with his mother.

I have gotten to know him a little better, and he is really into me so it seems. He brings me lunch daily and I go to his church whenever I can. It gets more awkward each and every time I go there, but I try not to bother myself with it. I have spoken to

David about wanting to rather buy a house instead of renting, and he said he has the perfect place for me and that he'll take me there to go see it – tonight. I don't know why, but perhaps it is one of his ways to be romantic. So, we have another date tonight. I don't know where we're going, so I have decided to go shopping for a while. Faith, Desiree and I are all off today and it is time for some retail therapy. We really deserve it. We headed out to Menlyn Mall and started going in shop to shop.

Desiree: "It's high time you got yourself a whole new wardrobe, baby girl. I mean, you're dating one of the most prominent men in the country."

Faith: "O bolela o kare wena o apara go nyesa (You're speaking as if your own wardrobe is the bomb)."

Desiree: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, you know very well Thapelo buys my clothes for me. He knows my style very well."

I just shook my head and continued walking. I don't really know what kind of style I am ready for now, since I am approaching my 26th year of life, but I am hoping to look more

approachable. Keo and Charisma have hinted that I need to look the part. Apparently I am a little too tiny and a bit too short for a doctor. Plus, no one wants to be constantly asked how old they are. I had gone to Arthur Ford and Cotton on just to check out a few items. We decided to take a break and head out to the hair Salon for some change in hair do. I opted for a whole new hairdo.

Hairstylist: “So, what do you want me to do to this afro?”

Ziphora: (excited) “I’ve never cut my hair in my entire life. Surprise me. I want it short and add some colour to it.”

Hairstylist: (excited) “I’m about to have my day made with you.”

While Desiree and Faith got their own hair done, I waited for Johnny, the hairstylist to do his magic on mine. After nearly two hours later, he was finally done. I had occupied myself with my phone, texting back and forth with David since I couldn’t see what Johnny was actually doing.

Hairstylist: “All done.”

I looked up and smiled. I was really impressed and actually surprised how good I look. He actually cut my hair so short and dyed it silver.

Desiree: “Wow, girl. Short hair has never looked so good on anyone. Girl, we can even see your face properly now.”

Faith: “Hehe, if I were Pastor David, I’d put a ring on you before someone else eats you out first.”

We laughed and I was about to pay when my phone rang unexpectedly.

Ziphora: (frowning) “It’s the hospital. Let me get it, it might be important.”

I answered it.

Ziphora: “Dr. Mokoena, hello?”

Nurse: “Dr. Mokoena, it’s Sister Nthabi speaking. We have a bit of an emergency. One of your patients is in labor and needs urgent assistance. I’m sorry to bother you on your day off, but you are the only one who knows of her situation.”

Ziphora: “Who is that?”

Nurse: “It’s Ms. Zwide.”

I started to panic immediately. Oh, my goodness Luvu is not supposed to go into labor until three more weeks.

Ziphora: (panicky) “Yes, yes, I’m here. I’ll be there soon. Please prep her for me. I’m on my way.”

I hung up and paid and rushed out.

Ziphora: “I have to go. Crisis with a patient. Can you drive me there, Faith?”

Faith: “No need to ask, babe. Let’s go. Thanks, Johnny.”

We rushed out and headed to the car. One thing I like about Faith is that she is a fast driver, just like me. Desiree on the other hand, is a very careful driver. Within 8 minutes we had arrived. I rushed straight to Luvo’s room without thanking everyone who was interested in my new hair do. My patient was my first priority. As I entered the room, I found her mother beside her, with Luvo in pain.

Ziphora: “Mrs. Zwide. What happened?”

Luvo’s mother: (panicky) “I don’t know. She was okay one minute and then the next she was not fine.”

The look on her face tells me another story.

Ziphora: “Luvo, how are you feeling? Where do you feel pain?”

Luvo was struggling to speak. She was sweaty and could barely sit still. She tried to speak, but ended up pointing at her belly.

Ziphora: “Okay, please relax. I’ll have to check the baby, okay?”

She just nodded while her mother was sitting next to her, looking rather shady. I already found the heartbeat monitor strapped around her belly. The heartbeat was rather slow and I quickly checked the sonar scan and immediately picked up a problem.

Luvo’s mother: “What’s happening, Doctor?”

Ziphora: “Nurse, get me theatre assistants ASAP. My patient needs to be prepped for an emergency C-section immediately.”

Luvo’s mother: (panicking) “Dr. Mokoena! Please tell me what’s going on!”

Ziphora: “The baby is in distress and Luvo is bleeding internally. If I don’t get that baby out soon we won’t have a happy ending for either of them.”

While the staff quickly rushed in and took Luvo out, I headed to theatre to get ready for surgery.

Luvo’s mother: “Doctor, whatever happens. Please, save the baby.”

I didn’t understand this woman at all. I mean, my first priority would be the patient. A baby can always be had at some point in their lives, forgive me. She was not even the least of all concerned about Luvo at all. She could have at least asked that I save the both of them. I ignored her and rushed to theatre. I quickly scrubbed in and found my team ready. Luvo was already sedated. I didn’t want to tell the mother the real reason behind the internal bleeding, because I can already see she wants this baby out as soon as possible. If I didn’t know better, I’d say that she would cut the baby out herself if she could. I tried my best and cut her open. Within about 15 minutes, the baby was out. A healthy and rather big baby boy

weighing a perfect 4.9 kg. Now, my main concern was Luvo. She is too young to die like this. Yes

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she ingested poison and it had already begun feeding on her internal organs, but luckily nothing was damaged as yet. I thank God I managed to save her and miraculously the baby was unharmed. The baby was whisked away immediately while I had to work on Luvo. It took me a rather long two hours to mend all the damage and suction all the poison out of her system. She is of course yet to feel the after effects. She won't be able to digest food for a while and she will be vomiting too. I stitched her up and just took my time staring at her once the anaesthetist and my team woke her up. Such a beautiful young girl yet such a troubled soul. I ask myself what is really happening in her life. Surely David can be able to assist her with his program? I got out and scrubbed out. Upon walking to Luvo's room, I was shocked to find Luvo's mother so thrilled to see the baby. She held him in his arms and had a rather peculiar visitor next to her.

Ziphora: "David. What a surprise. What brings you here?"

He looked a bit stunned to see me, but he was calm.

David: "Oh, I just came to check on Luvo."

Does he always check on all the girls he sponsors?

Luvo's mother: "Oh, thank you so much, Dr. Mokoena. You know, David has been raving about you ever since he got here, while Luvo was in surgery. He prayed for the both of them and I just knew that they were in such good hands. You are indeed God's blessing to us."

Ziphora: "It's my job, Mrs. Zwide."

Luvo's mother: "Oh, he looks just like his father."

Speaking of father, I have never heard them actually mention any father. So, I assumed there is no father to begin with.

Ziphora: "Have you decided on a name?"

David: "Junior."

It seems as if David blurted it out in haste, which just left me wondering why he of all people would know the baby's name. But then, it seems as if they have known each other for quite a while.

Luvo's mother: "He looks just like his father. It's a pity he won't be a part of his life anymore."

I just decided to maintain my peace and mind my own business. I went towards Luvo who was awake, but didn't look well.

Ziphora: "Luvo, are you okay?"

She just nodded.

Ziphora: "I'll come see you a bit later on and I'll get you an appointment first thing in the morning with our in house psychologist."

Luvo: (teary) "Thank you."

Both David and Mrs. Zwide were shocked or perhaps I wasn't seeing right.

Luvo's mother: (worried) "Did you say psychologist, doctor? Is everything okay?"

Ziphora: "Nothing to worry about, Mrs. Zwide. Doctor and patient confidentiality. Anyway, I should get going and get ready for our date."

David: "Faith and Desiree already left. I'll take you home if you don't mind."

Ziphora: "I'm actually supposed to get ready at Faith's place."

David: "Okay. I'll take you there and fetch you later on."

Ziphora: (smiling) "I'd like that."

David: "Your hair looks so amazing on you."

Ziphora: (smiling) "Thank you."

He kissed my lips and we headed out. He opened my door as usual and we drove off. I am absolutely delighted that I haven't seen his mother in a very long while. She has been gone to Mozambique for a women's fellowship tour. Ever since then, David and I's relationship has blossomed like never before. I am so excited that my birthday is coming up in two weeks' time. I don't even know what I plan on doing. David dropped me off and I found Desiree and Faith already sipping on some wine.

Faith: "And then? How did you get here?"

Desiree: "Go nale Uber wena (There's Uber man)."

Ziphora: “Hai (No), man, guys. David told you he’d fetch me, remember?”

Faith: “Oh, yes. Ag, askies (sorry), man. How’s Luvo doing?”

Desiree: “Yeah I was surprised to see Mdeva (David) there.”

Ziphora: (sigh) “She will make it. She ingested poison. Rat poison.”

They both looked at me with shock.

Faith: “Something dodgy is going on here. I mean why would the poor girl eat rat poison unless she really needs saving?”

Desiree: “I agree. That woman looks dodgy. Why was David there anyway?”

Ziphora: “I don’t know. I didn’t ask. Maybe to support her or something since she is part of his organization?”

Faith: “oho (oh).”

Ziphora: “What? I know that look.”

Faith: “Nothing. Believe me, this time it’s nothing.”

I could tell she wanted to say something, but I just ignored that look and headed straight to the bathroom. I really have to get myself my own place. I just wish David hurries up already with his surprise. He’s been wanting me to hold onto purchasing right now. I took a shower and put on my brand new black dress from Zara. I don’t look too bad really. I got to look at myself for the first time – properly since I got my new hair do.

Ziphora: “Faith, kopa o nketse make up nyana, toe (please put on some make-up).”

Faith: (smiling) “You don’t need to ask me twice.”

Desiree: “Why do I get the feeling something big is going to happen tonight?”

Ziphora: “Oh, come on. David won’t do that. He said we should rather wait til marriage of which I totally support.”

Desiree: “Yoh, I was actually hinting at marriage, babe.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “A proposal?”

Desiree: “Yep. Why not?”

Ziphora: “I don’t know, I mean we’ve only been dating for like a month.”

Faith: “My parents got married a month after dating. Like literally.”

Desiree: “When a man knows – he knows.”

I don't know about that, though.

Faith: "Is he actually serious? He literally said that he'll wait to sleep with you after marriage?"

Ziphora: "Yes, he did."

Faith: "Eh."

Ziphora: "Out with it."

Faith: "Well, I'm just saying that if he's not getting it from you, then it means he is most definitely getting it elsewhere."

Desiree: "I don't want to sound mean or jealous, but I agree with Faith. Sometimes men just get it elsewhere. I mean can he really hold out until you both agree on marriage?"

I kept quiet for a while. I mean they both stunned me with their statements. Is David really sleeping with someone else?

Desiree: "Ai, wa bona (you see) now Faith. Re bakela ngwana wa batho stress (we're stressing her out)."

Faith: "I didn't mean to, Zee. I'm just saying fela (only). Besides, not all guys are like that. I mean look at Jabs and I. He's in Jozi and I'm here. Do you honestly think that I believe he's not cheating on me during the week when I only get to see him on weekends?"

Hayi, these two really want to stress me out when David said he has a special night planned for us tonight. I really can't afford to be on edge. Not right now. I still have a lifetime to get to know him. Men aren't the same.

Ziphora: "I don't think we should generalize, guys. I mean we all have our own experiences. I might not have much or any for that matter, but I just think we shouldn't judge David like that. You two barely know him."

Desiree: "You're right, friend. I'm sorry."

Faith: "Me too. I'm all done. Please don't get all sad and ruin your make up. Here, have some wine to cool down."

I took the glass of wine and gulped it like no other. For some reason I feel so nervous. It's as if I sense that David has something hectic planned. I am not even sure what I'd say to him should he ask me to marry him. I mean, I don't think we're at that stage yet. I do know a few people who got married right after their first date. I am just not sure if that's the case for me. Faith gave me a really great facebeat and before I knew it, David called letting me know that he's at the gate.

Ziphora: "I have to go, guys. Wish me luck."

Desiree: "Good luck, babe."

Faith: "You have all the luck in the world. No need."

I hugged them and walked out. While walking down the stairs, I found David standing there in one of his Turkish suits. My goodness, this man is fire. I could smell him all the way from Faith's entrance. He had a bunch of yellow roses in his hands. Yellow is my favourite colour by the way.

David: (smiling) "Greetings, my lady."

Ziphora: (blushing) "Good evening, sir. You look rather dapper this evening."

David: "You look exquisite, Zee. My goodness, I think I am the most blessed man in the world right now."

Ziphora: "Thank you."

David: "These are for you."

He handed me the flowers and kissed me. I've gotten so used to his affection and I love it."

Ziphora: "Thank you. Where are we going?"

David: "Somewhere you'll love til death do us part, hopefully."

I frowned as he said that. He opened the door for me and I got in. Was that a hint?

Proverbs 18:22 – “He who finds a wife finds what is a good and receives favour from the Lord.”

Faith lives in Equestria now. She recently purchased a house there, while Desiree lives just across the street from her. I really like the area, but David asked me to wait a bit. We drove for about 15 minutes and we headed to Silver Woods Country Estate, also in Pretoria. I don't get why we're here, but perhaps David finally has his own house. I can't wait for that to happen and just spend time with him whenever we want to. I felt a bit nervous for some kind of reason. He put in his code and we drove in. The houses here are so amazing. I wouldn't be surprised if he actually purchased one of them.

David: “What do you think of this neighbourhood?”

Ziphora: “It's so beautiful, so serene.”

David: (smiling) “I designed most of the houses here, you know.”

Why am I not surprised?

Ziphora: "You sure are good at your job, Mr. Mosue."

David: "Not as good as you are at yours."

He stopped the car just before one of the houses. The lights were off, so I assumed someone wasn't home or something.

David: (smiling) "Have I told you how amazing you are, Dr. Mokoena?"

Ziphora: (smiling) "Yes, you have."

David: "I don't think you have understood me very well. Come."

He opened the door for me and walked hand in hand with me. I was actually in awe to see this house from a closer point of view. The house is so gorgeous, with a modern design and even has a wide fireplace outside. It's winter, but out here, one won't feel it. He opened the door of which I was not even surprised that he had the keys. The charcoal coloured house has such a huge interior, one would not even believe it. All I see in this house is black and white with a tinge of red here and there. It's not really my first choice, but it's so unique. The owner really has some style. We walked upstairs and I was rather surprised that the whole house is actually furnished. He opened the huge sliding door that takes us to the patio just outside the bedroom, and I was met by a beautiful sight. There's a pool right here as well, just like down stairs. A Jacuzzi/pool to be exact. The patio couches are so elongated, and look so relaxing. There were yellow candles everywhere with yellow rose petals on the floor. The rose petals took me towards the table just before the fireplace. My goodness, I became hungry instantly as I could smell the beautiful aroma of the food.

Ziphora: (smiling) "David, this is so beautiful."

David: "Not as beautiful as you. Come."

He pulled me towards him and made me stand right before the glass balcony. He hugged me from behind and I became hypnotized by his gorgeous scent once again.

David: "Take a look at the sky for a moment and tell me what you see."

I didn't know what to say, really, so I went with my gut.

Ziphora: "Well, I see the moon and the stars."

David: (chuckling) "You know, I want you to look at the night sky every single night and I want you to be reminded of tonight. I love the night, Ziphora, simply because it just reminds me of all the calmness of nature. The day is so busy and the scorching hot sun doesn't make things any easier, but the night is just something else. It holds so much evil that people do behind closed doors, but it also gives one a chance to repent and become a better person. You get to breathe, you know, actually breathe. You see, when I look into your gorgeous eyes, I am reminded by the beauty of the night. So

much good comes from your eyes, because you're so pure – both inside and outside. I need someone like you in my life, Zee. Scratch that, I need YOU. You are the calm I need in my life. Every night whenever I sleep, I forget about all the darkness in my life because you are the light that shines right through. You make me believe that there actually is a heaven.”

Ziphora: (teary) “Dave, those are the most beautiful words anyone has ever said to me.”

I thought he was done, but he just continued to melt my heart.

David: “I see the woman whom I'm meant to spend the rest of my life with when I look at you. When I first met you, I was a mess. An even bigger mess than I am now. I was an arrogant asshole because that is whom I thought I was meant to be, you know. Then I met you. Ziphora, you are such an amazing woman and I know that you'll be an amazing mother. Not only will you be the perfect wife for me, but I never want you to think that I just want a pastor's wife next to me. You are meant to lead a nation, my love. Moratuwa w aka (My love), you are standing right at the top of the balcony of your new home. I know, you hate surprises, but when I heard you tell me that you

were looking for a house, I wanted to get you one that you love and one that would represent you. I know, the colours are not exactly your taste, but you can change that. So, I got busy and finished this design. I had started the construction months ago, but then I finished it just for you. I bought the client out and paid him double than his original purchase price, because I couldn't see you living anywhere else other than this house."

I was beyond stunned. What is he even saying? He bought a whole house? For me? Me? Ziphora Mokoena, Dr. Ziphora Mokoena is a home owner of such a beautiful house?

Ziphora: (crying) "David."

He didn't even let me speak or offer to change his mind. Nor did he give me a chance to decline. He went straight to the table and handed me the title deed.

David: "I bought this house for us, but I wanted you to be the owner. As you can see right there, you are the sole owner of this house. I know, you don't believe in being too tied down, so

this is my way of showing you just how much you actually mean to me.”

I looked at the papers and I just cried.

Ziphora: (crying) “You bought a house worth R4 million for me?”

David: “You cost way more than R4 million. You are priceless, Ziphora.”

Just when I thought he was done, he did the unexpected. He knelt down on one knee and took out a yellow ring box. What attention to detail.

David: (nervous) “Dr. Ziphora Mokoena, I believe that God sent you right into my path to heal my heart. Whenever I see you I suffer from mini seizures and possible strokes. My heart literally skips a beat and I feel faint whenever you get close to me. Whenever I lay alone in my bed

I think of you. I end up feeling like I'm in a long coma just thinking of you. I don't think I could ever live apart from you. You are the light in my life, Ziphora. Only you can heal me from the demons that are consuming me. I know, we haven't been together for very long, but I want you to know that you are the woman for me. No other woman has ever made me feel what I feel around you – safe. Believe me when I say that I have a really dark past, but I hope that you'll stick around with me. I love you so much, Zee. Will you make me the happiest man in the world and be my wife?"

He opened the ring box and right there was an exquisite, silver ring with a very big rock. How on earth can I say no? I don't even think I want to say no. Yes, oh, yes it is way too soon, but love waits for no one, right?

Ziphora: (crying) "Yes, yes, David I will marry you."

He jumped up as if he was holding his breathe – literally waiting for me to say yes. He spun me around and put the ring on my finger.

David: "Thank you, Dr. Mokoena. Thank you for making me the happiest man in the world."

He kissed me so passionately. I literally felt like the angels were singing and the serenity of the night was giving us blessings. It felt as if we were consummating our relationship – intimately and not sexually. We broke the kiss and he took out a small remote from his jacket pocket and played a song. Yep, the outside ceiling has built in speakers. Joe's Turn back the years played and it truly felt as if it had some sort of meaning to him. I don't know, but his eyes just look as if they mask some sort of pain, but at that moment. I saw a lot of glistening. His eyes were elated, if I could say that.

David: "May I have this dance?"

Ziphora: (smiling) "Of course."

He caressed my body and gently touched me. His left hand was in mine while his right arm was gently placed on my back. He danced to the song with me like he was caressing a Spanish guitar. I felt so safe in his arms. I knew then that I had made

the right choice. David might not be perfect, but he truly is the man I think I want to be with. Rome was not built in one day, but I know for sure that he will make me happy. Once we were done dancing, he kissed me passionately again. I felt those weird signals being sent straight to my pussy again. He pulled out of the kiss and smiled at me as he kissed my forehead. We took a few pictures along with the ring on my hand and posted our favourite one on Instagram. Yep, I know I shouldn't have done that, but I guess being crazy in love makes one do crazy, stupid things. I switched off my phone so that I couldn't get any disturbance from people calling or texting me. We sat down and ate our delicious meal. He actually cooked it all – so he says. I am yet to see him in action in the kitchen. We had dessert and afterwards, we didn't bother cleaning up. We were so excited so we took a moment to bask in our new reality.

Ziphora: "Can I go take a shower? I'm a bit cold."

David: (chuckling) "You needn't ask me for permission, Dr. Mokoena. This is your house."

Ziphora: "Our house."

David: "Fine then. Our house. On one condition, though."

Ziphora: (frowning) "What?"

David: "I'd like to take a shower with you."

I felt my body freeze for a moment as I gulped my own saliva in shock. He must have noticed and I saw his face lighten up.

David: (smiling) "I don't want to have sex with you. Not now anyways. I want our first time to be special for you, Ziphora. I just want to be one with you right now. I just want to see your beautiful, naked body. I promise you, I won't try anything funny."

I nodded as I felt so nervous. I don't even know why I agreed to that. I mean, I have never been naked in front of a man in my life before! We slowly walked to the bathroom. Oh, this man has style. The whole floor is covered in black/grey marble. The shower is so huge it could probably fit four to five people in it. He stood behind me and I could feel his warm breathe taint

my skin. He slowly kissed my neck in small kisses as he slowly slid the dress off my body. I was no semi-naked. I didn't wear a bra as the silky dress didn't permit me to wear one. He smiled at me without saying a word. Everytime I tried to look down in embarrassment, he pulled my chin up.

David: "You're so beautiful, Dr. Mokoena. More than you'll ever know."

He slowly took off his clothes. I finally saw his toned upper body for the very first time. He really doesn't do those suits justice. I can watch him walk around like this all damn day. He slowly took off his pants, and I could already see his hard buldge in his briefs. I swallowed hard, while staring at his hidden penis, while he chuckled. I felt my heartbeat rise, because well, I have seen a few penises, but only in medical wards. This time, I get to see a real, erect penis right in front of me. It's probably best I see it now before the actual wedding night. He slowly took off his briefs, and my eyes widened as his briefs went down. I didn't realize it, but as my eyes widened, my mouth widened as well.

David: (chuckling) “Don’t look so shocked, love. My body will soon belong to you and yours to me.”

I looked down and felt so shy. Fuck, I have to take off my panties. Luckily I shaved. His warm hands touched my hips softly and lowered my panties. I was officially naked. Me, Ziphora Mokoena, standing naked in front of a man I got engaged to a few hours ago. We got into the shower and I still felt a bit weird, a bit tense. This feels a bit unusual, but Faith and Desiree do say that one does get used to getting naked in front of your own man. The warm water slid right on top of my skin and I felt a little better. David kept caressing my arms and my back along with my abdomen. Not once did he touch my breasts nor my vagina. He said he didn’t want me to lose control, but the more he touched me, the more I needed him to just touch my erect nipples. Just once. His warm breath on my skin made me feel so wet down there. I can’t wait for the big day to happen. After our shower, we didn’t even lotion our bodies, we got into the bed and drifted off to sleep in one another’s arms.

David

I found myself staring at Ziphora in the middle of the night. How did a fucker like me land myself a rare gem like her? This woman is everything a man could ever need yet she chose to fall for someone like me. I'm too dark for her, too tainted, but she keeps me sane. She's the only woman who has ever managed to make me forget about the darkness in me. I know that I love her, but I love the fact that she keeps me sane even more. My mother is coming back and I know, she will want to ruin this. I pray to God that I don't crack and lose it. I don't want to disappoint Ziphora like that. She is just too special for me. I already have so many secrets and if she finds out, she'll most definitely leave me without thinking twice. If I had my way, I would have asked for another mother.

11

Romans 2:16 - "On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men."

Ziphora

It was a really nice evening, which turned into an even greater night. I found myself naked in bed with David nowhere in sight when I got up the following morning. I remember; we took a shower – together. I still don't know how to feel about that, though. I mean, I slept with a man – naked. I decided to check on my phone and recalled that I switched it off last night. The moment I switched it on I was bombarded with notifications and messages. Why on earth did I even post that photo? I checked my Instagram and I realize I was tagged in a video. Oh, my word! It's a video of last night's proposal.

I still don't know how he managed to do it, but nonetheless I am happy. I saw a few non-important people comment, congratulating us. Wow, look. I am trending on Twitter already. Apparently I have been given a new hasthag; #FutureChurchMother. Apparently people think that I am the next best Mma Moruti (Pastor's wife). This is insane. I chose to

ignore them once again because half of the people who don't even know me always have something negative to say. I saw a few missed calls from Faith and Desiree, and numerous missed calls from my mother. Oh, I know she must be really pissed at me to even leave me a voice mail message. I decided to listen to her message by dialing the rather dreadful 121.

Susan: (furious) "Ziphora Destiny Mokoena! Nna ka hlollwa ka nnete (I must really be dreaming, seriously). For me, a whole me! Susan Bloody Mokoena to hear about my own daughter's engagement in the middle of the night! From your own grandmother, nogal (on top of it all)! Wa nswabisa (you're really disappointing)! Ge o sa nthata, o tla tla mo after o utlwile monate (If you still love me, you'll come home right after your nice time)! La le rata lerete, bana ba ka jeno, waitse (you children of today really love dick)!"

My mother never speaks like that – ever! I am in serious shit. I checked my WhatsApp and she was online. I felt myself trembling in fear – even behind the cellphone screen. That is just how much I fear my own mother. I checked my WhatsApp group. Well, I have two; one with Faith and Desiree and one with my sisters.

Keo: "Lol, you're in deep shit, bra. Mama o galefile (Mama is so angry)."

Charisma: "Lmao, she conference called us for a whole hour telling us how neither Keo nor I have ever done her like that. She was even drinking the wine your boyfriend bought her."

Keo: "Why are we even bothering, Charisma? She's probably getting laid as we speak."

Charisma: "I'd get laid too if I were her. Did you see that rock? Not even my rock is that big."

Keo: "Ai, wa be o thomile (Oh, you have started again)."

Charisma: "Let me go sleep. She'll wake us once she reads our messages."

They were finding this funny while I'm trembling in fear right now.

Ziphora: "Guys! You just decided to have a whole conversation without my presence in here?"

Keo: "Good morning to you too, future Mrs. Mosue. Phela we didn't want you to think that we were gossiping about you. No secrets, remember?"

Charisma: "So? How was it? Did you finally get laid?"

Ziphora: "No, we didn't have sex. We just had a shower together and slept after eating, that's all."

Keo: "Eh! He must be really crazy, gay or a real gentleman."

Charisma: "For once, I agree with Keo."

I heard the bedroom door slide open.

Ziphora: "Let's talk later."

David walked in shirtless, with a tray full of breakfast.

David: (smiling) "Good morning, moratuwa (my love)."

Ziphora: (smiling) "Hey, Dave."

David: "O robetse jwang (How did you sleep)?"

Ziphora: "Like a baby, I think. You?"

David: "I slept fine, thanks."

He sat right next to me and placed the tray on top of my thighs. He gently placed small kisses on my shoulder.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Eish, David. I’m really worried. Everyone has seen the picture and the video. And my mother is having a fit.”

David: “Yes, about that. I’m really sorry. I got carried away. I didn’t think we’d actually trend once again. The thing with your mother, I admit and take full responsibility. I’ll fix it.”

I know I’m not a child anymore, but my mother did not want to find out from other people that I got engaged. I totally understand her frustration. And as a result, I am afraid to go back home.

David: “She’ll be fine. Let’s eat up and take a shower. I don’t want her to think that I proposed just to make you impure. She won’t believe you when you tell her that nothing happened, so you’ll tell her that I dropped you off at Faith’s immediately after our dinner.”

Ziphora: “Yes, but what about the clothes? All my clothes are at Faith’s and she’s at work.”

David: "Don't worry about that. I'll get you a new outfit just before you go home."

Ziphora: (sigh) "Can't I stay here until she stops being mad at me?"

David: (laughing) "No, you can't. The more you delay, the bigger the problem gets. Trust me, I know."

For a moment it truly felt as if we weren't talking about my mother anymore. He tends to hint at something which happened in the past, but I don't ask because I can see it upsets him. He will tell me as soon as he is ready.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Okay."

We ate our breakfast and jumped into the shower again. This time, it was less awkward. We were having a bit of our own fun and kissing and touching here and there, but he didn't touch my intimate areas. I like that about him, although it must be pure hell for him to abstain knowing what sex feels like. But he

said he is willing to wait, so he will keep that promise if he really loves me. We got into his car and already I could see a few journalists with cameras and microphones outside. His windows are pretty dimmed, so they couldn't see who is inside the car. I don't know how I feel about life in the limelight. This is all too much and it doesn't seem to bother David much.

Ziphora: "Don't you get tired of all this media at times?"

David: "Not really. Mostly because I'm hardly outside. But if they bother you so much, I can get them fired."

Ziphora: "Aowa (no), that's a bit extreme."

David: (chuckling) "Okay, but if they bother you ka nnete (seriously), I'll have to sort them out."

I smiled and texted Faith to cover for me just in case Mama asks here where I slept last night. David and I headed to the mall. I had to put on a huge hat and sunglasses as a disguise. This media shit is just too much. Suddenly everyone wants to know

who I am. We got into Mr. Price because I just didn't want a fancy outfit. Mama would most definitely get suspicious. He paid for the outfit and we were off. I got into the car and we drove off. We made it to my house and I just felt like turning back.

Ziphora: (nervous) "Maybe I should go back with you. I mean, so that I can revise my speech."

David: (chuckling) "Ziphora, I am not going to let you be afraid like you're a teenager. You're almost 26 and you're about to be married. Open the gate."

I felt myself tremble once again.

Ziphora: (shaking head) "Aowa (No)."

David: "Open the gate and trust me."

I stared at him for a few seconds and it didn't seem as if he was about to go anywhere. I opened the gate and he drove in. I felt

my pulse going faster than normal and myself hyperventilating. This is not going to be good. I'm already starting to sweat. Shit. David got out of his seat and opened my door as usual. I found myself hesitating for the very first time to get out of the car. He held my hand and walked alongside me. I felt so scared; scared shitless really. I knocked. Imagine. I knocked at my own house.

Susan: (shouting) "Tsena (come in)."

Mama never tells anyone to just come in without checking who it is. She knows it's me. I was shaking, but David held my hand firmly.

David: (whispering) "Relax."

I tried, but I was just not comprehending his reassurance. I found her sitting right on the couch, watching tv with a mug in her hand.

Ziphora: (nervous) "Dumela Mme (Hello, Mama)."

She gave me one of her uninterested looks.

Sussan: “Oho (Oh)

ke wena (It’s you). Ne ke re ke Patrick (I thought it’s Patrick). Ne ke batla go reka di tamatie (I wanted to buy some tomatoes).”

Yep, I trust her to be very sarcastic.

David: (smiling) “Dumela Mme Mokoena (Good morning, Ms. Mokoena).”

Susan: (chuckling) “Dumela, Mokhwenyana (Hello, son-in-law).”

David wanted to laugh but he composed himself. Does he honestly find all this shit funny?

David: “Re ka dula (May we sit)?”

Susan: “Go tswa mo lena (It’s all up to you). You’re part of the family now.”

Wow, Mama. She just kept going. David gently pulled me down and sat right next to me.

David: “Mme (Ms) Mokoena – “

Susan: “Yes?”

David: “I know you are not very pleased about the video and the pictures you saw on Instagram. Actually, I know that you are very angry that I did not ask for your daughter’s hand in marriage beforehand. I sincerely apologize. I got over excited and wanted to be romantic.”

Mama kept quiet for a while and looked David straight in the eye. Not once did she look at me, but I could feel her eyes sting.

Susan: "Hmm, I see. Why should I believe you? Your mother obviously thinks that my daughter is not fit to be your wife. I mean, she has already passed rude comments about her not having both parents."

I could feel David tense up as soon as he heard what his mother said.

David: (firmly) "Mme (Ms) Mokoena, with all due respect, I am not my mother and I'll never be her. I could curse the day she brought me into the world, but that would be a total abomination against God. He has a purpose as to why I am here today. I love Ziphora, so much that if you could open my heart and see right through it you would really be on my side. My mother has her own views and rest assured, I'll make sure that she never comes between my wife and I. Not before we marry and most definitely not after we marry."

Susan: "Hmm, I see. I'll forgive you on one condition and one condition only."

David: "Anything."

Susan: “You had better give my daughter the marriage of her dreams. A big, pricey wedding is every woman’s desire, but a happy and stable marriage is what is actually important. You had better love her the way God intended you to, or else, you won’t be able to have any children. Ra utlwana (You understand)?”

David: (chuckling) “Eya (yes), Mme (Ma).”

Susan: “Then let me just say this. Even though I was hurt to hear the best news of my life from my horrid mother, that was the best proposal I have ever seen. You did well, David. Not many men your age would stay without children and no marriage up until now.”

She got up and hugged him, but David tensed up a little bit. Something is not right with his past. I hope it is not too serious and it won’t interfere with our marriage.

David: (smiling) “Kea leboga, Mme (thank you, Ma). I had better go and leave you two to it. I’ll see you later, Dr. Mokoena.”

He kissed my cheek, most probably as a sign of respect for my mother. Mama smiled at him all the way and then looked at me.

Susan: “O emetse eng (What are you waiting for)? Go walk him out, bathing (goodness)!”

I rushed towards the door and walked David out. As soon as I was outside, I felt a huge sense of relief. My goodness, my mother is one tough cookie. David was happy, but I could tell he was upset about something.

Ziphora: “That was really embarrassing. Now I know she is going to ask me if I’m still a virgin or not.”

David: (smiling) “Don’t worry, she knows you’re still one. Believe me.”

Ziphora: (frowning) "What's the matter?"

David: (sigh) "It's just this thing with my mother. I really hate her attitude. I'll have to sort her out as soon as possible."

Ziphora: "Well, whatever you do, just make sure you don't say or do anything that you'll regret."

David: (smiling) "Okay. Listen, I'll come fetch you before you go to work."

Ziphora: (frowning) "I do have a car, you know."

David: "I have a feeling paparazzi might stalk you once they see your car registration. Just trust me, okay?"

I nodded and he kissed me.

David: "Bye."

Ziphora: "Bye."

He got into his car and sped off. Something is not right with Mma Moruti Julia. Perhaps I bit off more than I can chew. I looked behind me and saw Mama walk away from the window. Did this woman just peep through the curtains to watch us kiss one another? I slowly walked in and found her all serious on the couch again. I went to sit right opposite her again.

Susan: "So, o robetse kae maobane (where did you sleep last night)?"

Ziphora: "Ke robetse ko Faith, Mama (I slept at Faith's place)."

Susan: "Ao? Then how do you explain the fresh scent on your clothes?"

Ziphora: “Ao (Goodness), Mama akere we went shopping yesterday.”

Susan: “Oho (Oh). Okay. Don’t worry, I won’t ask you if you slept with him or not. That’s your business and your vagina. All I’m going to say to you is, you’d better not regret the years of marriage ahead. It’s not nice being married to a man with a malfunctioning stick.”

I just turned red right there and then. Did she really have to go there? She gave me one look and laughed so hard.

Sussan: “Relax, I’ll stop. I know you’re still a virgin. Besides, even if you had slept with him I wouldn’t have said anything, Ziphora. I’m not one to talk, especially after what I have been through with your father. I just want you to make choices that you won’t regret later, that’s all.”

Ziphora: “So, you’re really okay with David wanting to marry me?”

Susan: “Ngwanaka (My baby), no mother really wants to let go of her child, but what I can tell you is that, if I stop you from this then I’ll just be driving you closer to him and that will drive a wedge between us. I have to allow you to make your own mistakes and have your own path. If you fall, I’ll be there to catch you and not to judge you. I made a promise to you from the day you were born that I’d love and protect you – no matter what.”

I knew right there and then that mama was ready to support me with my journey with David. All I can say is that I feel tons of relief right now and nothing can contest that feeling. I can now be free with him without being afraid of what she’ll say.

David

I can’t believe my own mother would stoop this low. How the fuck does she expect me to feel when she keeps trying to ruin my entire life like this?! I found the monster in me taking over. I could feel my body overheat with rage. I’m seething right now! The nerve of that woman! I stormed in and found her right in her bedroom having her tea!

Mma Moruti: (smiling) “Oh, hey, my boy.”

I got so angry, that the devil came over me. I grabbed her by the throat as the tea flipped over and scortched her old thighs. I put my hands on her neck.

Mma Moruti: (shocked) “David! Please don’t do this!”

David: “Is it not bad enough you sold Jacob to your own brother?! Is it not bad enough that I am the way I am because of you, mother?! Why don’t you have peace?! Why can’t you just let me be happy?!”

I slowly found myself weeping on the ground like a little boy. Just like the first time it happened. The very first time. In my room. Ever since then, every single summer night in my room felt cold. Because of her. My very own mother. I was five then. Thirty years later, the memory remains etched into my mind.

Mma Moruti: (crying) "Son, please. Don't do this. It was only one time. I don't know what had gone over me. I have this obsession over you, David. You can't leave me. I refuse. She can't take you away from me."

David: (crying) "I'm not your husband, Mma (mom)! I'm your son! Get that into your thick skull!"

I stormed out of there, feeling an urgent need to release the tension buried inside of me. Ziphora can't see me like this. She can't. I need to get it done ASAP.

12

Psalm 44:21 - "Would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart."

David

I found myself feeling stranded; feeling as if I just couldn't breathe. I needed to get this monster out of me before I do something I really regret. I got into my car and drove off. I knew that I'd get just what I needed. Within half an hour, I knocked on the door.

Nova: (smiling) "David. I knew you'd be back. Do come in."

I walked in without saying a word. I headed straight to my usual room and waited.

Nova: "Would you like anyone else on the menu today, perhaps?"

David: (shaking head) “No. Bring my usual.”

Nova: “On it.”

She closed the door while I loosened my tie and sat in my usual chair, facing the balcony. I won't have to stress about anyone watching anything from outside because the walls are so high here, one won't notice a thing. Within 5 minutes, the door opened.

Esperanza: “David, you called for me today. You should have let me prepare myself.”

David: “You know just how I like it, but today I want you to undress me – slowly.”

Esperanza: “Rough day?”

David: “Get to it.”

Esperanza: "Alright."

I relaxed on the chair as she slowly took off my shoes and then she went up to my pants. She unbuckled it and I closed my eyes trying to erase that faint memory, but it just won't go away. Every time Esperanza fucks me, she reminds me of my own sick mother. She removed my pants and slowly went up to my upper body. She slowly removed my jacket and then my shirt along with my tie. She slowly kissed my neck and went down to my nipples and sucked them just the way I like it.

David: (moaning) "Aaah, bite them for me. You know how I like it."

She bit them just the way I like it.

David: "Go down to my crotch, slowly, using your tongue."

She did just what I asked.

David: "Remove my underwear."

I got up slightly to give her more leeway to do as asked.

David: "Suck it. Slowly from the tip."

Esperanza did as instructed. She twirled her tongue and I felt her hot breath on the tip of my dick. I felt myself moaning even though my mother's image just wouldn't disappear in my mind. I felt as if perhaps I'd get rid of the pain today. Maybe this will be the very last day that I give into this monster inside of me. The same monster that has helped me captive for the past thirty years. I put my hands on her head and forced her down to my whole penis.

David: "Suck faster."

She did as instructed. I felt myself moan as she went faster and faster. I pushed her off before I gave into the pleasure.

David: "Take off that shit and lie on your back."

She quickly removed her slutty outfit so that I could stare at her bare breasts and fat pussy. Esperanza is the only woman in this place that gets me. She knows just what I want and how I want it. She is my mother's age; 55 years old to be exact. Whenever I'm with her, I feel as if I get to release the demon inside of me. The demon my mother created for her own physical pleasure. I wasted no time and entered her fat, warm pussy. She knows just how I like to hear her moan.

Esperanza: (moaning) "Yes! Oh, that's it, my boy! Fuck me harder! Fuck your mother!"

I found the monster inside of me wanting to feed on the inner rage I felt. I put both my hands on her throat and I strangled her. I enjoy watching her feel the pain I feel and she understands it. I rammed into her harder and faster while tightening the grip around her throat. Within minutes, I shot my load into her and I climaxed. I let go of her throat and she was coughing and gasping for air.

Esperanza: (out of breath) "Today you very rough, Davey."

I got up and wiped myself. I thought I'd feel different, but I feel worse than I have ever felt before. Perhaps it is because now that I have found the love of my life, I am so scared of losing her over this beast within me. I got dressed and Esperanza was staring at me smiling. The only thing I felt within me was deep seated guilt and so much pain.

Esperanza: "You look so sad today. But I know you'll be back."

I walked out and got to the counter. I found Nova there.

Nova: (smiling) "I trust Esperanza fulfilled your desires today."

I took out my card and proceeded with payment.

David: "Make it 20k today."

Nova: (smiling) "You know, when I hired her I had no idea she'd be such a hit. I mean, she is a bit old."

David: "Take it as her severance package. I won't be coming back."

I took my card back and walked out. I found myself in need of crying as I got into my car. I screamed for a good two minutes, allowing the tears to drown me. I wallowed like I have never done before. I don't know how to get out of this life-long cage. My mother still holds me captive even today and the only way to get rid of her is to kill her or to admit to all my sins and go to prison. I can't do that. I don't think I ever can. I started the ignition and drove off.

Ziphora

After David dropped me off at home, I tried my best to get some sleep because I am on nightshift tonight, but I just couldn't sleep. I was reeling in too much excitement to even fall asleep. My phone has been beeping and ringing off the hook. I don't even know how where journalists got my number. I ignored all non-important people and focused on my friends and family. While I was staring at the ceiling, deep in thought, Koko surprised me with a call.

Ziphora: “Dumela (Hello) Koko (granny).”

Koko: “Ja (Yes), ngwana ngwanaka (my daughter’s daughter). Ke gona ka mokgwa o ke le godisitseng (Is this how I raised you)?”

There she goes again. Taking credit for absolutely everything.

Ziphora: “Aowa (No), Koko. Le ra bjang (What do you mean)?”

Koko: “Ke ra gore (I mean) I must hear from people that you are engaged to the most prominent and the most God-fearing man in the country? Aowa (No), Ziphora.”

Ziphora: “Askies (Sorry), Koko. I just haven’t had a chance to answer everyone’s calls.”

Koko: (chuckling) “Why o bolela o kare o itse batho ba ba thousand so (Why are you speaking as if you know a thousand people)?”

Ziphora: “I mean journalists and people I don’t even know have been calling me and asking for interviews. I am sorry I didn’t call you back. It honestly wasn’t intentional.”

Koko: “It’s alright, my child. All is forgiven. Now I bear good news. Julia wants to meet you for lunch tomorrow.”

That’s odd. I know that Mma Moruti doesn’t like me at all. I mean, why on earth would she want to meet me – again? And what’s even worse is that she can’t even hide how much she detests me. She really just had to call and ask Koko to ask me on her behalf? Wow.

Ziphora: “Couldn’t she have done it herself?”

Koko: (chuckling) “Julia is a busy woman. She just came back from Mozambique. Besides, she asked me personally because she doesn’t know how to relate to you just yet. I mean, she is rather shy. I know her too well.”

I chuckled internally. Mma Moruti? Shy? The devil has never been shy.

Ziphora: "Oh, I see. What time?"

Koko: "She'd like to meet you at 9am if that's okay with you."

I frowned in annoyance.

Ziphora: "But Koko, I'd have just knocked off from my night shift. And besides

9am isn't exactly lunch."

Koko: "Ai, breakfast then. Waitse go tsenya bana dikolong tsa makgoa ke mathata nako engwe (taking your children to white schools is a problem sometimes)."

Ziphora: (sigh) "Fine."

Koko: “That’s more like it. Oh, and Zee. Ke kopa o itshware hantle (please handle yourself gracefully). This is the queen of the church we’re talking about. If you play your cards right, you’ll take over from her one day.”

Wow, does everyone actually think that my only goal in life now is to be the next Queen of the church? Fuck no.

Ziphora: “I have to go, Koko. Bye.”

I didn’t even give her a chance to say her goodbyes and hung up. My mother won’t like the sound of this at all. Perhaps it is best I don’t tell her about my call with Koko just yet. As for Mma Moruti, I have to gather all my strength and hope she doesn’t poison me tomorrow. Better yet, I won’t order anything or leave any of my food out of sight. I just have a bad vibe about her. I was about to try and fall asleep when I got a call from David. I smiled to myself before answering the call. I really need to think of a pet name for him.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Baby.”

David: (elated) “Baby? We’re making progress. I like the sound of that.”

Ziphora: (chuckling) “Miss me already? It’s not yet time for me to go to work, you know.”

David: “I know, I just miss you.”

Ziphora: “I miss you too.”

David: “I was hoping you and I could spend some time together before you go to work.”

I checked the clock quickly and realized I had about five hours to spare before my shift.

Ziphora: “I have a few hours to spare. Let me get up and get ready.”

David: "I'm actually outside. You can just grab your clothes for the evening and come out."

I haven't even done such in my life before. Speaking of which, I left my new clothes at Faith's place last night.

Ziphora: "Okay."

I hung up and quickly packed my work clothes. It's nothing fancy; just a pair of jeans and a plain shirt. I need to start dressing up, but it's no fun walking around all night in heels. I usually wear crocs or comfortable Nurse shoes. Yep, those you find at Dischem in the medical shoes aisle. Everyone just calls them Nurse shoes and believe me, they're so comfortable. I took a few of my toiletries and packed my bag. I was about to say goodbye to Mama, but she wasn't home. She must have gone out, so I left her a note instead and walked out. I found David already standing outside, leaning on his car. He was smoking. I have never smelled even a tinge of nicotine on him. His teeth don't even look like they have been stained by any nicotine and his skin is smoother than mine even. I walked towards him and frowned. He smiled, but I could tell that something was bothering him.

David: (smiling) “Moratuwa wa ka (My love).”

He hugged me.

Ziphora: “Since when do you smoke?”

David: “I stopped smoking a while ago. I occasionally do it when I am stressed – highly stressed.”

So, I was right. He is stressed. I decided not to pry at that moment. It wasn't the time.

Ziphora: “Okay. Shall we go?”

David: “Mind if I finish this smoke first?”

Ziphora: “Okay.”

He took my bag and placed it in the boot and stood right next to me as he smoked. I could tell a lot was on his mind. I just don't know if I should ask at this present time, but I'll just go with my gut.

Ziphora: "Got a lot on your mind, huh?"

David: (chuckling) "You have no idea. A lot is an understatement. Have you ever had something that just bothered you for pretty much all your life? So much that if you had one opportunity to break that horrible cycle of depression you would do it in an instant?"

Well, I thought long and hard about it and to be quite honest, the only thing that held my mind captive to that point is the issue with my father.

Ziphora: "Well, I'd say yes. I mean take the issue with my father for instance. If I had the opportunity to wipe it all away and erase him from my life; not murder, obviously, but if I had the choice, I'd do it without thinking twice."

David: “What if you could do it, but then doing it would mean sacrificing yourself?”

Okay, now we’re reaching some other kind of situation I just don’t get.

Ziphora: (frowning) “Well, I’d think about it for a second, but if eliminating this problematic situation meant sacrificing myself and I’d still be able to have a life afterwards, even though I’d have to pay for my sins then I’d do it. I believe in second chances and I truly believe that people can change. I mean, sure not everyone will forgive, but the only person’s forgiveness you need to worry about is God. He is the only one that will make way of your situation. Once you actually face the situation, you realize that it is actually not that bad.”

He was listening to me attentively, as if I was speaking to something really hectic going on within his soul. He stared at me for a second and I saw glistening tears. Oh, my goodness. I felt so sorry for him; I actually felt like crying on his behalf. Then he snapped out of what he was thinking and kissed me on my lips.

David: (smiling) “I know that I have made the right choice by choosing you. You’ll be such a great wife to me.”

I just smiled even though I was confused.

David: “Come, let’s go.”

He opened the door for me and I got in. We drove off and not once did he continue that intense conversation. We continued chatting about random things and our relationship as if he just wasn’t about to cry a few seconds ago. I don’t know, I’ve said it before; David is a deep person and rather mysterious too. All I can hope for is that I get to peel off all these onion layers surrounding him.

13

Isaiah 5:20 - "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

Ziphora

David and I made it to our house. Yes, I call it our house now. I am still yet to tell my mother that I'm a home owner before I even became a wife. Anyway, we walked in and the place still looked the same as when I had left, but there are a few new items. It seems as if my soon-to-be husband had gone grocery shopping.

Ziphora: "And this?"

David: "I went to do some shopping for us. I mean, we can't starve to death, now can we?"

Ziphora: "You don't think I'll be living here, do you?"

David: “Why not? I mean I’ll obviously be visiting you. I can sleep in a separate bedroom if you’d like. Until we get married.”

I feel so bad that he is willing to sacrifice all that for me.

Ziphora: “You’re actually serious?”

David: “Zee, I meant it when I said I love you. I’m willing to wait for as long as it takes.”

I smiled as he hugged me. I didn’t realize it when he got to my house, but he smells a bit weird, sweaty with some kind of cologne I don’t recognize. I mean, surely I don’t expect him to have just one cologne, right?

Ziphora: (frowning) “You smell weird. Were you jogging or what?”

He got a bit tense.

David: (edgy) “Oh, uh, I was running up and down the mall trying to get everything I thought you might like. Are you low key telling me that I smell like a pig?”

I felt so embarrassed. I could feel my cheeks heat up already.

Ziphora: “No, I didn’t mean it like that.”

David: (smiling) “Zee, it’s okay, really. When you’re in a relationship, you have to be honest with your partner, no matter how badly they might take it. If you think I smell, then I most probably do.”

I smiled and nodded in shame. Dammit.

David: “I’m going to take a quick shower. I’ll be right back.”

I nodded as he left and I quickly packed the rest of the grocery items that were outside the fridge and cupboard. This guy

actually went overboard. Why on earth would I need so many things to cook? Woolworths food doesn't come cheap, but I guess he loves the taste or something. While he was gone, I decided to acquaint myself with the kitchen. I saw everything was already in here. Some of it is not really my style, but the pots are to die for. I took out some slow cook beef; baby potatoes; pumpkin and spinach. I decided to make my own version of creamed spinach – the way my mother taught me. I got busy and within half an hour he was back – and topless. He smelled so good. Dammit.

David: (smiling) “I even brushed my teeth, doctor. I know how non-smokers hate the smell of nicotine.”

I hate it, but I have gotten used to it since Faith smokes. I know, a doctor who smokes. There are more than we actually might think of.

Ziphora: “It's okay. Faith smokes so it's not so bad.”

David: “Hmm, a doctor that smokes?”

Ziphora: "Don't ask."

David: "I'm not judging. Besides, you shouldn't be cooking. You have night shift tonight."

Ziphora: "Normally I cook at home even though Mama insists on me not doing anything when I have night shift, but my body is used to it already."

David: "Hmm, well in that case, I'll get us a glass of wine."

Ziphora: "You can drink, I can't. I have to be sober tonight."

David: "You're so right, Dr. Mokoena. I'll make you a virgin Mojito."

I smiled and he got busy while I continued cooking.

David: "So, do you mind telling me about your father?"

Ziphora: “Ag, there’s actually not much to tell about him. Basically, he left my mother when she was pregnant with me.”

David: (shocked) “Heh (Huh)?”

Ziphora: “Yep.”

I ended up telling him my whole life story, basically giving him my auto biography. He laughed and gasped along the way. It actually felt good to see him so interested in my life and where I come from. Meanwhile, he spoke of his upbringing rather briefly. He’d become a bit sad while speaking about his life growing up, but whenever he spoke of his father, his face lit up. I could tell from the day I met his father that he was a very good role model for him and Jacob. Oh, how I wish I had that from my father in a way. We finished our meal and I had about two hours left before my shift. David helped me wash the dishes, while occasionally sprinkling some water on me. I still prefer the old way of washing dishes, even though we have a dish washer. It’s therapeutic. He took out his phone and decided to make a live Insta video. Yep, with his topless self, I was indulging in all the love and affection he was showering

me. After two glasses of wine, he must have been a bit relaxed. He seemed to have completely zoned out of his brief moment of sadness a few hours ago. During the live video, we were dancing to Christiana Milian's Us against the world. Yep, the kitchen has its own built in voice activated sound system.

David: (smiling) "Here you go

peeps. I know so many of you have been talking about my wife right here. I am officially off the market. Please do us both a favour and stop hounding her. I'll literally die for this woman right here. I'll kill for her if I have to."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Stop it, David. You can't say things like that."

David: (smiling) "Well, I'm not playing, baby wa ka (my baby)."

He kissed my neck as he held the phone right in front of me. I was standing right in between his legs while he had one arm around my waist.

David: "Dr. Mokoena is officially taken. All of you who have a problem with it can take it up with God himself. Ziphora Mokoena, I pledge my life for you."

He really seemed so serious. I am not one for social media, but David was all for showing me off. I smiled at him as he put the phone on the phone stand on the kitchen counter and danced with me until the end of the song. I have honestly never felt love like this before. I truly believe that love is not like the kind we see in movies - it's actually better. When I met him I never had an ounce of thought in my mind that he'd be this romantic.

David: "Yess! Turn around, Mma (Mrs) Mosue!"

He twirled me around and I went with it. He stared at me; actually stared deep into my soul.

David: "I love you, Dr. Mokoena."

Ziphora: "I love you, David Mosue."

He kissed me so passionately and we actually forgot that we were live on Instagram. We found ourselves kissing passionately until his phone rang and I broke the kiss.

Ziphora: “Haowa (No), David. You kissed me like that live on social media?”

David: (laughing) “Don’t act like you didn’t like it.”

I did like it, actually, but it is a bit inappropriate.

Ziphora: “Aren’t you going to answer the phone?”

He looked at it and switched it off immediately.

David: “It’s my mother. I’ll deal with her later. Come, let’s go lie down.”

I smiled at him and didn’t want to pry any further. This Julia is a real problem. I can tell already. He took my hand and we

walked upstairs to our bedroom. We lay on the bed in a spooning position. He held me so close and I enjoyed feeling his heartbeat while he could hear mine. It's amazing how our hearts could just be so in sync. We lay there in silence while he occasionally kissed my head and I must have dozed off right there and then.

David

I found myself staring at Ziphora while she fell asleep. My beautiful Ziphora. She is so beautiful, just like the yellow roses she loves so much. She does not know just how much of a beautiful, ball of energy she is. She gives me so much peace and I am so afraid of what I'll do. I have already become so dependent on her. I took my phone and switched it on, but quickly switched it to silence because I know my mother might be trying to call me endlessly. As expected, I already found 5 missed calls; 2 voicemail messages and countless WhatsApp messages. I decided to open her WhatsApp texts and as usual, they were just horrifically psychotic.

Mma Moruti: "You'd better answer the phone if you know what's good for you! How can you be so stupid?! How can you

behave like a man whore and idolator right on social media?!
Do you know just how this makes me look in front of the
church?!”

I saw she was online and she started typing. I refused to let her
do that to me, so I blocked her immediately. I scrolled down my
WhatsApp contact list and came across Luvo’s number. I don’t
even know what to say to her. I have done so much damage to
that girl all because of my own mother. Now she has birthed
my mother’s new slave. I decided to let her be and I went to my
brother. Fortunately he was online.

David: “Mfo (Brother).”

Jacob: “Davido. Lol, Mom is super pissed at you.”

David: “I know, hence I just blocked her right now.”

Jacob: “Lol, ah, she is not going to leave you hanging after that.
What were you thinking?”

David: "Don't act as if you have never done it before. You know how she gets."

Jacob: "Ja, I overheard her talking to Papa about you and Zee. She's not taking it too well, shame."

David: "Just like she didn't take it too well when you decided to marry Jeannette?"

Jacob: "Ah, worse even. But don't let her control you, Dave. Remember the promise we made to ourselves and one another when you turned 18."

I remember that too well. How can I forget?

David: "Ja, but you know just how I can't get over that. I can't forget it. All those years, J."

Jacob: "You have to forget. Try to. Leave it buried deep within your mind, otherwise you'll relapse."

David: "I already did."

Jacob: "Shit. Well, get therapy or something. Just get better. Ziphora is a good woman, Dave. The same way Jeannette is good to me. She took me out of a deep hole. You know that."

David: "Yes, but don't tell me you don't relapse every now and then. I mean, have you honestly dealt with what Malome (Uncle) Jack has done to you?"

Jacob: "Stop it! Don't tell me about that fucker! You just get better. For Zee's sake and for yours. You're going to be a father one day and you can't bring a new life into this world with so much baggage."

David: "Maybe we should tell Papa (Dad). About everything."

Jacob: "Are you kidding me?! You know very well we can't fuck with Mama like that. She has all our scandals, all our secrets. We'll go to prison. All of us. And to top it all off it will kill Papa."

David: "Maybe if we tell him, then somehow we can work on a plan to make her take the fall for everything, I mean she is actually the root of all our problems."

Jacob: "Not now, Dave. Focus on you. We'll sort her out some other time. Just make sure that she doesn't do anything to Zee. You know what happened to your last fiancée."

How can I forget?

David: "Okay."

Jacob: "We'll talk later."

David: "Shap. Say hi to Jeannette for me."

And just like that the conversation with my brother ended. I tried to make him deal with the past as much as I am willing to deal with mine, but he just won't budge. We're both so broken

and all because of family members. Family whom we entrusted with our entire lives. I took a picture of Zee sleeping and put it on my WhatsApp status. I was about to sleep next to her, when a text message from my mother came through. “You’d better not think of alienating me like that, David. I made you and I can easily take you out. Don’t forget that.” Maybe I should just accept that my mother will always be there to control me. I have to find a way out of this misery. I just have to.

Julia Mosue

I found myself losing my mind already! How the fuck did things get this badly in just a few weeks?! I mean I knew that girl was just no good. She’s just trash!

Ntate Moruti: “Will you stop pacing up and down like that? You’re making me dizzy.”

Mma Moruti: “Are you even worried about anything – ever, Mack?”

Ntate Moruti: “Ai, Julia. I don’t understand what your problem is. David is old enough to marry. If you ask me Ziphora is the best thing that has ever happened to him after Norah.”

Norah didn’t cut it either. Too bad she had to suffer. Perhaps I can make Ziphora suffer the same fate. I mean, I have done it before and I can surely do it again.

Ntate Moruti: “All I am saying is that you need to give her a chance. You had your own doubts about Jeannette, but here she is. I mean you weren’t exactly first choice for my parents either and look at you now, the leading lady of the most prominent church in our country.”

Mma Moruti: (annoyed) “You just had to take it there.”

Ntate Moruti: “All I am saying is that everyone deserves a chance. Don’t cast stones unnecessarily. You’re not perfect, and you know what the Bible says about being judgmental.”

Ag, here he goes again. My holier than thou, perfect husband. At times I ask myself why I married such a weakling. He is all focused on God this and Jesus that.

Mma Moruti: “Okay.”

Ntate Moruti: “I know you don’t agree with me. If you keep going like this, you are going to lose him. Don’t be the overbearing mother who just can’t let go of her children.”

I can’t let her have David. He is my son; I love him so much – too much. There is only one way out of this sticky situation. And it is a permanent solution.

14

Isaiah 43:18-19 – “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Ziphora

I found myself being woken up by David. We must have dozed off right after our lunch.

David: “My love, tsoga (wake up).”

I slowly opened my eyes and David was there next to me smiling.

Ziphora: “Yoh (Oh), what time is it?”

David: “Don’t worry. I woke you up an hour later so that you can get ready in peace. I ran you a bath. May I join you?”

It seems as if David really enjoys bathing and showering with me.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Of course."

We walked to the bathroom and before I knew it he had taken off all his clothes. I still can't wrap my head around the size of his penis. Each time I see him naked, I just find my mouth widening automatically.

David: (chuckling) "Don't stare so much. You'll pop a brain cell."

I found myself blushing. Shit. It's my turn to take off my clothes now. It's the second time we're about to be naked around one another, but I just still can't feel confident enough to do it.

David: "Here. Let me help you."

He was standing right behind me as he slowly took off my clothes while occasionally kissing my arms, neck and shoulders. His warm, soft hands were familiarizing themselves with my back and my waist.

David: (softly) “You really need to be more confident in your own skin, baby. You’re so beautiful, I just wish you could finally see it.”

He just knows how to warm my heart. We got into the bath tub and he placed me right in between his legs. He was sensually washing my back, arms and he finally started touching my breasts. Just feeling his tantalizing fingers on my nipples made me feel like I was about to cum. It’s funny since I have never really had an orgasm before. I’ve tried masturbating, but that just didn’t end too well. It just felt too weird.

David: (whispering) “You need to relax. I’ll teach you how to let go and be free in your own skin. Do you trust me?”

I nodded as I failed to respond with my lips.

David: "Say it."

Ziphora: "I trust you..."

He kissed my neck, while his hands were slowly twirling around my nipples; squeezing them gently. I felt myself moan a little bit. I've never moaned before in my life. My body was responding to his touch, as I could feel his rock hard dick poking my bums. His one hand was playing with my breasts, rotating from one to the other, while the other one went down, further down to my crotch. The moment his hand touched the top of my vagina, I felt incredible sensations down my legs.

David: "Relax. Let go."

I just nodded with my eyes closed and my head on his chest. He spread my legs further apart, as he gently placed his index finger on my clitoris. He started brushing his finger on it slowly, as if it was a very light feather brushing against my clit. He then started to rub it in circular motion. I instantly felt my upper body head up. The more he rubbed my clitoris, the further I spread my legs apart. My breathing felt heavier;

louder and I could actually hear myself moan. His other hand was not doing my breasts any justice, and his warm tongue was welcoming my neck to a licking I have never experienced before.

Ziphora: (breathing heavily) "Dave..."

David: (whispering) "Let go, my love. Feed into your craving and follow my finger. Your clit is so small and warm. I can't wait to taste you, baby."

I could feel myself getting so heated up with his words. He went faster, while I could feel something happen within me. A new wave of heat had overtaken my body, my toes were curling and my hips felt as if they were contracting.

Ziphora: (moaning) "Aah, David. What's happening to me?"

David: "You're about to cum, baby. Let it all go. Cum for me. Cum for daddy."

I felt myself become overhyped, and within seconds my whole body tensed up as I released some fluid down there.

Ziphora: (moaning) “Aaah! Fuck!”

I have amazed myself. I have just had my very first orgasm without penetration. Of course it can happen, I just never thought that it would happen to me.

David: (chuckling) “How did that feel?”

Ziphora: (shyly) “I have never done that before. It felt so nice.”

David: (smiling) “I could see.”

Wow, he just knows how to make me blush.

David: “Don’t be embarrassed. Having an orgasm is not a bad thing at all.”

We continued taking a bath and we dried ourselves and got dressed once we were done. It's June month, so it gets really cold after 5pm.

David: "I made you some food and I have already packed your lunch box. I made sure I pack enough for three."

Ziphora: (smiling) "You're so sweet."

David: "I have to be, otherwise you won't marry me."

I chuckled as we walked out. We got into his car and drove off. I never bothered checking my phone, because I knew that so many people were still talking about us. I'm so annoyed already by all the attention. I arrived at work and it was time to say goodbye to my man.

Ziphora: "Thank you so much for today. I hope you also feel better."

I just said that even though he didn't really tell me what was eating him up.

David: "I'm okay, love. I'll come fetch you right after your shift."

Oh, I nearly forgot.

Ziphora: "Oh, my grandmother called me just before you came to fetch me. She said that your mother had asked her to ask me if we could do breakfast tomorrow morning."

I saw him frown immediately.

David: (frowning) "When were you going to tell me?"

Ziphora: "Honestly, it slipped my mind. I'm sorry."

David: "It's okay." Are you going?"

Ziphora: "I couldn't exactly say not. I mean we both know how much she hates me."

I saw him become quiet. There is something that is just not right with his mother.

David: "Okay, I'll come pick you up and we'll go meet her together."

Ziphora: "I don't want to keep you away from work, David. You honestly don't have to drive me around everywhere."

David: "I don't mind. Besides, I have an assistant for that. My mother is – "

He was about to tell me something rather crucial so it seems but he chose not to.

David: “Anyway, I’ll come fetch you and we’ll go meet her together. Don’t tell her you’re coming with me in case she calls.”

I nodded as he kissed me. I greeted him goodbye and walked out of the car. I know that Mma Moruti is going to come at me all guns blazing tomorrow, but I decided to just let it all slide. As I walked in

nearly every nurse and a few doctors were staring at me. I hate attention and I am not so famous or well-known here, but today it seems as if all eyes are on me.

Nurse1: (smiling) “Evening, Dr. Mokoena.”

Nurse2: (excited) “Do you need help with those?”

Ziphora: “Uh, no thank you, I’m fine.”

Nurse3: “I love your new hair do.”

Nurse 4: "I really need me some tips on how to bag me a man like that, too. You're so blessed, girl."

Nurse 1: "Did you even see the views on the video your man posted of you two today?"

Nurse 2: "Over 200k views, wena girl."

I couldn't even get a word in. They were just so all over me.

Jacob: "Alright, ladies. That's enough now. Give Dr. Mokoena some space to breathe, please."

Oh, Jacob saved me. Thank goodness.

Nurse 4: "Ah, alright, Dr. Mosue, but I'm here just in case you ever get divorced or whatever."

Jacob: (chuckling) "I'm married, Joyce. Happily married and you of all people know that."

Nurse 4: "Ah, alright then."

Ziphora: "Thank you so much. You really saved me there."

Jacob: "It's alright. You've become quite the celebrity overnight, huh?"

Ziphora: "Eish, blame your brother. He just loves posting aowa (no)."

Jacob: "You'll get used to him. I hear you're meeting my mother for breakfast tomorrow."

Ziphora: "I see things don't stay secret amongst the Mosue family."

Jacob: "Trust me, we are very good at hiding things. Just a heads up, don't succumb to any of her ridiculous requests."

He obviously has had his fair share.

Ziphora: "If I may ask, was she also like this with you wife?"

Jacob: "Oh, yes. She was not as hectic, but she was most definitely like this with her."

Ziphora: "Then how did you handle it?"

Jacob: "Luckily Jeannette is very good at defending herself. Plus, I defended her from the get go."

I looked down as it dawned on me. I don't recall David ever standing up for me in front of his mother.

Jacob: "Hey, don't compare us. David loves you, he's just been through a lot. You just have to be there for him and be patient. He will open up to you soon enough. He has just been through a lot of hell."

It sounds really deep – much deeper than I have anticipated. What is it that has gotten David so hung up?

Ziphora: “Thank you for the heads up.”

Jacob: “Sure. Later.”

He walked away as I proceeded to my office. I found Faith and Desiree there waiting for me.

Ziphora: “Eh, banna (My goodness). Ga le na spane lena (Don’t you have work to do)?”

Faith: “Did you hear that, Des?”

Desiree: “Yep, loud and clear. Our very own bestie has deserted us.”

Ziphora: “Ai, you two can be so dramatic.”

Faith: “We’ve been waiting on you. Your mom even said you left your house while she went out. Dude, explain please.”

Ziphora: (sigh) “Fine. Just before David proposed to me that evening, he revealed to me that he had bought me a house. He gave me all the documents and all. It is indeed in my name.”

They both gasped as they stared at me in shock.

Faith: “You mean you’re a whole home owner now?”

Desiree: “In Silver Woods Estate? The Silver Woods?”

I nodded while smiling.

Desiree: “My goodness! I need me a man like that bathing (gosh).”

Faith: "When are we having a house warming?"

Ziphora: "I don't really know. Maybe as soon as this whole paparazzi thing dies down."

Desiree: "Is it that bad?"

Ziphora: "I haven't even checked my phone ever since David and I were sleeping this afternoon. They have been calling me non stop asking for interviews. I don't even know where they got my number."

Faith: "Just be careful. Ask him to sort them out. We all know how much you hate attention."

Ziphora: "You know me very well. Anyways, I have some rather unexpected news."

Desiree: "You got fucked?"

Ziphora: “No, but I had my very first orgasm.”

They both screamed out in excitement.

Faith: “Tell us more.”

Ziphora: “A lady never tells. All I can say is that David has magic hands.”

Desiree: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, wa bora waitse (you’re so boring, you know).”

Ziphora: “I’ll give you guys the 411 the day we go all the way.”

Faith: “Why haven’t you vele?”

Ziphora: “I don’t know, but he says he is waiting for us to get married and that he is not in a rush.”

Desiree: “The last guy who said that to me turned out gay. Just saying.”

These two and their weird theories. David is not gay. I think if he was I would have seen it coming from a mile away. We continued chatting away until we all proceeded to do our shifts. I had just finished checking on one of my patients when my phone rang unexpectedly.

Ziphora: “Dr. Mokoena, hello?”

Luvo: (shaky) “Hi... Hi, Doctor. It’s me, Luvo.”

Ziphora: (surprised) “Hi, Luvo. I was hoping to hear from you. How are you? How is the baby?”

Luvo: “He’s fine. I’m okay. I’ve been meaning to call you, but I just didn’t want to bother you.”

Ziphora: “It’s no trouble. What can I do for you?”

Luvo: "I... I just wanted to warn you."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Warn me?"

Luvo: "Yes. You're about to get married into a very dangerous family. They are not what they seem."

Ziphora: "What do you mean, Luvo?"

I heard a voice in the background.

Luvo's mother: "Luvo! Please bring me another nappy. Lo mntwana uyakaka man (this child shits a lot)."

Luvo: "I have to go."

Ziphora: "Luvo, wait."

Before I could even ask her again about what she was talking about, she just hung up. What on earth is she even talking about?

15

Phillipians 2:4 – “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Ziphora

During my night shift, my mind kept dwelling far off whenever I had time to be alone. I couldn't even take my usual half an hour nap in my office. I kept thinking of Luvo and what she said; how scared she sounded when she called me last night. I tried calling her back, but her phone was off and has been off ever since. I don't know what she is talking about, but now I am even more worried than I was before about meeting Mma Moruti for breakfast. Something about that woman just unsettles me. Before I knew it, my shift was over. It was time for me to leave. As promised, David came to fetch me. Instead of waiting in the car, he actually came up to the maternity ward to fetch me.

David: (smiling) “Good morning, beautiful.”

He smells so fresh and clean as usual, but his face tells another story. He looks worn out, like he didn't sleep a wink.

Ziphora: "Hey. Are you okay?"

David: "Whenever I'm around you, I'm always okay."

He kissed me briefly and we walked out. We didn't even want to entertain everyone who was staring at us. Once we got into the car, he took a moment of silence before he put the key into the ignition. I can sense how tense he is. It must be this meeting with his mother.

Ziphora: "I can cancel my meeting with your mother if that's okay with you."

David: "No! I mean, don't do that."

His response leaves me worried.

Ziphora: "Are you sure everything is okay, David?"

David: (faint smile) "Moratuwa (My love), I'm just nervous. You know how my mom gets."

He kissed my hand and off we were. The further we drove the less we were conversing. I could tell my Dave was just not okay. I closed my eyes and said a small prayer. As soon as I opened them, we were at the mall. It is not such a distance from Wilgers Hospital to The Grove Mall.

David: "Let's go."

We walked out and walked into the mall hand in hand. He offered to hold my hand bag and even after I refused, he took it from me. Ai, David. Of course, Queen pastor asked that we meet at Cuppaccino's. As we were about to look around for her, she was already seated. She was even waving at us, wearing ridiculously oversized sunglasses, an oversized Orange hat and of course, she was dripping in Prada. I could see her long heels all the way from the door. This woman is too dramatic for my liking. She is way too overdressed for 8am in

the morning. I had to fake a smile as soon as I saw her standing up from her chair. Goodness, she can't even hide her hatred towards me.

Mma Moruti: (smiling) "Oh, Davey. My sweet boy."

She literally grabbed him from my hand and forcefully hugged him. I could tell just how uncomfortable and annoyed David was. She hugged him for a good 10 seconds if not 20. David eventually pulled himself away from her. I saw her adjust her face just to greet me with a "proper" smile. This woman is hilarious.

Mma Moruti: (smiling) "Ziphora, my future daughter in law."

Before she gave me her fake hug, she gave me one of her usual nasty looks. You know, that top to toe look. As her eyes came back up, I could see just how displeased she was. She was probably judging my outfit and cursing at me in her tiny, meagre brain.

Mma Moruti: (hugging me) “Oh, honey. You must be exhausted, hey. It can’t be easy delivering babies all night.”

There she goes again with her condescending attitude. I could feel David tense up as soon as she said that. He squeezed my hand.

David: “Ma, ema nyana (wait a minute).”

Mma Moruti: (frowning) “Askies (Excuse me)?”

I could see David was pissed. For the very first time I have met him, I actually see him defend me in front of his mom.

David: “Don’t speak to my wife like that. She has a very important job and has done quite a lot to save a lot of lives.”

I could see her become instantly irritated. I couldn’t help but smile. Hell, I didn’t even hide it.

Mma Moruti: "She's not your wife – yet."

That yet came way after. It seems as if I am going to have it rough before I settle in like Jeannette. I need to ask her when this cruella finally accepted her.

David: "Excuse me, may I please have a Whiskey double on the rocks."

Waiter: "I'm sorry
sir. We don't serve alcohol before 11am."

David wasted no time as he took out a few R200 notes and placed them on the table for him.

David: "You still don't serve alcohol even now?"

Waiter: "I'll see what I can do."

David: "Before you leave, let me ask my wife what she'd like."

Ziphora: (smiling) "Please bring me a Caiphrina. Thank you."

Waiter: "On it, ma'am."

David kissed the back of my hand and smiled at me. I know he did that just to spite Cruella who was watching us like a hawk.

Mma Moruti: (annoyed) "Isn't it a bit too early to be drinking?"

David: "Oh, Mama, don't act like ga o phele ka di Mimosa (you don't live on Mimosas)."

I could tell he was deliberately rubbing her up the wrong way.

Mma Moruti: (clearing throat) "Anyway, clearly you two seem serious about one another. So, when are you getting married?"

Ziphora: “Oh, David and I are in no rush.”

Mma Moruti: (chuckling) “You can’t be serious. I mean, this is the event of the year. I already have journalists in line to book you two for an interview. Top SA weddings also wants to be the first magazine to get a full scoop on the wedding. And my goodness, Ziphora, tell me you’re about to do something with that hair. I mean, you cannot expect yourself to walk down the aisle with that ridiculous hair style. It is barely even a hairstyle.”

Wow, she just had to go there in a flash.

Ziphora: “I don’t see anything wrong with my hair.”

Mma Moruti: “Oh, honey. You’re about to be a Mosue; even though you wouldn’t have been my first choice if I were Davey, but – “

David: (interrupting) “Don’t call me that!”

I could tell he was really pissed.

Mma Moruti: "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like th – "

David: "You just like controlling me, don't you? You were never like this with Jacob when he met Jeannette. Tell me, Mama, is it so hard for you to see that I am happy? Genuinely happy?"

Mma Moruti: (softly) "David, calm down, please. People are staring."

David: "I don't give a fuck whether they're staring or not! They might as well take pictures! I have told you time and time again that you dare not speak to my wife like that. I don't even know why you called her here because every second word from your mouth has been an insult ever since we've arrived!"

Mma Moruti: "David, please. Calm down and we can talk about this."

David: “Ziphora and I will set our own wedding date and you’d better cancel those silly shows. She hates attention and the sooner you get it through your thick skull that she is my woman, the better.”

Mma Moruti: “Okay. I get it. I’m sorry.”

David: “This meeting between you was a mistake. Please leave.”

I was so shocked. I was happy that he had stood up for me, but I didn’t expect him to chase his own mom away.

Mma Moruti: (embarrassed) “David, I – “

David: “Are you going to leave, or should we?”

He was dead serious – staring her right in the eye with blood shot eyes. Not once did he let go of my hand. She looked at him hoping he would say he was joking, but he was dead

serious. Then she looked at me and I could tell she was seriously angered.

Mma moruti: "Fine."

She was speechless and actually stood up without saying a word further. She took one good look at me, and David was not bothered. I felt a bit bad as if I am ruining their relationship, but she is really disrespectful. Our drinks came and David enjoyed his drink. I sipped mine as well and I must say it went down rather nicely. David just proved to me that he is willing to love me and won't let his mother come between us. The way he was fuming, though tells me there is more to what had just happened. And what is the story behind him refusing to be called Davey?

Julia Mosue

I can't believe my own son spoke to me like that. It would have been something if he had done so behind closed doors and not in front of that whore! But he just had to do that! Things were fine until Ziphora came into the picture. I curse the day her

stupid grandmother made them meet! What the fuck?! I doubt she is even a virgin. No virgin acts like that. I won't allow a fucking harlot to be a part of my church! That will never happen. I need to think of something very fast. I decided to call one of my trusted men.

Buda: "Buda hello?"

Mma Moruti: "Buda, it's me."

Buda: "Mma Moruti. Long time no hear. The last time you called me was when I had to do the job with Norah. Too bad she didn't survive the accident."

Mma Moruti: "Ja, now you know why I called. I need a similar favour – except this time, I need you to make sure that she suffers. Burn her alive or something, but it must be seriously tragic."

Buda: "On it. Give me her car registration."

Mma Moruti: "CY0057 Gp. Grey Polo Vivo. She lives in Silver Lakes and is a doctor here at the hospital."

Buda: "No problem. You know how much I charge."

Mma Moruti: "Get it done and I'll triple it."

Buda: "Sho sho (Sure sure), Mma Moruti."

I hung up and smiled to myself. No one messes with me and gets away with it. Soon, she won't be able to smile at me like that. She'll be a thing of the past and by the next day, a replacement for her will have been found. She should actually ask people about me. She doesn't know me very well, she only knows of me. The church me and not the real me. I am Julia Masechaba Mosue and no one messes with my plans.

16

James 4:6 – “But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Two days later...

Ziphora

It has been an amazing two days and I haven't heard anything from Mma Moruti ever since that day at the restaurant. David and I have been great. I told my mom about the house and she was happy, although she preferred that I buy my own house with my own money. Nonetheless, David and I have grown a lot stronger in just a few days. Of course, Mma Moruti has been trying to contact him and not me, but he just hasn't seemed interested. Every time I try to tell him to make amends with her, he just won't hear of it, so I decided to let it be. It's Sunday and another day at the church. I just don't know why I am always off on Sundays. I think I need to change that. David didn't even want to go to church, but I told him that he shouldn't let his mother get in the way of his faith.

So, he joined me in the shower and that's what we have been doing ever since; taking showers and random baths together. It is becoming a lot harder to abstain from sex when I get to see his penis every single day. We got dressed and man, this man just knows how to dress. We drove out in his car as always. I feel a bit lazy since he always drives me around. Mama says I am behaving like I'm handicapped. I think I should change all that and drive my car for a change. It's still at Mama's house even. Once we arrived at church, it was packed as always. Unfortunately, Desiree and Faith couldn't accompany me today as they had work commitments, but Koko is here. She seems as if she has been waiting for me ever since she arrived. As soon as I got out of the car, she rushed towards me and gave me a hug.

Koko: (excited) "Ngwana ngwanaka (my daughter's child). How are you? Kgale ke go emetse (I've been waiting for you)."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Hello, Koko (granny). I'm well. How are you?"

Koko: "Oh, I'm great. Hello, mkhwenyana (son-in-law)."

She hugged him as well, but David didn't mind.

David: (smiling) "Hello, Koko."

Ziphora: "Am I missing something?"

Koko: "Oh, no, not even. You are going to sit with the Church wives today, while your future husband is going to be on the pulpit."

Oh, geez. Why does it feel like everyone around me enjoys making calculated moves for me without my consent? I could see David frowning instantly.

David: (frowning) "Askies (Excuse me)?"

Koko: "Oh, I thought it wouldn't be a problem since your mother suggested it. She says people have been asking a lot about when you two will be getting married and so, she saw it fit to include Ziphora in the church sooner rather than later. Unless, I'm mistaken."

David: "I don't think – "

Ziphora: (interrupting) "Forgive me for interrupting you, love, but it's really okay. I can't expect you to abandon your duties and sit with me. Besides, we're not married yet and people might get the wrong idea about us."

David was really not happy about my suggestion at all.

David: "I really don't think it's a good idea, Zipho. Have you actually been around those women?"

Yep, he calls me Zipho every now and then.

Ziphora: "It's honestly okay. I'll have to join them some time, right?"

I saw so much doubt and fear written on his face. He kept quiet as he stared at me for a while, looking for affirmation.

David: "Okay, but the moment you feel uncomfortable, text me."

Imagine that. Me having to text my soon to be husband because old, judgmental church ladies make me feel uncomfortable. I'm not about to show these women that they can walk all over me.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Trust me, I'll be okay."

He gave me a brief kiss and before I knew it his mother walked out the church and rushed towards us.

Mma Moruti: (hurriedly) "Oh, my son. Thank goodness you're here."

And there she was; forcefully hugging my fiancé again and completely ignoring my presence.

Mma Moruti: “Oh, Ziphora, pardon my manners. David has to get dressed for today’s sermon. He’s blessing a young couple getting married today. Surely you understand, don’t you?”

I was about to answer, but she cut me off as always.

Ziphora: “I – “

Mma Moruti: “David, don’t keep the people waiting now.”

David didn’t want to go, but I gave him the look. I made him do what he is supposed to do. He can’t always hide behind me forever. He has to face his mother and attack whatever injustice she did to him. He nodded at me even though I could tell he was just not in the mood to even be around that woman. She tried to hold his hand, but he let go. Koko walked with me into the church, trying to make me look at Julia in another light. Yeah right.

Koko: “Oh, don’t mind her. She tends to be like that whenever she’s nervous. She is really a good person, you know.”

Wow, sometimes I ask myself if my own grandmother is not senile or mental. She actually thinks that Mma Moruti is a good person? Ja, neh. We walked in and I was about to go sit right in the second row, but Koko pulled me into a different direction. There is a section I just didn't notice before whenever I attended this church. There is a very small and intimate block upstairs that seems like it is for VIPs. It has about 10 or 20 chairs.

Koko: "Oh, no, honey. You can't sit there as if you are some commoner. You are a Church Wife now, so you'll be seated over there."

I looked towards the direction she was pointing at and I saw women that were just not my cup of tea. These women were ranging from women my age if not younger, to women as old as Mma Moruti; in their 50s or so. They were all dressed in proper haute couture. I'm talking Alexandre Vauthier, Bouchra Jarra, Chanel, Dior, Prada, Gucci, Versace, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren, Oscar de la Renta; you name it. I know proper couture when I see it because Koko is obsessed with those runway shows. She used to make us watch them whenever we were

visiting her, and so that is how Charisma got to be such a fashion addict. It is actually a good thing she doesn't have children now, because imagine her kids being draped in proper couture from birth. I still don't even know how I feel about Koko calling certain people commoners, but anyway. She walked with me and a woman in the first row waved at me. She looks more or less my age, but her body structure is so beautiful. She is petite in size, with plump breasts and her waist line is to die for. I can't imagine myself walking in such long, thin pencil heels all day. She was even wearing gloves to match her Ralph Lauren outfit. I mean

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this looks like the Stepford Wives.

Woman: (smiling) "Hey, oh, my goodness. Our Queen mother has told me so much about you."

By queen mother I am assuming she means Mma Moruti. She even hugged me. she must be very friendly.

Ziphora: "Oh, hi."

I felt so out of place, with my Burberry outfit and simple wedges.

Woman: “Oh, my manners. I’m Boitumelo, but please, call me Boitu. This next to me is Amogelang and right next to her is Akanyang.”

Boitu seems like the friendliest of the bunch, the other two just greeted me unfazed.

Ziphora: “What about the rest of the women?”

Boitu: “Don’t worry yourself about them. They are a bit older than us, so usually they mingle with their own kind. Most of the time we’re glad we don’t get to interact with them. Come, sit.”

She literally pulled me beside her, while Koko just went to the back to sit with one of the elder looking ones. Boitu was so nice, shame. She is apparently married to one of the Senior Pastors and she is 27, has one child, a son and church is pretty

much her life. She graduated from Law school and decided on becoming a stay at home mom. That could never be me, I'm sorry.

Boitu: "So, when are you and Pastor David getting married?"

I was about to answer when Amogelang decided to speak out of turn.

Amogelang: "Who knows? She doesn't seem too serious about that man. Many more ladies would have killed for her position."

Did she just talk about me as if I'm not here?

Ziphora: (frowning) "I'm here, you know. Anyway, we've decided to wait a little while. He is not pressuring me into choosing a date anytime soon. He is actually very patient."

Amogelang: (chuckling) "David? Patient? I doubt we're talking about the same person. Hey, Akanyang, do you remember that

time David had sex with Theresa and dumped her because she just wasn't into oral?"

I see where this is going even before it goes further. This bitch has a problem with me and doesn't even know me.

Akanyang: "Yes, but that was like ancient years ago, Amo. Theresa should let that go already."

Amogelang looked a bit annoyed, and I could tell she was hoping for a different response from Akanyang just to see my reaction. How childish.

Ziphora: "Who's Theresa?"

Boitu: "Amo's cousin. She and David had a brief thing. I wouldn't even call it a relationship. Don't mind her, she is just going through a lot with her husband."

Amogelang: (annoyed) "Well, David isn't as perfect as you think, you know. He gets bored very easily."

She sounds as if she knows a little too much.

Boitu: (irritated) “Need I remind you, Amo, focus on your problems with your husband. I won’t mind spilling the beans about that if you continue with your rudeness.”

Amo immediately kept quiet and looked down in annoyance. Boitu really doesn’t seem like one to mess with. The choir started singing and the Bride walked down the aisle.

Boitu: “We’ll talk in a bit. Let’s watch this moment. Trust me, after this, you’ll have a wedding date in mind.”

I didn’t even realize that David and his family had already walked out on stage. David couldn’t stop looking at me and smiling, while his mother tried to wipe the annoyance off her face. The groom was standing right at the altar, while the beautiful bride walked down the aisle, slowly, with the choir singing “I will always love you” by Whitney Houston. This is a rather modern church. I just love how they put their own spin

to the song. I was so caught in the moment of watching the groom's face as the bride was walking down the aisle. That's my favourite moment. I don't look at the bride in all the tv shows I watch, I look at the groom's face. His face tells me how he feels at that particular moment. It's like they get so wrapped up into the moment and everything just stands still. And there it was, I saw a few tears fall down his face. The view from up here is just so amazing. You literally get to see everything in abundance. My Dave was the one in charge of the sermon today. Shame, I could tell he wasn't even prepared because he wasn't expecting to be in charge of the sermon or even be part of it at all.

David: "You may be seated."

We all sat down and now my focus was all on David.

David: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to witness a beautiful union between these two. It sounds, a bit clichéd, doesn't it?"

The congregation laughed slightly.

David: “I for a fact know that it is a cliché, for my fiancée would most definitely tell me so. She is a very honest lady – even though I don’t like hearing what she has to say at times. Isn’t that what love is? Honest? Real? True?”

I found myself instantly captivated by his words.

David: “Psalm 37:23 - 24 says; “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” This verse reminds us that when you seek God, He delights in you because you want His way above all else. It means that He leads you in the way you should go. The same way we seek God, is the same way we’re supposed to seek our wives. God desires nothing but the best for us; whether it is for a certain period of time or for eternity. Love is a beautiful thing and an achievement at most, as not everyone gets to experience that. Psalm 37:4 says; “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” A lot of people sitting in front of me today, know that I have never been lucky in love. But then, I decided to trust in the Lord and wait. My small piece of advice to the two of you, is never sleep

angry. Love tests your limits; at times it frustrates you, but at the end of the day, if the beauty you fell in love with of the person next to you does not fade away, then you're really in love. When you are upset with your partner, yet you don't keep tabs of the wrongs, when you don't do things with expectation of being rewarded of them doing the same for you, then you know you chose right. When you are okay with the fact that they are snoring right next to you, farting even and you don't get upset – you most definitely know that you chose the right woman or man.”

I could hear the congregation burst out in laughter. The whole time it felt as if he was truly looking at me. Oh, I hope he isn't talking about me farting at night. Do I even fart? He gave the couple a chance to say their vows and before we knew it, they had said “I do”. We all had to take turns shaking their hands and congratulating them, but I only saw a number of selected people getting up – including us who were seated with Agape Church of Christ's most elite – the Church Wives.

Boitu: “Come on, we have to go wish them good luck. It is inappropriate not to get up.”

So, I did as she said and already, Amogelang was already shooting daggers at me. I ignored her and did as told by Boitu. David smiled at me when I was in front congratulating the couple. I saw Mma Moruti look at me in annoyance, but what's new? After two hours, the church service was over. I was starving and I just couldn't wait to leave.

Boitu: "Come, we have to go to the house."

I looked at her surprised.

Ziphora: (surprised) "House?"

Boitu: "Yes, we're invited to the wedding lunch."

I wonder if that's how it is done here. The Church wives and pastor and his wife and family are always invited to the weddings.

Ziphora: "Is it done like this all the time?"

Boitu: (nodding) “Yes, but of course, my Tumelo ensured that we do things differently. We didn’t get married in the church, however the whole church was invited since he is one of the Senior Pastors. You might have to do it a certain way as well, since David is next in line to becoming the Bishop. Of course, only if the two of you agree to do it like that. My advice, don’t be bullied into anything.”

I suppose that was a warning of some sort. Something is really up with this family and I intend to find out what it actually is.

17

1 Corinthians 13:13 – “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Ziphora

While walking out with Boitu by my arm, Amo just couldn't wait to be the basic rude bitch she is. Looking at her standing, she really isn't all that.

Amo: (annoyed) “Is she coming with us now? What are we? A charity society?”

I was literally about to open my mouth, but Boitu stopped me.

Boitu: “I don't recall treating you like that when you joined us. Don't get too comfortable, Amo. We all know there is someone in line waiting to take over from you as we speak.”

Wow, daggers all the way. Amo immediately backed off and walked away. While walking towards the cars outside, David came rushing towards me, with his mother running after him. This woman, though.

David: "Zipho! Why didn't you wait for me?"

Ziphora: "Oh, I'm sorry, love. Boitu has been keeping me right by her side."

Boitu: "Don't look so worried, David. She has to make friends sooner rather than later."

David: "I thought we could drive together."

Mma Moruti: "Oh, come on, David. I'm sure she is fine right by herself. She is in good hands, isn't she Boitu?"

I could tell by Boitu's annoyed look on her face that she also was not a big fan of Mma Moruti.

Boitu: “David, I’ll personally take care of her. We’ll meet you at the house.”

David: “Fine, take my car, please.”

The way David just wants me in his car all the time one would actually swear he only trusts his car and not others.

Boitu: “I won’t say no to driving that mean machine.”

David chuckled as he handed her the keys. He ignored his mother who was anxiously standing right behind him and kissed me.

David: “See you soon. I love you.”

Ziphora: (blushing) “I love you too.”

Well, I just never get used to saying those three words to him.

Mma Moruti: “David! A re ye toe (Let’s go already)!”

David ignored all her efforts of trying to touch him and walked away. The whole time he kept looking back to see if I got in the car. Boitu was having the time of her life, more especially since Amo and Akanyang were not with us in the car. Koko left with one of the elder women.

Boitu: (chuckling) “Oh, that man is so smitten. Thapelo is so much like David. Even now, we’re still so madly in love with one another.”

Ziphora: “What’s the deal with Amo if you don’t mind me asking?”

Boitu: “Ag, that one. She got married to her husband not so long ago. Two years ago to be exact. She is quite young; 22 years old to be exact. Rumour has it that he married her because she was pregnant.”

Ziphora: “Oh, so what was that about her being so rude towards me?”

Boitu: “David was a bit of a wild one right after Norah died. He really didn’t take her death too well. We all thought that they were going to get married at some point, you know. So, he went rogue after her death. He slept with quite a few women and had wild parties. It was quite bad. He always told the women that he was not about the relationship life and Theresa, who happens to be Amo’s cousin, fell for him – despite being his booty call. She fell for him hard, and being older than him, she thought that he would marry her. But when he finally moved on and stopped calling her, Amo held it as a grudge against David even til today.”

It makes sense.

Ziphora: “What happened to Norah?”

Boitu: “She had a really horrible car accident. There were a few rumours about her brakes being tampered with, but well,

nothing ever came out of that conspiracy theory. I'm not surprised he hasn't told you about her yet. It was really tough on him. I am so glad he actually moved on with someone he truly loves. Don't believe everything they say about him, when he loves – he loves hard."

Ziphora: "You sound like you know him very well."

Boitu: "He and Tumelo have been best friends for years. So, I got to know him quite well."

Ziphora: "And Mma Moruti?"

Boitu: (laughing) "Ai, Julia. She is one mean bitch. She is actually the one who gets to decide who joins the Church wives and who doesn't – despite our votes. She is such a perfectionist it is sickening. No wonder her own husband loathes her. They don't even sleep in the same bed. It's been years."

Wow, Boitu knows so much.

Boitu: “Eh, utlwa ke phatloga bjang (listen to me going on). Please don’t get the wrong idea about me. I really like you. I just tend to talk a lot. I promise you, I’m not a gossipmonger.”

I actually laughed at that and she looked really worried as if she was about to lose me as a friend. I laughed so hard, she felt relaxed even while driving.

Ziphora: “Trust me, I don’t judge, love. It’s all good. My lips are sealed. I promise.”

She smiled at me and nodded in relief.

Boitu: “No wonder Jeannette likes you so much. I can tell you are going to be a good wife to David.”

Wow, Jeannette talks about me?

Ziphora: “She talks about me?”

Boitu: “Oh, all the time. She wishes that you and David tie the knot already. She can’t phathom being the only daughter-in-law in that house.”

Oh, no. We are most definitely not going to stay in that house.

Ziphora: “I doubt we are going to stay in that house.”

Boitu: (frowning) “Eh, Julia is going to have a fit once she hears about that. Save that for after the wedding if you wish. Jeannette tried it and it just didn’t end too well.”

I was too afraid to ask what she meant by that last statement. We arrived at the new couple’s house and my goodness, it is beautiful. The garden is spectacular, with water fountains almost everywhere. It is so huge, a whole marquee could actually fit in the yard. The entire theme consisted of blush pink and rose gold themed colours. It looks spectacular, along with the amazing upside down cake. People go all out for weddings and I have never seen anything like this in my entire life. The Bride was wearing a beautiful silk wedding dress, and it seemed rather conservative. The Church wives even had their own huge

table along with their husbands. Koko was not the odd one out, as she was catching up with one of the elder ladies. It looks like they have known each other for quite some time. Just as Mma Moruti thought David would join them at their table, David came straight to sit next to me. Of course, Jeannette was so happy to see me, that she and Jacob also joined us and squeezed right next to us. Wow, our table was filled with about 20 people if not more. I got to meet Thapelo, and he looks so humble and very good looking. He seems rather quiet, quite the opposite to Boitu. I looked around every now and then and Boitu honestly seems like she is the only sane woman here, apart from Jeannette. The rest of these women just all seemed to love looking prim and proper, wore high heels – even Jeannette was in heels despite her baby bump. I am in shock. I'd love to be able to rock such shoes one day when I get pregnant.

Ziphora: “Jeannette, if I may ask, why are you wearing heels? I mean don't they hurt?”

Jeannette: (chuckling) “I am already used to them by now, love. And you might have to get used to them too. It's the rules of the Church Wives society. You can't attend any of our meetings

if you're not dressed properly, that includes high heels and certain coloured dresses or skirts – no pants.”

That is the biggest load of shit I have ever heard. She looked at me and actually saw the shock on my face.

Jeannette: “Don't worry, everyone who has ever tried changing that rule, got fired from the society. So, if I were you, I'd just stick to it.”

So these women are actually okay with Mma Moruti dictating basically everything to them? I even saw their hairstyles and they were more or less a certain style.

Ziphora: “And the hair?”

Boitu: “You are either allowed to have weaves or wigs, but no over the top hairdo's like styling your own hair in an outrageous manner. We tie our hair in buns on certain occasions or events we're invited to

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especially if the media has to be there. Other than that, you're not allowed to have certain colours on your hair."

Jeannette: "I'm surprised Mama allowed you to be here with that hairstyle, love."

Jacob: (chuckling) "I heard her complaining about her hair all the way here. She is not impressed, but I love someone giving her a run for her money. Forgive me, but Mama wa phapha (Mama is too forward)."

They all laughed including David.

David: (smiling) "My wife is not a stepford wife, she can wear whatever she wants, when she wants. I won't allow such autocratic behaviour towards her."

Jeannette: "Jacob also tried that, but failed. Good luck."

David ignored her and kissed my hand. Before I knew it, Mma moruti had come to our table. Will she ever give us time to ourselves?

Mma Moruti: (smiling) "Hi, ladies and pastors. Ziphora."

She said that while literally trying to swallow the amount of hate she had left in her mouth.

Mma Moruti: "I hope all is well here."

Boitu: "Oh, Queen Mother, all is well."

Mma Moruti: "Ziphora, I hope you can see how we do things around here. I mean, as the future Queen Mother, you should be taking tips, starting with that hair."

David immediately clenched his jaw and gave her a stern look.

Mma Moruti: (smiling) “Ag, pardon me. I didn’t mean to sound so rude. I just meant that it would be wise for you to try and see things from our angle at the church.”

David: “My wife will do no such thing. She is her own person.”

David was so stern, it wasn’t even funny. Julia felt the irritation from her son and was not too happy about it.

Mma Moruti: “Well, then. I do hope you get to choose a wedding date soon, I mean, our ladies do not stay engaged for too long, unless you intend on living in sin. And we all know what happens when you live in sin.”

David was so tense and irritated.

David: “Ma, I told you – “

I didn’t want a repeat of last time. I most certainly didn’t want the elder ladies to think that I was turning David against his mother and gloating in the fact that he didn’t mind

disrespecting her in public. Yes, she is a bitch, but that wouldn't come across like that to them, so I decided to intervene.

Ziphora: (interrupting) "16th of September, my birthday."

Shit, I just blurted it out. I mean, it's only June month now so which means that we only have about two and a half months to prepare. What the fuck was I thinking? I looked at David, whom I thought would be displeased, but he was so happy and smiled immediately.

David: (smiling) "The 16th of September it is."

Mma Moruti was really not pleased. I saw her face literally become fatter with annoyance.

Koko: (ululating) "Halala! Finally, a date has been set! Ngwana ngwanaka (my daughter's child), man!"

I felt a bit weird, rather anxious and a little bit regretful. I truly hope I just didn't make a mistake. I most certainly do not hope

that Mma moruti will start putting weird plans in motion as to try and get rid of me. The one thing I know is that God and my ancestors have my back. I most certainly would not have met David if they didn't allow it. Nonetheless, I actually enjoyed myself despite Amo's irritating comments. Her husband had been warning her from time to time and they had to leave early. She claimed it was because her nanny had to leave early, but I doubt it was the case. I think he was so angry at her, that he just was too embarrassed to be around us with her acting like that. David and I headed to our house and took our usual shower. Before bed, David asked me to do something with him I never thought I'd ever do.

David: "Zipho, do you mind if we start our own tradtion?"

Ziphora: "What kind, love?"

David: "I'd like us to start praying together. Every night before bed, no matter how we feel about one another."

My heart melted right there. This man is for keeps, isn't he?

Ziphora: “And what if you’re not there? You’re somewhere away or I’m on nightshift?”

David: “Then we shall pray together before one of us leaves and again over the phone.

Ziphora: (smiling) “I love it.”

I wasted no time further and knelt down next to him. David lit a candle for us and we began praying.

David: “Father God, I thank you so much for everything you have given me, but most importantly I thank you for giving me this amazing woman I am soon to call my wife. If I had it my way, I’d marry her right here and right now. Father God, only you know my heart. Only you know how long I have been yearning to feel the amazing beaming light I feel inside of me. You have sent Ziphora my way, for you know that she is the right one for me. I can only pray that I am half the man my father is and I can only hope that I am half the man I need to be for her. I am not perfect, lord, but thanks to your mercy and grace, I found myself the perfect woman. Please bear with me,

oh, lord. For I know that there are times when I am going to upset her unwittingly, and I am going to get upset unintentionally, but as I said, You know my heart. Purify me and cleanse me just for her; make me whole again oh, lord so that I can make her the happiest wife in the world. Grant me peace of mind so that I can never unleash any wrath on her, for she is just a perfect flower. I ask you for your guidance. I thank you once again, in Jesus' mighty name. Amen."

That was the most beautiful prayer I have ever heard from a man. Any man, actually. I smiled and kissed him. It felt so weird, but I think David and I finally connected, spiritually. I don't know how to explain it, though. I fell asleep and had the most surreal dream about a woman I have never met before.

Woman: (smiling) "Relebohile. Ngwanake (my baby), I am so happy my grandson chose you to be his. Finally, our ancestors have done what they were supposed to correct a long time ago."

Ziphora: (frowning) "I don't understand. Who are you?"

Woman: "Ask your husband, he will tell you. You two were supposed to meet long before this. By now, you two would have had a son. By the Grace of God, nothing defeats God."

Ziphora: "Who are you, Mama?"

Woman: "I am the one who chose you, your guide. Believe me when I say that you are the one we have been waiting for. Welcome to the family Relebohile."

I woke up feeling a weird spirit in the bedroom, a good spirit, almost like that woman was right in the room. Who is she and why is she calling me Relebohile?

18

Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Ziphora

The following morning I woke up and I could still remember the dream very well. It had been a while since David checked into the office, so he had to leave earlier than I. I decided to tell him about my odd dream before he left.

Ziphora: “Love, I had a weird dream last night.”

David: (frowning) “Nothing scary, I hope.”

Ziphora: “Well, not really. I dreamt of a woman. She looked rather old and she spoke about you.”

David: (surprised) “What did she say about me?”

Ziphora: “She was smiling at me the whole time and told me that she is very happy that her grandson chose me. By her grandson I assume she means you. She also said that she is the one who chose me for you.”

David: “What did she look like?”

Ziphora: “She looked fair skinned, a little chubby with beautiful dimples and eyes like yours. Hazel eyes.”

David stared at me like he was in deep thought.

David: “You’re describing my late grandmother.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “I had no idea your grandmother was deceased.”

David: “My father’s mother.”

He really seemed to be thinking hard.

Ziphora: "Is everything okay? I hope I didn't upset you."

David: (smiling) "You could never upset me over something so beautiful. I have to go and confirm something with my father. I'll call you later, okay?"

He kissed me and left. That was odd. I continued fixing myself since he left with his car. He asked one of his drivers to bring my car to the house for me. I know Mama won't be too pleased about that, and what's even worse is that Koko probably blabbed about what happened yesterday at the church wedding. I have to speak to Mama very soon. I finished getting dressed and just as I was about to walk out, I received a call from security.

Ziphora: "Hello?"

Security: "Good morning, ma'am. There is a man here for you. He says he has brought your car here."

He's right on time.

Ziphora: "Thank you. Please let him in."

Security: "Alright."

I hung up and within minutes, he arrived at my door. My car looked almost unrecognizable. With tinted windows and 17 inch mac rims. My car was just a standard car the last time I checked. Why would David change my car without asking me? Or perhaps he was trying to impress or surprise me? I don't know.

Man: (smiling) "Good morning, ma'am. I trust all is in order."

Ziphora: "Yes, thank you."

Man: "Have a good day, then."

Ziphora: "Oh, wait. I didn't quite catch your name."

Man: (smiling) “My birth name is Bhuddist, but you can just call me Buda.”

He gave me this weird smile, with ridiculously gold teeth. About four or eight with a weird scar on his right cheek. Perhaps he had a bad accident back in the day, so who am I to judge?

Ziphora: “Pleased to meet you then, Buda.”

Buda: “Enjoy the ride. I hope it is a pleasant one.”

He winked at me and that just made me cringe. I don't know, call me weird, but there was just something sinister about the way he said that. He got into one of the Mosue company cars. Apparently the parents run a transport shuttle business, so they are pretty well off. I decided not to dwell so much on it. I got into my car, and it just felt so weird. He even got me leather seats and a sun roof. Before driving out, I decided to say a prayer for the day and call my fiancé.

David: "Mosadi wa me (my wife). Miss me already?"

Ziphora: (smiling) "Love, why did you change my car so much?"

David: "I wanted to surprise you and sports it up a bit. Do you like it?"

Ziphora: "It feels a bit too showey, though, but I am in love with the leather seats and the sun roof."

David: (chuckling) "I'm so glad you like it. I hope the person who brought it to you was not late."

Ziphora: "Oh, he was actually right on time. He looks a bit creepy."

David: "How so? Timber is the neatest guy I know."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Timer? The guy who brought the car said his name is Buda."

David's tone of voice changed immediately.

David: (worried) "Did you just say Buda?"

Ziphora: "Yes. Is something wrong?"

David: "Where are you now?"

Ziphora: (shaky) "I just got off the robot from my house. Is something wrong?"

David: "Zippo, I need you to pull over to the side."

Ziphora: (panicky) "I can't. There's so many cars here and everyone is driving fast."

David: "Ziphora, I need you to focus and relax right now. I have seen you drive and I know you can do it."

I felt my heart race abnormally and I was overcome with an immense heat wave. I tried pressing my foot on the brake pedal and the car didn't want to stop. With my eyes focusing on the road, and my foot trying so hard to hit the pedals, I felt like I was about to meet my maker.

Ziphora: (scared) "David, I can't hit the brakes. It doesn't want to stop."

I could feel the panic in David's voice.

David: "Don't panic. Listen to me and try to be calm. Okay?"

Ziphora: "Okay."

David: "Where are you now?"

Ziphora: "I'm approaching Nellmapius robots."

David: "Okay. As soon as you approach the robots, move your car to the side. I want you to try and turn it approaching the Equestria bridge. Okay?"

I nodded forgetting that I was on the phone.

David: "Ziphora? Are you still there?"

Ziphora: (shaky) "Yes, yes I'm still here. I'm on the side of the road now. I managed to turn."

David: "Good."

I could hear a sense of relief in his voice.

David: "Okay, now I want you to slowly change your gears down until you get to gear one, okay? Slowly."

I could feel myself dripping with sweat.

Ziphora: "Yes."

I did as told and I finally managed to get it to gear one.

David: "Okay, now put the car on neutral, and slowly pull up the handbrake."

I put the car on neutral, but as soon as I pulled up the handbrake, it didn't stop. Instead, I saw it move uncontrollably faster. My heart rate started racing once again.

Ziphora: (scared) "David! The car isn't slowing down. It's moving too fast on its own!"

David: (scared) "Where are you? Zee? Where are you now?"

I tried to manoeuvre the car as best I could, but I couldn't dodge any cars. I really didn't want to kill anyone or crash into anyone's car, so I did what I thought was best.

Ziphora: "If I don't make it out alive, know that I love you, David."

David: (screaming) "Ziphora! Ziphora! Talk to me!"

In an instant, I swerved my car to the side of the road, and all I heard was a loud bang. The airbags came out and the one from the steering wheel hit my face. I felt so much burning pain in my neck and face

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and I tried to open my eyes, but they were slowly failing me. I saw people staring at me while others just passed by. I tried to see what was before me and I saw smoke coming out of the car. I could hear David shouting my name frantically, but my own body failed me. My voice failed me.

David: (frantic) "Ziphora! Stay there! I'm on my way."

I could hear someone from the street shout.

Person: "Fire! The car is on fire!"

David: (worried) "Ziphora! Please, try to get out of there!"

I tried to remove my seatbelt, but I failed. It was locked and couldn't unlock. I saw fire right in front of the bonnet. People were shouting and screaming outside of the car, some were banging my windows, trying to get me out of the car. I could hear David crying on the phone, as if his voice was crying from a distance.

David: (crying) "Ziphora! Please, please don't leave me! I won't make it without you!"

I saw myself being concealed in flames. I could literally see the whole car covered in flames, but what is odd is that I wasn't burning. I was weak, and felt a bit dazed, but no flame was touching my skin. People outside were shouting and

screaming, while David was wailing over the phone and even praying for me.

David: (hysterical) “Oh, Modimo wa ka (My God), kea go kopa hle (I beg of you). Please save my wife. For me, for us, for our future children. We still have so much to do and so many things to see and so many to achieve. For I know I haven’t been the best of your followers, but please don’t punish my wife for my own sins. Please, don’t let this happen to me again – I beg of you, oh, God.”

Just then, I gathered the strength to get out of my slight concussion. I could see the whole windscreen and car covered in massive flames. Surprisingly, I wasn’t inhaling any smoke. I could see flames all around me in the car, but none of them were touching me.

Ziphora: “David? Are you still there?”

David: “Zee?! My baby please tell me you’re okay.”

I was about to answer him as I had started feeling hysterically panicked, but I saw the most beautiful vision of spirit right next to me.

Woman: (smiling) “Hello, Relebohile, ngwanaka (My baby). We meet again.”

There she was. The woman I dreamt of last night, David’s grandmother.

Ziphora: (frowning) “Mme (Ma), what’s happening?”

Woman: (smiling) “Don’t be afraid. I told you last night that I would protect you – always.”

My goodness, she is even more beautiful than in my dreams.

Ziphora: “How am I going to get out of here?”

Woman: “Don’t you worry. I’ll help you get out of here. Remember always, that I’ll be here whenever you need me. No harm will come to you for as long as I’m your guide.”

I felt so much at ease as if I wasn’t stuck in a car full of burning flames. I felt safe.

Ziphora: (nodding) “Okay.”

I literally saw her unlock my safety belt and she was still smiling at me.

Woman: “You can open the door now.”

Ziphora: (worried) “What about the flames and the smoke?”

Woman: “Trust me, no harm will come upon you. Learn to trust your gut. You see the feeling of safety you feel right now? It means you actually are. You were not named Ziphora for no reason. You are a bird, just like the wife of Moses and just like the meaning of your name. May you soar high and fly

like the beautiful bird you are. Stay blessed, child, for I am always with you.”

I nodded and opened the door. Indeed, the flames did not touch me at all. The smoke did not affect me at all and as soon as I walked out of the car, it exploded. I looked back and saw my car burning into ash, while everyone around me was astonished to say the least. They were even recording the whole scene. I wasn't bothered. I had just had the most moving experience of my life. The paramedics were there and they rushed to me.

Paramedic: “Ma’am? Are you okay? We need to get you checked out urgently.”

The other one was still shocked as they had taken me into the ambulance.

Paramedic 2: (shocked) “My goodness, not one single scratch! How did you survive that crash?”

Looking right outside the ambulance, people were still taking pictures and videos of the car and including me. The media had just arrived, but I didn't even take note. I saw the woman standing right in front of the crowd, smiling at me and she slowly disappeared. Is this even real? I saw David approach me running hysterically.

David: (frantic) "Oh, thank goodness! Are you okay? Is she okay?"

He hugged me, but was also surprised when he took a good look at me.

Paramedic 1: "I don't know how she managed, sir, but she didn't sustain one single scratch or any effects of the smoke. It is a miracle."

David: "Okay, but we need to take her to the hospital just to do more tests."

I was genuinely fine. I felt fine, surreal but fine. He was just staring at me and had his arms wrapped around me the whole time the ambulance was on the way to the hospital. He was talking to me and thanking God for bringing me back, but funny enough I was never dead. I was just trying to process everything that had just happened to me. I can honestly say that I firmly believe in the spiritual world.

Psalm 46:10 – “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

The way to the hospital felt a little overwhelming for me. David was right by my side, fussing over me, while the one paramedic was driving, and the other kept staring at me in deep shock. We arrived and I was placed in a ward very quickly since I work there. They did a few tests and drew my blood just to be sure. David was sitting right next to me, holding my hand.

David: “Are you sure you’re okay, moratuwa (My love)?”

Ziphora: “Yes, I’m fine, really.”

I could hear the news on tv and a few clips of the fire appeared. I took the remote and increased the volume.

Reporter: “It has been reported that Dr. Ziphora Mokoena, the fiancée of Architect mogul and Pastor of Agape Church of Christ, David Mosue, was involved in a freak car accident. It has

also been reported that her car was seen swerving out of the road and landed right on a tree. You can even see in the clip that follows, that she was seen walking right out of the car, completely conscious and unharmed, with no scratch or any sign of burns in sight. A lot of them call it a miracle, while others call it insanely odd. Some believe that she may even be using a certain type of muthi. Is this a miracle?"

I was in shock. Will I ever get rest? One of the civilians was being interviewed. I could see the car burning behind the crowd with the fire brigades trying to get the flames out.

Civilian: "I saw her walking out and the flames were just separating from her. It was almost like Jesus walking on water. I have never seen such in my life. She is truly blessed."

David could tell just how unsettled I was and decided to switch off the tv.

David: "Don't worry about them. They're not worth it."

Amongst all this drama, I completely forgot about everyone in my life. While David was talking to me, I could hear Mama's voice.

Susan: (frantic) "Where is she?! Where is my daughter?!"

She didn't even give the nurses a chance to speak. Immediately, I saw her rushing in and she looked terrible.

Susan: (wailing) "Oh, ngwanake (my baby)!"

She rushed towards me and just cried while holding me in her arms. I totally get how she feels. It feels very surreal

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and she must have been in a real state seeing my car burning on live television.

David: "I'll give you two some space."

I nodded as he walked out. I love how he thinks. He knows just when to make an exit.

David

As soon as Ziphora's mother walked in there, it was the perfect opportunity for me to walk out and breathe. I found myself rushing towards the lift. I didn't even check which direction it was headed when I rushed in. Fuck, it's still headed up to the 7th floor. I really can't wait that long, I need to breathe before this monster inside of me takes over. The lift went open right on the 7th floor and I ran out. I found myself running down 7 flights of stairs. As soon as I walked out towards the parking lot, I found myself feeling so overwhelmed like I just couldn't breathe. An immense feeling inside of me forced me to scream it all out. I screamed coarse tears were burning my cheeks as they fell down to my shirt. I can't fucking believe it. I nearly lost another woman I dearly love. This can't be right. What I'm thinking surely can't be right, but then everything adds up to it. I have done so much research on Buda and all his call records show that he was in contact with my mother just hours before Norah died. And now, the same thing happened to my dear Ziphora. I know, I must think my mother is a monster. I feel it in my bones that she is the one who was indeed responsible for

her accident. I just need to speak to the one person who can confirm everything. And now that everyone has witnessed Ziphora walk right through burning flames – it means that my grandmother really chose her for me. once I do find out that my mother is indeed responsible for this – I'll have to against my word and promise to God and deal with her – permanently.

Julia Mosue

I can't believe it. This can't be true. How the fuck did Ziphora get it right? The news must be wrong, surely. I was so deep in thought, I had completely forgot my husband was still around.

Ntate Moruti: "I know, right? Everyone is asking themselves the same thing. She is truly blessed to have been saved from a burning car. Modimo wa phela (God is alive), Julia."

Mma Moruti: (annoyed) "Mack, ga o na mosebetsi ka jeno (don't you have work to do today)?"

Ntate Moruti: (frowning) “Bathong (Goodness), Julia. Ge o dira o kare ka go tena bjanong (why are you acting like I irritate you)? I thought we could spend time together, you know, just like the old days.”

Mma Moruti: (annoyed) “I have work to do.”

Ntate Moruti: “Oh, okay. As long as it doesn’t involve you trying anything funny to stop David from marrying that girl.”

Mma Moruti: “Heh (Huh)?! O ra bjang (what do you mean), Mack?!”

Ntate Moruti: “I mean I know you and I know that you are very displeased that he chose her instead of the one you chose for him. I’m warning you, Julia. If anything happens to her or you try to stop the wedding, you’ll have me to deal with.”

He just left me standing there in shock and walked out. It’s impossible. He was just hinting, right? I mean there’s no way he knows what really happened to Norah. If he knows, I’m as good as doomed. I just need to find out how Ziphora managed to escape that accident without a scrape. There is no way she is highly blessed as people think. I doubt she is even a virgin.

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Psalm 37:23 – 24 – “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”

David

It was finally time to do what I have been dying to do for the past few weeks. I finally decided to call him.

Malome Jack: “I have been expecting your call.”

David: (anxious) “How are you , Malome (uncle)?”

Malome Jack: “I’d be a lot better if you called regularly or answered my calls. The question is how are you doing?”

David: “Not too good. I need you.”

Malome Jack: "I know. Your grandmother told me. Especially after the footage I saw on the news, I'm more than happy to come."

David: (sigh) "Can you be here by tomorrow at least?"

Malome Jack: "I'm already on a plane to South Africa. I shall be landing in about two hours."

David: (relieved) "Okay, I can come fetch you."

Malome Jack: (chuckling) "David, you don't have to do that. I'll meet you at your house."

David: "How do you know I no longer live at Mom's house?"

Malome Jack: (laughing) "Are you seriously asking me that?"

David: "I forgot. See you soon then."

He hung up and I felt immediately relieved. At least I can manage looking after Ziphora for a some time while I figure out what is happening. I collected myself and went back to Ziphora's ward. Her mother was calmer, but I could tell she was shaken by it all.

Ziphora: "Oh, you're back. The Doctor is discharging me."

David: "Thank goodness. Shall we go?"

Susan: (teary) "Actually, I was thinking she could come home with me tonight, if that's okay."

My heart was a bit bummed, but I let them be. Her mother also nearly lost her.

David: "Of course, Mme (Ma). You needn't ask."

Susan: (smiling) "Thank you for understanding."

David: "If I could only ask one thing."

Susan: "Yes?"

David: "Please drive my car. Just to be safe."

Susan: "I drove mine all the way to here."

David: "After what happened with Zee today, I just can't afford to take any chances, please."

Susan: "Okay."

I walked alongside Zee and led them to my car. I took Susan's car with me as we drove off. I asked her to call me the moment she got home and she did. I am just grateful that she is okay and put on leave. Once I got to my house, I could feel just how empty it is without Zee. I'm already so used to her presence warming up this house. I took a shower and changed, and

immediately poured myself a drink. Within half an hour, security called.

David: "Yes?"

Security: "Dumela Rre (Evening sir). There is a man here for you. He says he is your uncle."

David: "Please, let him in."

Security: "Noted."

Within minutes I heard a knock on the door.

David: "Malome (Uncle)."

Malome John: (smiling) "Ngwana sesi (my sister's child). How are you?"

David: "I've had better days."

Malome John: "Come. Let's go sit down and we can talk about it over a drink."

David: (chuckling) "You still drink?"

Malome John: "I may be a missionary, but that doesn't mean I don't have to enjoy the world's pleasures every now and then."

I laughed a bit and walked alongside him. We made it to my patio, and I brought the drink and glasses. I poured us a drink and sat in my chair.

Malome John: "I'm all ears."

I knew he was just the right person to talk to. He knows me in and out and he just gets me. I found myself feeling so overwhelmed. All the pain and hurt I have been withholding finally came out. I felt an immense rush of emotions over me

and I just let the tears out. My face felt so hot, I was literally sniffing, but I just couldn't hide it anymore.

David: (crying) "I have failed her, Malome. I failed my own wife, before I even married her. What kind of a man does that?"

Malome John: "You didn't fail anyone, David. If anything, your own mother failed you."

David: "I tried by all means. I told myself that I would try this time, and not let her die the way Norah did. I took her car for extra's and even upped the security on her car, but I just couldn't save her from harm's way. I knew when I first met her that I just couldn't be the man for her, but I fell for her and now, I'm the monster my own mother has created."

Malome John: "David, look at me."

I felt so ashamed to even look up, but I did.

Malome John: “You are not a bad person. You were just a child and she took advantage of you – when she should have nurtured you. She abused you and she’s not even sorry about it. You know it and I know it. And we both know that she was indeed responsible for Norah’s death.”

David: “I nearly lost Ziphora, Malome (Uncle).”

Malome John: “You won’t lose her. Because she is protected and she is your chosen one.”

David: (surprised) “So, the dream?”

Malome John: “Yes, the dream was real. She did indeed dream of your grandmother.”

I was in a bit of shock.

David: “But, how could she choose Zee for someone like me?”

Malome John: "Because your grandmother loved you so dearly and you know it. She fought to protect you and your mother is yet to regret all she has done to you. You are not a bad man, David. I always remind you to do your meditation. I know, it is not easy, but you just have to keep trying. Remember what I taught you when you were 17? And you eventually managed to stop her from sexually abusing you any further?"

David: (sigh) "I remember."

Malome John: "Have you been practising?"

I looked down and shook my head in shame."

Malome John: "Hmm. Have you given into any urges for the past year?"

David: (ashamedly) "Yes."

Malome John: "Victims of sexual abuse don't heal overnight. Some never even heal, David. You have come a long

way, but please. Don't let it get to you like that. Continue therapy. I can give you sessions if you wish."

David: "I appreciate that, Malome, but I honestly don't know if I will ever be healed."

Malome John: "And? What about the child?"

David: (aggrevated) "What about the child?"

Malome John: "You need to do right by him, David. And you need to tell Ziphora the truth."

I quickly jumped up out of anger.

David: (angrily) "No! I can't do that. I'll lose her."

Malome John: "You'll be surprised just how forgiving and understanding she is. She loves you, David. Besides, you were forced to do it. You didn't create that child out of love and will

power, but nonetheless, you have to do right by him and his mother. She has been too traumatized.”

David: (teary) “I can’t, Malome. Please, don’t make me. I can’t even think of that boy without hating myself. We all know why my mother forced me to impregnate that child – for her! We all know that.”

Malome John: “Well, I am back now and we are going to fix all that. Have faith and we can work on the David we all want and need.”

My uncle gives me hope even though I am so battered and broken. I don’t even know how I will get through this, but for Zee, I’ll do anything.

David: “What about Malome Jack?”

Malome John: “What about him?”

David: “What if he comes back? You know Jacob won’t survive it this time.”

Malome John: “Baby steps, David. I’ll deal with that bastard. It’s so saddening to see how your mother and brother took it upon themselves to practise learned behaviour. Instead of doing the opposite of our own father’s abuse

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they decided to manifest and thrive in it. Their days are numbered. Just you wait and see. 1 Peter 2:20 – 21 says, “For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

Indeed, he is right. I just can’t wait to finally put this all behind me. I have suffered long enough and Ziphora does not deserve to be a part of such a sad life. God help me.

Ziphora

As soon as I came home, Mama forced me to get into the bath tub and has been nursing me ever since. She even lit her candle and burned some mphepho (incense) and we prayed together. I can tell she is really rattled, and oddly, I don't feel scared at all. I had the most magical experience ever and I was saved right at death's door. Mama wrapped me with a blanket even and called everyone she knew to tell them how God has favoured me. She even called Charisma and Keo and they came running. I have been so spoiled, they made me my favourite soup and since I am on leave, they even decided to give me all access to any alcohol I desire. I really miss my David, but it is so nice to bond with my mother and sisters.

Keo: "Hai, ngwana mma (No, my mother's child), you have really seen it all. Like, ka nnete (truly), o di bone (you have seen it)."

Charisma: "Can you believe the video of you walking through the flames has been viewed over 500 000 times already? I mean, wow. I have been dying to be the celeb you are, my dear. Even my own husband can't top that."

Susan: "Aowa (No), man. Le lena le rata go trenda too much (you love trending too much)."

Charisma: "Mama, you won't understand."

Susan: "Of course, I didn't. I mean, in my days, you could sleep with the whole village and no one would know about you. These days, mathata fela (just problems)."

Keo: (laughing) "Speaking of, Mama, when are you going to give Charisma and I a chance to take that beautiful black baby in your garage for a spin?"

Susan: "Suka (nonsense), you both drive luxurious cars. If anything, I should be worried about getting Ziphora another car."

Keo: "She's a big girl now, Mama. Besides, insurance will cover it and she won't be Johnnie Motsamai (Walker) for very long. She has a rich husband."

Susan: "Husband to be."

Charisma: (frowning) "Mama, keng o kare (why does it seem as if) you don't want her to get married bjana?"

Susan: "Suka (Nonsense), I don't mind."

Keo: "You know, you have said 'suka' twice now. You're very uncomfortable."

Susan: (sigh) "I just worry about you, Ziphora, that's all. I mean, ever since you have met this man, it has been drama after drama and not to mention this Julia devil who doesn't like you. I mean any woman who claims to be a woman of God for that matter that doesn't love my kids o nale bothata (has a problem). I have raised good daughters – great daughters."

Ziphora: "Mama, come on now."

Sussan: "Are you sure you don't want to reconsider marrying him, my baby? I mean, maybe this is God's way of saying no."

Is she for real? She must be kidding.

Keo: “He-eh(No), Mama, don’t do that. Please, don’t. I know, you love having Zee around, but you yourself have a boyfriend, so you need to let that go.”

Ziphora: (shocked) “Mama wa jola (is dating)?”

Keo and Charisma looked at each other and I knew that they both knew, while Mama just looked down in shame. So, she has been grilling me for dating meanwhile she has been dating all this time. I was feeling a bit furious, I don’t even know why. I was about to respond, when I got a call from an unknown number.

Ziphora: “Ziphora hello?”

Frank: “Ziphora, my baby. O kae na (how are you)?”

This must be a bloody joke. Why on earth is my own father calling me?

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Hebrews 13:8 – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Ziphora

I found myself feeling rather annoyed before he even went further.

Ziphora: (frowning) “Ke bua le mang (Whom am I speaking to)?”

Frank: (chuckling) “Ao, ngwanaka (oh, my child). It’s me, your father.”

Ziphora: “By my father, you mean Frank?”

Frank: “Hao (Goodness), Ziphora. Why o etsa chena (why are you acting like this)?”

Charisma: "Put him on speaker."

I put him on speaker.

Ziphora: "A ke tsebe o cho jwang (I don't know what you mean)?"

Frank: "I am calling to check on you, my baby."

Charisma rolled her eyes immediately. Mama became sour while Keo just tightened her jaw and kept sipping her wine.

Ziphora: "Oh, okay."

Frank: "I saw your video online and I just couldn't believe it. I am so sorry you had to go through that."

Ziphora: "Okay."

I honestly just didn't know how to respond.

Frank: "If there is anything, anything at all that you need me to do, just call me, okay?"

I could see the rage in Mama's eyes evolve. She just couldn't take it anymore. She grabbed my phone from my hands and just lashed out. Even while my phone was on speaker, she just carried on shouting.

Susan: "Waitse keng (you know what), Frank! I have raised all my three children rather perfectly without you! While you went ahead and had children with another woman and didn't give a fuck about ours, I still went ahead and managed to feed them! I did both a mother and a father's duty while wena o dutse o pharame (you were just relaxed with no care), mogwetao (you asshole)! Ga ka belega bana for wena, wa nkutlwa (I didn't birth these kids for you, you hear me)?! Akere o ba lahlile wena (you threw them away, remember)?! So don't you dare call and ask how they are doing now, fokken hond (you dog)! Etswa mo baneng baka (leave my kids alone)!"

Frank wanted to elaborate, but mama didn't want to hear of it, so she hung up and took a large sip of her wine. We could see she was bothered as she was even sweating. We took a long look and just stared at her in silence. Mama never shouts at someone like that, let alone swears at them unless she really reaches her limit. We didn't know what to say until she broke the ice.

Susan: "Keng (What)? Frank ke mogwete vele (Frank is really an asshole)."

We just burst in laughter so much, and decided to take it with a pinch of salt. My poor mother, she loved a man who just didn't reciprocate what he was given, but nonetheless, she beat all the odds and gave us the best life anyone could ever wish for. I don't regret growing up without a father. I mean, she did everything for me a father couldn't, so I really appreciate her presence more than anything.

David

The morning after my uncle came was rather refreshing. I woke up feeling a little better, but the pain really never goes away. I am scarred for life, but I am hopeful for new beginnings. My uncle forced me to deal with my demons, so I have to take the first step. I don't know how I feel about it, but I have decided to give it a try and go for it. We arrived at my parents' house and even I feel rather anxious and scared, I know I have to face my mother one way or another.

Malome John: "Are you okay?"

David: (nervous) "Yes, it's just that ever since I have met Zee, I feel so afraid whenever I am around my mother."

Malome John: "It is highly normal, because she shows you the purity of life. You feel so scared because you just don't feel like you deserve her. Relax."

I nodded and decided to put my trust in him. He knocked and my father opened the door. They both have always gotten along without a doubt.

Ntate Moruti: (smiling) “Sbare (Brother-in-law). How lovely to see you, man. O fihlile neng o sa njwetsa (when did you arrive without telling me)?”

Malome John: (smiling) “Mcdaniel Mosue. I arrived not so long ago. Last night, in fact.”

Ntate Moruti: “Hao (Goodness), why didn’t you call me to pick you up? Is my house not good enough for you anymore?”

Malome John: (chuckling) “Don’t be silly. I just came to see your son first.”

Ntate Moruti: “Well, my sons are your sons. Come in. And wena (you), David? Why do you let your uncle knock in your own home?”

David: “Ah, Ntate (Oh Father). I figured since I moved out, I need to respect your house. Forgive me.”

Ntate Moruti: “This house will always remain your home. Don’t be silly, John. How about a good old tot of cognac for old time’s sake?”

Malome John: “It’s a bit too early, but why not?”

My father was so happy – so oblivious to everything happening right under his nose. If only he knew just how much of a devil he married. How can I match this woman’s power? I ask myself if such a woman really birthed me. God can be cruel sometimes.

David: “Ntate (Father), a mme o teng ka ntlong (is mom around)?”

Ntate Moruti: “Oh, yes. She is getting dressed. I’ll call her. Julia! Julia weh (Oh, Julia)!”

I felt myself shaking but it wasn’t visible for my father too see. I have always managed to pretend so well around him, but he always understood my nervousness as being a bit shy and

awkward. My mother walked down so candidly, that she became stunned to see me with Malome John.

Julia: (shouting) “Keng na (What is it), Mack?! You just like calling me for no reason – “

She nearly missed a step, but quickly regained her position. She looked like she had seen a ghost the moment she saw Malome John.

Ntate Moruti: (smiling) “Hao (Goodness), Julia. Aren’t you going to greet your brother? Not to mention your son. You’ve been practically nagging me about him.”

Julia: (nervous) “John. What a nice surprise.”

John: (smiling) “Sesi (My sister). Don’t I get a hug today?”

I could see my mother literally walking on eggshells. She slowly walked towards Malome John and hugged him briefly.

John: (smiling) “It’s been so long, my sister. Have you listened to Jesus and repented yet?”

Ntate Moruti: (laughing) “Oh, John. You’re so funny, waitse (you know). Well, have you repented, my wife?”

Papa thought it was a joke, honestly.

Julia: (fake smile) “I have.”

David: “Ma, won’t you take a seat, please. We’d like to talk to you.”

Mma Moruti: “Talk to me about what?”

I was so nervous, but my uncle looked at me and reassured me that I’d be okay. So, I took a deep breath and decided to try.

David: (sigh) “I’d like to talk about what you did to me years ago from the time I was 4.”

Immediately, she felt nervous and I knew that the cat had caught her tongue. I really was convinced that I had had her. I felt as if I would finally be able to get my revenge and my life back.

Mma Moruti: “David, have you told your father and uncle what you actually do with those girls you help under your foundation?”

I was confused, but I think I knew where she was headed.

Mma Moruti: “Have you told them what really happen to them after they finish their courses? I mean, the world can be so cruel. Who knows what could actually happen to you, David. I mean the years you could spend in – “

I quickly stopped her.

David: "I meant that, I felt so neglected by you ever since I was four, Mme (mother)."

She smiled. Her sickening smile just makes me feel like vomiting every time. My father and uncle were both so confused.

Malome John: (frowning) "What's happening David?"

David: (anxious) "Nothing. I need some air. I'll be right back."

I just stormed out of the lounge without any explanation. How the fuck could she trick me into creating this foundation knowing very well what she wanted to do? So, she really managed to pull it off?! I found myself on the porch, forcing myself to calm down as I was hyperventilating. She walked out and I could hear her annoying high heels pin the floor.

Mma Moruti: "David, my child, why do you always have to work against me?"

David: (angered) "So? All those rumours are true? You actually traffic those girls?! My Girls?!"

Mma Moruti: (sternly) "You'd better think twice before you raise your voice to me, little boy. I'm still your mother."

David: "You aren't shit!"

Mma Moruti: "Need I remind you whose signatures are all on those forms? Huh? Aren't you the one who signed for all those visas for all those girls, Davey? You are the one responsible for their disappearance. You – not me. I never signed anything. I was merely seen praying for them."

David: (angered) "You're one sick fuck, Mme (mother). I curse the day you were born."

Mma Moruti: "Oh, honey. Then that means you too are a monster. I mean, you go around fucking every old woman you see in a skirt. Any woman with saggy, old tits and an old, tight vagina. You are no different from me. You are me and I am you. We're one, Davey. And if you could just see it, you and I could make magic."

David: (teary) "I'll never let you get away with this."

Mma Moruti: "You're mine, David. No whore of a woman will own you. No one."

Proverbs 10:12 – “Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.”

David

I immediately walked out of my parents' house that night. I could not stand to listen to that devil say such things to me. To think I had gone there to expose her and she drops such a huge bomb on me. Who the fuck does she think she even is?! She birthed me without my permission, ruined my life due to her sadistic nature and now she has embezzled me into a crime! A crime worth a life sentence! I created that foundation to help young girls, but she had her own plans. So, the rumours are true. She actually traffics all the young girls I recruit in my program! I promise those girls a good life, a good education overseas, yet my mother does this to me?! This makes me an accomplice to a disgusting crime.

How do I even go about telling anyone about this? Ziphora will never want me once she hears of this – never. I can't even phathom to think what it is like to even be in prison. I would do anything for her, but being away from her is not an option. This

woman I call my mother has become nothing but a curse to me. If Ziphora finds out how or why Junior was even conceived – I’m doomed. I feel like I have become the devil’s advocate. How on earth can God bless me when I have done so many bad deeds? I am not a man worthy of God’s blessings nor mercy. I am not even worthy to be called David. I am not strong like the David I was named after. I feel like such a powerless coward. I can’t even face myself in the mirror. I am such a mess. God help me. I even forgot that I left Malome John at the house. I immediately got into my car and drove to the one place I have always found solace – ever since I was 18 years old. I don’t even have to knock, as I am one of the premium members here. I just swipe my black card at the gate, but I was oddly surprised when I wasn’t let in. I decided to call Nova.

Nova: “Yes?”

David: “Open the gate.”

Nova: (surprised) “Oh, it’s you? So, sorry. I did not recognize car.”

I hung up. That is just how anxious I am right now. She knows it very well hence she wasted no time and allowed my black card access. I immediately got out of the car and walked in. I found Esperanza ready for me already.

Nova: (smiling) "There she is. Your daily meal."

David: (shaking head) "Bring someone else. I want two."

Nova: (puzzled) "Okay, what kind of woman?"

David: "Younger. Much younger. 25 or so, but younger than 30."

I wasted no time and headed to my regular room. I'm not proud of what I do here, but at least the place is discreet unlike hooking up with a prostitute at some corner. This is an escort agency, and it is very discreet for very high profile clients. Politicians come here all the time. I headed to my regular chair, the one that always faces the bed and I got naked immediately.

Esperanza: (smiling) “I see you hungry for me tonight, no?”

I ignored her as I stared at her. Amazingly, I find her attractive when I am stressed and in a really bad space. She is my mother’s age – probably older. I didn’t even ask about her age when I requested her, but something about her feeds the monster that my mother has created. I love sucking on her saggy breasts and her fat pussy gives my demonic side some good sense of glory. After fucking her I feel some sort of relief. It really helps me cope at times. I can’t exactly go to therapy, because who wants to hear that a man has been his mother’s sex slave for years? And that now that I have found a woman whom I love wholeheartedly, she is rebelling and becoming an even worse bitch she has ever been?

David: “Get naked.”

After she did that, I heard a knock on the door. That can only be the girl Nova sent.

David: (sternly) “Enter.”

The door opened slowly, and in walked a gorgeous girl, with buttermilk skin and a very tiny body. She was curvy, but quite small built. Her hair is fairly long and she is white, much like Esperanza. She is actually Italian.

Girl: "You call for me, master."

David: "Get naked."

For some odd reason, all I see in her is a young and beautiful woman, like my Ziphora. How can I even fuck a girl like that? How can I fuck her knowing that my Zee is waiting for me and she has just escaped death? The more I thought about everything, the flatter my dick became. Esperanza saw it and frowned immediately.

Esperanza: "Let me help you with that."

For an old woman, she surely knows how to give a mean blow job. She started sucking my dick and as soon as that young girl wanted to come closer, I immediately protested.

David: "You sit. I want to watch you."

She nodded as she sat on the bed and spread her legs so widely apart, so I could see her small pussy. I didn't even get aroused at all. Esperanza tried to suck my dick back to life, but it just didn't get up. I just kept staring at this young girl, and I felt an immense pain deep within me.

David: "That's enough now, Esperanza."

Esperanza: "What do I do now, Davey?"

David: "Leave."

She frowned and was about to ask questions, but I just gave her my usual grin and she left within an instant along with the girl. I didn't even catch her name. The poor girl most probably

didn't even dream of working in an escort service, but circumstances most probably drove her here. I put on my clothes, took out a cigarette and lit it while standing on the balcony. I kept getting flash backs of my entire childhood. It is funny how the mind works. At times it blocks out all the trauma, but in my case, everything just comes rushing back all at once each and every day. My mother is the cruellest woman I know and still, I don't have the heart to kill her, because I still wish she could tell me why she did what she did to me. As I was smoking, I felt a sudden heavy sensation around me.

Koko Refilwe: "Hello, David."

I nearly choked on the cigarette smoke. I turned around and there she was – sitting on the balcony couch. I blinked a few times and rubbed my eyes to see if I was just not imagining things.

Koko Refilwe: (chuckling) "You're so funny. It's me, alright. Not in the flesh, but in the spirit."

David: (shocked) “Koko (granny). O batla eng mo (What are you doing here)?”

Koko Refilwe: “I could ask you the same question. Don’t you get tired of this place? Tired of sleeping with whores?”

I kept quiet and looked down. I have always been so afraid of her.

Koko Refilwe: “It’s no use feeling embarrassed and ashamed now. Get out of here. I’d like to talk to you away from this place.”

David: “But, how will I find you?”

Koko Refilwe: “Don’t you worry. Let’s go.”

I walked out of the room, but oddly, I could still see my grandmother next to me. I could even hear her speaking to me.

Nova: (smiling) “Everything okay, Dave?”

Koko Refilwe: “Dira ka pele (Make it snappy). I really don’t have all day, ngwanaka (my child).”

I decided not to respond. I took out my card and made payment.

David: “R40 000. R10 000 for Esperanza and the rest for the girl.”

Nova: (frowning) “But she didn’t do anything, no?”

David: “Are you here to run a whore house or to question me, Nova?”

Nova: “Apologies, 40k it is.”

While she was making payment, I saw a man I have recognized from the media and a few launches.

Man: (smiling) "I'm off now, Nova."

Nova: "Okay, I send you bill, no?"

Man: "As usual."

This is odd. He does this a lot. He must be quite a regular, but how come I can't recall who he actually is?

Man: (smiling) "Hey. I hope you won't tell my wife I was here by the way you're looking at me."

David: (chuckling) "I won't tell if you won't."

Man: "Sure, thing. So, what's the architect of the year doing at a place like this?"

Now, I remember who he is.

David: (chuckling) “The same thing a running mayor is doing here, right?”

Man: (chuckling) “So you do recognize me?”

David: (laughing) “How can I not?”

He took out his hand for me to shake.

Man: “Well, then, let me introduce myself. Phila Zwane, owner of PZ Constructions and of course, running for mayor.”

David: “David Mosue. Owner of Agape Architects amongst other things.”

Phila: (chuckling) “My wife really enjoys your sermons. Apparently, you speak straight from the heart. I’ll see you around, Mr. Mosue.”

He smiled at me and walked out, but oddly, he didn't reek of any sex or look like he was busy. But then again, there are showers in this place, so perhaps he did take one before leaving. For a moment I forgot all about my grandmother's presence and I stood for a few seconds thinking about him.

Koko Refilwe: "Everything happens for a reason, David. Now, let's go."

I quickly came back to my senses, took my card from Nova and walked out. I got into the car and my grandmother was right there with me. I am still driving Ziphora's mother's car since I asked her to take mine home.

Koko Refilwe: "So, how is life?"

She was always known for her sarcasm and her candid behaviour.

David: "Ka nnete (really), Koko (granny)?"

Koko Refilwe: (chuckling) “There is no harm in asking. Straight to the point then: ke masepang a o a dirang (What the fuck are you doing)?”

David: “Eng Koko (What, grandma)?”

Koko Refilwe: “David, I might be spirit now, but that doesn’t mean I cannot punish you. I gave you a good girl and you want to mess it all up? O tauwe (are you drunk)?”

I looked down in shame.

Koko Refilwe: “David, this is not the time to look down and act like a coward. I know, you are badly hurt, bruised and damaged, but that is why you have Ziphora. She is meant to heal you – to show you what life actually is.”

David: (teary) “Koko, I can’t. I have tried and you know I have tried, but I just can’t right now.”

Koko Refilwe: “You can and you will. You promised her marriage and a good life, isn’t it? Well, then, that is just what you are going to do.”

David: “What about Mama?”

Koko Refilwe: (angered) “That bitch is going to reap what she has sown. Believe me when I say that her time is coming. Ra bakisana ka ena ko badimong (in the ancestral world, we are debating about her).”

David: “I just want all this to be over, Koko.”

Koko Refilwe: “Please, don’t be like your grandfather. Banna ba ga Mosue ba rata bofebe (The Mosue men love being whores), but you and your father are so different. Unfortunately, your father became attracted to a whore and wena (you), you want to be one. Don’t do that, believe me when I say that even in death your grandfather is still annoying me this side. Be the man I have always asked you to be, ngwanake (my child). I am the one who named you David, even though your mother will want to take the crown.”

David: (teary) “Why can’t you just stop her now, Koko?”

Koko Refilwe: “Because life was never meant to be a smooth sailing ride, David. God is bigger than your problems. You are a healer, a preacher of note and your words touch a whole lot of people. Why do you think that man told you what he said about his wife?”

David: “Surely, he was just making conversation.”

Koko Refilwe: (chuckling) “You were meant to meet that man, David. He is your ticket out of this demonic life you are living.”

David: “How can that be when he was at the very same place I come to for solace?”

Koko Refilwe: (laughing) “Don’t judge a book by its cover. What you see is not always what you get. You’ll find out soon enough. I have to go, but think about what I have said. Be the man I have always asked you to be.”

With that said, she faded away. I felt so heartbroken. I mean, surely if my ancestors are there to protect and be there for me, then surely they should deal with my mother, right? My brother and I have suffered enough. I started the car and drove off. I found myself right outside Ziphora's mother's house. I called her and she picked up immediately.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Hey, stranger."

David: (chuckling) "Stranger? Wow, I am dearly missed, hey."

Ziphora: "Always and forever."

I like that.

David: "Are you already up and dressed?"

Ziphora: "Of course, David. It's 11am already."

Time really flies – even when you’re not having fun.

David: “I’m outside.”

Ziphora: “Oh, let me let you in then.”

I drove in as soon she opened the gate. Seeing her standing there in her white maxi dress, just made me smile. Ziphora just brings out the best in me and she doesn’t even know it. I wasted no time and got out of the car. I hugged her so tightly.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Someone missed me.”

David: “I always miss you.”

Ziphora: “Didn’t you go to work?”

David: (sigh) “How can I when I have so much on my mind and my wife is not well?”

Ziphora: (chuckling) "You guys are so dramatic."

David: "What do you say we go out for some lunch? Besides, I have a surprise for you."

Ziphora: "Well, I won't say not, but Faith and Desiree wanted to come see me."

David: "Let's do lunch and I'll give you that surprise. Afterwards, we'll fetch your friends and you three can catch up at our house."

Ziphora: (smiling) "That is a great idea. Let me get my hand bag then."

I smiled as I took looked at her rush towards the house. She came back and locked the door.

David: (smiling) "I see your mother is enjoying my car."

Zipohra: (chuckling) “Very much so. She says yours is a lot more comfortable than hers.”

David: “Well, surely we can fix that.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “Don’t you dare buy her a car.”

David: (laughing) “I didn’t say anything. Come.”

We got into the car and headed out. Ziphora is the one for me. I love her so much it scares me at times. I have so many demons to deal with, but I know that she is the one for me.

Ziphora

Last night was so much fun with Mama and my sisters. Oh, I feel so much better and ready for work, but apparently I am not fit to go back to work yet, so I am indulging in this week – long leave. David keeps hinting at a surprise, but that is just it. I

don't even know what he has planned exactly. My goodness, I realize now just how much I have missed him. No wonder Faith opted for Res the moment we finished high school. She used to literally sleep out every night and would say "kumnandi endodeni" (it's so nice at a man's place). I know what she means now – except for the sex part. David is a fast driver, but careful, much like me even though he says I drive too fast. We got to Sandton mall in about half an hour. I didn't expect to have lunch so far from home, but then, I am about to marry classy man David. We headed to the parking lot and got out. Immediately, he took my hand in his and kept kissing the back thereof nonstop. I just love his affection. We arrived at a unique boutique.

Ziphora: (excited) "Wait a minute, David. Isn't this the Nicci boutique?"

David: (smiling) "Yes, it is."

We entered the shop and I boomed with excitement immediately. I mean, Francesca, the owner of Nicci Boutique is one of the best designers in the country. Her work is in the likes of Gert-Johan Coetzee, David Tlale and all the top

designers one can think of in South Africa – the world actually. I found myself in prodigious admiration as I was looking at all the wedding dresses and ball gowns in the store. Within minutes, she walked out dressed in uniquely styled and very tight pants, and a Versace top that he had unbuttoned almost all the way down her navel, of course. She has very long, black hair with a fringe style – she is most definitely Italian.

Francesca: (excited) “Oh, David! So happy to finally see you!”

She kissed my dear fiancé on both his cheeks. She is really Italian, I suppose.

David: “Yes, this is the beautiful flower I told you about.”

Francesca took a good look at me and smiled in amazement.

Francesca: (excited) “What a beautiful flower indeed. You know, in my country, we call a flower fiore. You are a beautiful

fiore, my dear. You remind me so much of someone I call a Dea.”

Ziphora: “What does that mean?”

Francesca: “It means goddess. She is one great goddess, I tell you. One day, you’ll get to meet her, hopefully. I dress her from time to time. I even dressed her on her wedding day. It was so beautiful, in Italy. David, you need to up your game.”

David laughed so casually. He must know her by the way they are communicating.

Ziphora: “Do you two know each other?”

Francesca: (laughing) “Of course, my dear. Nobody just walks into my store. Who do you think makes all his suits?”

That makes sense. His designs are unique and he never really wears one suit more than once.

Francesca: “Come, let’s go talk. Girl talk. You, David, go take a smoke or something. We shall see you in a minute.”

He chuckled and kissed my cheek as Francesca took me away.

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“Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues were with songs of joy.”

Ziphora

Francesca whisked me away to her bridal room. Wow, this room is filled with wedding dresses galore. I can't even think of where to start.

Francesca: “So, tell me, Fiore (flower), what kind of dress you want?”

Ziphora: “Honestly, I have no idea, Francesca, but I do like flowy dresses. I'm not very extravagant, and I just like simple things.”

Francesca: (nodding) “Simple is good, although it wouldn't hurt to go all the way on this particular day, you know. David told me that your mother-in-law is not very pleased about this wedding. So, my advice? Don't make it a church wedding. It is all about you, no?”

She is right. It is all about me – and David, of course.

Ziphora: “You are absolutely right.”

Francesca: “We get to venue later. Tell me what is your favourite colour.”

Ziphora: “Yellow.”

Francesca: “Yellow suit your skin very well. Dea’s favourite colour is red and she wears it very well.”

I wonder who this Dea is. She took out a few dresses and unzipped the bags. My goodness, I have never seen such beautiful wedding dresses in my favourite colour before. Francesca really does go all out to make you fall in love with an extraordinary dress. I never imagined myself getting married in a yellow dress, but then what do I have to lose? I went into the fitting room and fitted my first dress. Francesca is so hands on – despite all the million items of jewellery on her wrists and

fingers. The very first one was a bright yellow, one hand Mermaid dress with outrageous roses on the side. I never thought I'd ever look this good in a mermaid gown, but wow, I do. It is a little too much for me, though.

Francesca: "My goodness, your body is so petite, no? But you do dress no justice."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Francesca. This is a beautiful dress, but it is a little too much for me."

Francesca: "Remember, big is good, but you also have to love it. This day comes only once – hopefully."

She is right. I opted to try another one. The second one was a sassy wedding dress, filled with lace at the bottom and it was very flowey, and it had a diamond bodice. I love it, but somehow it lacks that thing.

Francesca: "I know what you think. You think, it is nice, but something lacks, no?"

Ziphora: (nodding) "You read my mind."

Francesca: "May I suggest making you your very own custom wedding dress?"

I didn't think of that, honestly.

Ziphora: "I never really thought of that, Francesca."

Francesca: "You marry prominent business man and pastor of church, you have to have a custom dress."

Ziphora: "Won't that be too expensive?"

Francesca: (laughing) "You are so silly. Your future husband wears custom made suits. One suit cost minimum R15 000."

I was so shocked that I gasped in shock. How bloody rich is David?

Francesca: “I take your measurements and we talk in a few days, okay?”

I nodded while she spoke to me about her family and how Dea and her husband Phila put her on the market here in South Africa. She is normally fully booked, but made a plan for David. Once we were done, I found David sitting comfortably on one of the couches in the store. He quickly got up when he saw me approaching.

David: (smiling) “Done so quickly?”

Francesca: “Yes, she wants custom made. Just like you.”

David: (chuckling) “Well, she learns from the best.”

Francesca: “I call you in few days, Fiore. Ciao Bella (Goodbye).”

She kissed us goodbye. I need to get used to this. I mean, there is no way I'd ever get used to such greetings. David and I decided to go grab some lunch and actually talk about our wedding. Since I blurted out September, we have less than two months to plan for the wedding.

David: "So, did you like your surprise?"

Ziphora: "I actually did, baby. You just know what to do and when, neh (don't you)?"

David: (chuckling) "Anything for you. My uncle John is in town."

Ziphora: "The psychologist?"

David: (nodding) "Yes. He is also a missionary. So, I was thinking that since well, we're getting married so soon, we might as well start planning now."

Ziphora: “To be honest, I don’t know where to start.”

David: “Well, I for one don’t want to have our wedding in the church. I have my reasons, but that is not ideal for me. Unless you feel otherwise.”

Ziphora: “Actually, Francesca got me thinking. I have never really been anywhere besides Cape Town or Durban, so I’d like to have something like a destination wedding. Like a beach wedding.”

David: (excited) “My word, I love that idea, Zipho. What about getting married somewhere in the Carribean? Or the Maldives?”

Ziphora: (shocked) “Dave, I was thinking something more of Cape Town or Durban.”

David: (chuckling) “My love, I want to show you the world. I meant what I said, and Cape Town or Durban is not keeping to my promise – no offence.”

Ziphora: “None taken, moratuwa (my love).”

We sat and discussed further destinations and venues where we would like to have our wedding and after a hefty meal, we did some shopping. Yes, he enjoys taking me shopping. He used me losing my phone as an excuse to buy me a new one. Of course he bought me the latest iPhone. Ai, this man. We headed out and were on our way to Desiree’s place. She and Faith were together since they live in the same complex. I decided to video call Desiree on the way.

Desiree: “Ooh, Faith, look who it is.”

Faith: “Are we still even her friends?”

Ziphora: (chuckling) “Enough goofing around

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guys. I’m with David and I’m literally two minutes away.”

Faith: “Ai, le wena (oh, you). You didn’t even bother to warn us. Si dakwe (we’re so drunk).”

Ziphora: (laughing) “Faith, at this time of the day?”

Desiree: “I warned her.”

Faith: “I have problems, nkosi’yami (My goodness).”

Ziphora: “Ai, come out guys.”

Desiree: “On it.”

We waited outside and they took a few minutes to come out. David was unbothered and didn’t mind them being so tipsy during the day. Faith walked in embarrassed. I could tell she was sloshed.

Faith: (embarrassed) “Sawubona (Hello), Sbhari (brother-in-law).”

Desiree: "Hi, David."

David: "Hello, ladies."

Desiree: (giggling) "He's so formal."

Faith: "Oh, NJ was always so formal."

By NJ she meant her boyfriend. He has always been a bit of a troublesome guy every now and then. I think this time it has worn its toll on her. I decided not to dwell on it around David. It's just not the right atmosphere. I diverted the topic and he just didn't mind at all. We got to our house and she was a bit excited.

Faith: (astonished) "Eh, moghel (girl), your house is a beaut! David, ngwana mma (my man), o berekile (you have done well)."

David: (smiling) "Thank you. Come on in."

Desiree: "Wow, we only read about such houses in novels or see them on tv. I never knew they existed."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Wait til you see the pool area."

We walked in and we were met by a very handsome man. I assume it is his uncle John, since he was dressed quite formally.

David: "Malome (Uncle), these are Zipho's friends, Faith and Desiree."

Malome John: (smiling) "Pleased to meet you ladies."

He took his time to get up from his chair and shake their hands. Faith seemed a bit mesmerised by him as she held onto his hand for a little too long and stared him right in the eye. Oh, goodness, this girl isn't about to embarrass me like this.

Ziphora: (shyly) “Forgive them, Malome (uncle).”

Malome John: (smiling) “No need. You must be makoti wa rona (our daughter-in-law). David chose well.”

I blushed. At least someone from his family sees potential in me.”

Ziphora: “Have you eaten, Malome (Uncle)? I can make something for you.”

Malome John: “No need, ngwaneso (dear), I’ll grab something later. David, re ka buwa (can we talk)?”

David: “Sure. Let’s go to the study.”

Malome John: “It’s a pleasure meeting you ladies, and Faith, you most definitely deserve better. It was not his comb – in case you were wondering.”

Malome John made some kind of eye-contact with Faith of which I battled to understand. But then, it really seemed as if they were the only two people who knew what they were talking about. As soon as Malome left the room with David, tears streamed endlessly down Faith's face. Oh, goodness.

Desiree: "Oh, friend. Ska lla (don't cry)."

Faith: (crying) "I knew it. You see? He knows about ikamo (the comb)!"

What is she even on about?

Ziphora: "What are you talking about?"

Faith: (crying) "I saw a comb at his place with traces of hair – weave in fact! I confronted him about it and he said it was his. That time you both know Njabulo has a chiskop, guys. I mean, what the fuck?! 5 years down the line and I get played like that? He had the audacity to lie to me in my face?! This right after I saw a g-string under his bed. A whole XXL g-string! When I

asked him about it he said that it belonged to his mother. That time his mother is your size, Zee! I'm so heartbroken."

Damn, Njabulo is the pits, honestly.

Faith: "I've had it. You can see even David's uncle uyazi (knows)."

Ziphora: "Let me get us a drink and we can go chill on the patio."

I went to the kitchen to grab us a good bottle of wine. How did David's Malome know about this anyway? Or was he just hinting or guessing? I don't know.

After a rather eventful day of entertaining Faith crying, she finally managed to get some sleep after literally two bottles of wine. David didn't mind them sleeping over at all and asked if it was okay to have his uncle over. I didn't even want to entertain him asking me for permission, but he said that it is important for a man to ask for permission from his wife. I ended up

cooking a feast for all of us and of course Malome John enjoyed every bite. When we got to bed, we prayed together and just before we fell asleep, David received a video call from his brother Jacob.

David: “Jacob, o ka founa ka nako e (you couldn’t have chosen a better time to call)?”

Jacob was at the hospital, wearing hospital attire and looking really happy.

Jacob: (excited) “Eh, monna (Oh, man). I heard Malome is in town. Sorry I couldn’t meet you guys. Jeannette was at the hospital from this morning. She gave birth – to twin girls!”

I remember David mentioning in passing that Jacob really didn’t want boys. I didn’t even take note of it much.

David: “That’s awesome, brother. Modimo a le lakaletse lethabo le mahlatsi (May God grant you all the luck and blessings in the world).”

Jacob: "Thank you, which is why I called you. You know how badly I didn't want boys, so I'd like you to name them."

David: "I'm honoured, really. Are you sure?"

Jacob: "Yes."

David: "Can I see them first?"

Jacob: "They're in the NICU getting checked out, but I can get in. Hold on."

I was so excited as if it was my very own children. Oh, my goodness, I just love children so much, that every time I get to deliver a baby, I literally feel like it is my own. A few have even named their own babies after me. Some have said because I have a unique name while some feel that they owe me their life. Jacob walked around in the hospital and pointed the phone directly to the NICU. He showed us the babies and they looked

really healthy and so beautiful. They were identical and looked so much like their father.

Jacob: "There they are, brother, your nieces."

David took a few moments staring at them. It was as if he was deeply thinking of a name. I honestly thought he'd give a name, but he did something truly amazing.

David: (praying) "Father God, we humble ourselves before you. We thank you so much for the gift of life. For you know our hearts, oh, lord. For the fact that you have blessed my dear brother with these two beautiful souls, you know that he is very much capable of loving fully and unconditionally. You entrusted him to father these two souls, dear God. I ask that you protect them from harm's way and bless them with a fruitful life and a life full of success and enjoyment. For that, I thank you and will continue thanking you. Amen."

I felt tears warm my eyes. This man must be something out of a movie.

David: "I name the left one Rethabile Esther Mosue and the right one Remofilwe Deborah Mosue. May they be blessed with the strength of these two women in the Bible. For God entrusted you with them, Jacob. Don't ever disappoint them and thank God each and every day for a woman like Jeannette. She is one strong woman."

Jacob: (crying) "Dankie abuti (thank you, brother). I will."

Ziphora: "Send love to Jeannette."

Jacob: "I will, bye."

He hung up and I took my time admiring David.

David: "What?"

Ziphora: "You never cease to amaze me."

David: "Well, I have an entire lifetime to amaze you."

Chapter 24

1 Peter 4:8 – “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

Ziphora

I woke up only to find David not next to me. I thought that he had gone to work, but to my amazement, he walked right in after about 5 minutes with his famous breakfast tray with the food’s remarkable smell striking my nostrils. He walked in topless as always, leaving me to wonder if he really is good in bed. Not that I would know what good in bed actually is.

David: (smiling) “Good morning, Dr. Mokoena.”

Ziphora: (shyly) “Morning, Mr. Mosue.”

David: “I made us some breakfast.”

Ziphora: "Thank you, but aren't you supposed to be at work?"

David: "I took a few days off. They know my wife nearly died so they are all understanding."

Ziphora: (laughing) "Bathong (Goodness), David. I'm not your wife, yet."

David: "Speaking things into existence, moratuwa (my love)."

We prayed and started digging in.

David: "Well, you'd better eat up and get cleaned up. I have a lovely surprise for you."

There he goes with surprises again. I can never keep up.

Ziphora: "What surprise this time?"

David: "I can't tell you otherwise it won't be one. All you need to do is get into the shower and get dressed. You're going to love it – hopefully."

I always love his surprises, so I guess I'll just have to wait and see. We finished eating and he took the dishes down to the kitchen. I got into the shower and started cleaning myself up. A few minutes later, he walked David as usual. It still amazes me how we can just bathe together without anything sexual. It's not like we're not tempted, but it is so nice to have these intimate moments. We got dressed and walked downstairs. To my surprise, I found David's driver waiting for us already.

Ziphora: (smiling) "You still won't tell me where we're going?"

David: (laughing) "Nope. You'll find out soon enough."

He kissed my cheek and we walked out. While in the car he was making casual conversation, but he was just talking about the wedding and asking questions thereof. I don't know what

he is up to, though. Before we knew it we were at the airport. I expected us to wait in line like the rest of the people, but David pulled me towards him gently and we walked right past. We stood right in front of a big plane, written Agape Foundation. I figured right there and then that it belongs to their family. I looked at him and he returned a smile.

David: (smile) "Are you ready?"

Ziphora: "For what, baby? Please tell me. I am dying to know."

David: "For an unforgettable weekend, my love."

Well, clearly he didn't want to tell me, so I just decided to embrace his element of surprise. We walked in and my goodness. Celebrities aren't trying to be funny when they prefer flying in private jets. The leather seats are so comfortable and the service is out of this world. We had a light meal since we did eat breakfast, and we had a few drinks. Throughout David just kept talking about our marriage, before it has even begun. We stopped in Abu Dabhi to refuel the jet. It was about 5p, by then. I headed to the rest room

and as soon as I walked out, David heard Soul Kulture's Gugu playing on the radio and he just asked me to dance – right there and then. He didn't even mind the people around us, so I just basked in the moment and went with it. I just love how carefree David becomes whenever he is around me. It is almost as if nothing else matters except me.

David: "I can't wait to make you the happiest woman alive, Ziphora. I love you so much."

Ziphora: "I love you too, David."

I must have dozed off after we had just eaten dinner. All I recall is David slightly shaking me to wake me up.

David: "My love, wake up, re fihlile (we have arrived)."

I slowly opened my drowsy eyes, and I realized it was night time. I felt so well rested, I must have been out of it for quite some time.

Ziphora: “Oh, how long have I been asleep?”

David: (smiling) “Long enough. It’s been a long, but pleasant ten hour flight, my love.”

He held my hand and we walked out slowly. People were already awaiting us at the airport. I tried to look around, but I didn’t recognize the place.

Ziphora: “Where are we, David?”

David: (smiling) “Welcome to Turkey, my love.”

Okay, I have never even been to Mauritius, let alone Turkey. This man is something else, really. I guess this is our very first baecation – right across the world. We got into our car and as dark as it was, I could see that it had “Agape Shuttles” written on it. I could tell it was also one of their cars, I just didn’t expect them to have so many connections even across the globe. We didn’t drive for very long from the Turkish airport, most probably about half an hour or so. This country is

so beautiful, even at night. I used to see such beauty only in movies, and now I am experiencing it hands on.

Ziphora: “David, o sleg waitse (you’re so bad, you know). Why didn’t you warn me? I could have brought my camera to take pictures at least.”

David: “Believe me when I say you’ll be able to take numerous pictures from tomorrow morning. Even videos, I promise.”

He kissed the back of my hand while I lay my head on his chest. We walked out of the car and arrived at our hotel. I could hear the noise from the water of the beach all the way from the hotel entrance. The lights are so majestic, the high walls bring so much greatness of this hotel. He booked us in at the D-Maris Bay Hotel in Marmaris, Turquoise Coast. I had never in my life imagined myself that I would even be across the world at my age. I must be one blessed woman. The staff was so pleasant, from the onset. They greeted us with their famous Turkish beer, and even sang a song for us – despite it being just after midnight. I was well rested, and after seeing the beauty of this hotel, I didn’t really want to sleep and David noticed.

David: (smiling) “Would you like to explore the hotel, my lady?”

Ziphora: (smiling) “I’d love to, but aren’t you tired?”

David: “I can never be tired for you. Besides, I also dozed off in the plane right next to you. Come, let’s go get cleaned up.”

We headed to our room and my goodness, all these rooms have a beach view. It looks so beautiful and serene at night. We have a glass balcony, with long and relaxing balcony chairs right outside. Apparently this hotel has 195 rooms and suites, with five restaurants, with five white-sand beaches, four designer boutiques and a hand-made jewellery shop

a huge spa with 10 treatment rooms, a Technogym and so much more. I cannot wait to start exploring all of these things – even if I get tired by the end of the trip. We got into the shower together as usual, and only afterwards I recalled that we didn’t bring anything with other than our cellphones.

Ziphora: “David, ro apara eng (what are we going to wear)? I mean we didn’t even pack any clothes since you didn’t warn me.”

He chuckled and I knew then that he had another surprise up his sleeve. He pulled me towards the walk-in closet and I was in awe. The entire closet was full – one side full of his kind of suits and clothes and the other seemed like it had my clothes in it. Surprisingly, all were in my size. I am quite small in size, I still don't know how he managed to get my size right.

Ziphora: (teary) "David, mara why (But why)?"

David: "Because you deserve the world. I keep telling you, my love. Come, dress casually. We have some partying to do."

I managed to wipe my tears away and focused on the plan ahead. I didn't see the need to put on any make-up and thank goodness to my haircut, I didn't need to comb anything. So, I just did my brows, wore a beautiful flower patterned maxi dress with gold sandals, while he put on his jeans and white Tshirt. We took a few pictures together and walked out. While we were headed downstairs, it seemed as if everyone was ready for us. We headed straight to the bar and tried almost everything on the menu. Turkish beer is really not so bad, but I still prefer my wine. It was the very first time that David and I

had actually let loose and partied together. I didn't even know he could dance. For a man who wears tight suits all day, he sure can outdance me. We had the time of our lives and before we knew it, the sun was rising. I knew then, after countless drinks and multiple dance moves that I was beyond exhausted.

David: "Well, I am guessing it is time to sleep, my love."

Ziphora: "I couldn't agree more."

For some odd reason, I just felt exceptionally aroused. I blame the Turkish alcohol, but my goodness I just saw David in another light. I found my eyes zooming right into his manhood, and actually craving it. Lord, help me. We headed to our room, and he closed the door. He stared right in my eyes in a very sultry way. I have never seen him look at me like that. His pupils were dilated and his eyes were squinting. He looked like some sort of beast – a beast that was hungry for a meal it hadn't received in days. I looked him right in the eye and it felt as if we were speaking the same language. Eye contact does not lie and eyes do speak indeed. He stepped right closer to me and touched my face. He slowly trailed his fingers down to my neck. David kissed me so passionately, it felt as if it was our

very first kiss. His lips moved down to my neck, and immediately I felt myself become wet down there. I tilted my head slightly so he could dive right further into my neck.

Ziphora: (moaning) “David.”

He took off my dress in an instant, and I took off his shirt. Within minutes, he had removed my bra and my panties. It always feels weird when he stops to take a look at my body like he is viewing a piece of art.

David: “You’re so beautiful, Ziphora Mokoena.”

I smiled as we carried on kissing and he placed me on the bed. He was right inbetween my legs. We had only kissed a few times ever since we started dating – nothing more. But that morning, we did a little bit more. I felt immense heat overtake my body as his hands were caressing every part of my body, from my breasts to my abdomen, all the way down to my waist. His lips travelled down from my neck to my breasts. For the very first time, a man sucked my breasts in the most sensual way I could ever imagine. I found my body moving

uncontrollably, while he devoured me. He made trails of kisses all the way down from my stomach to my waist. He kissed my waist all the way round, and I felt my toes curl.

David: “You’re so beautiful, Zipho. I know, we’re waiting until our wedding day, but I’d like your permission to make you feel good today.”

I was so high on sexual euphoria, that I felt like telling him to just put it in.

Ziphora: (softly) “Yes, yes. Please – make me feel good, David. I am begging you.”

I could feel him smile, even though my eyes were closed.

David: “Look at me.”

I looked down and felt a little shy. He positioned himself and spread my legs further. For the very first time in my life, a man, a whole man was staring right at my vagina. He was staring at

it with so much amazement. I saw his tongue flick my clit, slowly, as if he was devouring a lollipop. He slowly started sucking on my clit, going up and down and rotating between my clit and the entrance of my vagina. I have heard Faith and Desiree tell me countless times of how amazing it feels to be muffed, but experiencing it feels much better than hearing it.

Ziphora: (moaning) "Oh, aaah, David."

David: "Yes, my love."

Ziphora: (moaning) "Oh! O nketsang (what are you doing to me)?"

David: "I'm pleasing my woman. Come for me, please."

I have never really had an orgasm, besides that very first time he played with my clit and fingered me in the bath tub. I could feel my entire body heat up and I knew that I was close. The more he begged me to come for him, was the more he increased his speed and pressed his tongue on my clit. I let go

and felt myself shake immensely. David was so happy, I could tell by the way he was smiling at me. he even cleaned up all my excess fluid with his tongue – leaving me embarrassed beyond. I covered my eyes and tried to close my legs.

David: “Don’t be ashamed, Dr. Mokoena, you just had a pleasurable time.”

I saw him get up to get a towel and wipe me. He kissed my lips and got into bed right next to me.

Ziphora: (surprised) “That’s it? We’re not going all the way?”

Daivd: “Trust me, love, I want it to be special. I need it to be – we both do.”

I was a bit irritated by that, but I let him be. He is most probably right. It is the drinks talking. I dozed right off in his arms.

Julia Mosue

I found myself heavily annoyed when David was just not answering any of my calls. How dare he?! After everything I have done for him! To make matters worse I saw a video of them dancing in Abu Dhabi! Why the fuck was he there in the very first place? I know, he loves social media, so I decided to browse through his Instagram. Lo and behold, I saw a video of him and that bitch and a few pictures in Turkey! Why would David do this to me? Why can't he just accept that Zipohra is not the one for him?! I feel like I am going crazy. This is not the time for me to give up. No one can judge me – no one! I decided to pull the one card up my sleeve that would end everything between him and Ziphora.

Mma Moruti: “Hey, how is it going?”

Luvo's mother: “It's about damn time, Julia! When will you get that son of yours to take responsibility for the life he created?”

Mma Moruti: “That was not the initial plan and you know it.”

Luvo's mother: "Well then do something because Luvo is losing it. Before you know it she is going to confess everything and I can't have that, Julia!"

Mma Moruti: "You'd better make sure she keeps her mouth shut. Besides, that is not what I had in mind when I made this call."

Luvo's mother: "What is it then?"

Mma Moruti: "Get Junior ready. It is about time he gets baptized soon. You two need to come over for a visit. I am sure Luvo will love dining in a mansion and being well taken care of. I will book an in-house Spa treatment for her."

Luvo's mother: "Don't think you can bribe my daughter that easily, Julia."

Mma Moruti: "You sold her soul to me a long time ago. This is not the time to start getting a conscience. See you tomorrow. Don't keep me waiting."

25

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Ziphora

We woke up a few hours later, and thank goodness that I woke up in David’s arms for a change. He is always the first one to get up before me and makes me breakfast every morning without fail. This time, we get to be spoiled and relax together in our bed. The beautiful sound of the ocean woke me up and the gorgeous beaming sunlight.

David: (smiling) “Morning, sunshine.”

Ziphora: (smiling) “Good morning, Mr. Mosue.”

I felt my head pounding on my right side for a minute. I should never have had that much to drink, but I guess I got carried away.

David: (chuckling) "How is the hangover?"

Ziphora: "Tjo (oh), o kare wa mpona (it's almost as if you can feel my pain)."

David: "I knew you'd feel this way, hence I called in room service."

I looked at him and he actually looked like he had been awake for a while. He was topless and dressed in gym shorts and smelled really fresh.

Ziphora: "Were you exercising?"

David: "Yes, love. You should try it with me some time. I mean, I am planning to turn the basement into a gym at our house if that is okay with you."

I don't know about that. Yes, I encourage exercise amongst my patients, but I have never been a gym fanatic. No ways.

Ziphora: “Love, I think you know me better by now. Gym is not my thing.”

David: (chuckling) “I’ll keep hoping.”

A knock presented on the door and it was room service. I should have known. They brought in the biggest breakfast I have ever seen so far in my entire life. Cheese, butter, olives, eggs, muhammara, tomatoes, cucumbers just to name a few were on for the breakfast meal of the day. I was so tired, I honestly thought we were just going to laze around in bed all day, but it seemed as if David had other plans for us.

David: “Go take a shower, love. We have a very long day ahead of us.”

Ziphora: “Aowa (No), why can’t we stay in bed?”

David: “We have the rest of the weekend to do that. Come.”

I sulked and grunted, but he just wouldn't hear of it. I dragged myself to the bathroom and decided to take a bath instead, hoping he would end up saying we should rather stay indoors, but he just wouldn't have it. I felt a bit better after the heavy breakfast, but I was so dehydrated, I just needed to keep drinking water to get rid of the hangover. I took my time like the diva I have never been, until David walked into the bathroom.

David: "Ziphora, don't make me drag you out of here."

Ziphora: "Okay, then."

I was just not in the mood, but he was so active and even laughing at me. I felt a bit annoyed at him. I got dressed so slowly, but he was just as patient as ever. When we headed out, I could feel as if the sun rays were literally blasting straight to my head and increasing my migraine.

Ziphora: "Yoh (Oh), David. Aowa (No), my head."

David: “Don’t worry. You’ll get the perfect hangover cure where we are going.”

He was so active, I was so jealous. We got into our car, which was of course their company car. Odd enough, David seems to hire the same driver for everything, which is rather safe. He doesn’t really let me talk to him, though, as he says he might steal me from him. Imagine that. We finally arrived at a local boutique. I was so amazed to see how beautiful the streets are. We walked in and the Boutique had nearly the same design and feel of Francesca’s Boutique back in Sandton. I decided not to ask David anything, as I felt it was rather pointless. He won’t tell me anything. A thin woman, who looked just like Francesca, just with much shorter hair walked out, smiling just like her. She had such beautiful dimples and such beautiful skin.

Gianna: (smiling) “Greetings, fiore (flower). Oh, my sister didn’t lie when she said you are indeed a fiore (flower).”

She greeted me Italian style just like Francesca. She did the same to David. She was so friendly, so it was very easy to just speak to her.

David: "Gigi, how are you?"

Gianna: "I'm always happy whenever you are around, David. I know, bring me good business, no?"

David: (chuckling) "Of course. Is everything set like we have discussed?"

Gianna: "Oh, yes. Francesca is at back. You so romantic, you just like Mamba."

I keep hearing about this Mamba guy. I wonder who he is.

David: "You speak so highly of him. I should meet him sometime."

Gianna: "You will, he is around Turkey. Maybe you'll meet soon, no?"

David: (smiling) “Ofcourse, Gigi, please, take good care of my wife. Tell Franny I’ll see her later.”

Gianna: “Ciao Bella (Goodbye).”

David just kissed me goodbye and told me he loves me and left. That was it. Gianna on the other hand, was too ecstatic to see me.

Gianna: (smiling) “Oh, my, you have such beautiful face. I cannot wait to work on it. Come, Francesca is waiting for you.”

I just let her lead the way as she gently pulled me beside her. I don’t know what awaits me, but perhaps a day of pampering in the beautiful town of Marmaris, Turkey.

David

I just love seeing my Ziphora so happy. It just brings a lot of peace to my soul. I can’t remember the last time I slept for a full 8 hours straight without any tension headaches or bad

dreams. I don't even drink or take tranquilizers to sleep anymore. I know I am not perfect, but I can't afford to lose Ziphora. The thought of her knowing what actually transpired in my life brings so much anxiety in my mind. My judgment may be clouded, but I'd rather keep a secret than lose her. I still have to come clean about Junior. How do I even begin to tell her how he was even conceived and why? I have lived in my mother's shadow for way too long and now, it is finally time for me to cut ties with the devil herself. I had switched my phone off ever since I took off from Jo'burg. So, I went to the nearest bar to grab myself a drink, while I decided to check my phone for any important messages. As expected, my mother was blowing up my phone. I didn't even bother to listen to any of her voicemail messages. I had unblocked her out of good faith, but now I think it is high time she stays on the blocked list. I can't afford such toxicity to cloud my marriage. I'll be a married man in a few hours, so I don't need this kind of drama. I deleted her messages before even reading them and blocked her with immediate effect. While I was smiling as I was browsing through my pictures with Ziphora, I just couldn't help but think of just how blessed I am indeed. For God decided to choose me out of all the men in the world and saw me worthy of that woman's love. I don't deserve it at all. While I was deep in thought, I heard a familiar voice.

Phila: (chuckling) “Please don’t tell me that this is all just a coincidence.”

I turned around and indeed. It was the man I saw at the brothel – the running Mayor of Gauteng and owner of PZ Constructions; the Phila Zwane. Alongside him was his wife, Ziyanda Zwane.

David: (smiling) “Perhaps you must be stalking me.”

He laughed as he gave me a friendly handshake. I didn’t want to be forward by shaking his wife’s hand, as I have heard he is very possessive of his territory. I’d also be, I mean she is a beaut, but my Zipho is just as beautiful if not more beautiful.

Phila: “I’d like to introduce you to my Goddess, my Queen, the mother of my four gorgeous children, Ziyanda.”

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Pleased to meet you, Mr. Mosue. I’m such a fan, I hope my husband has told you. I just can’t get over how pure your sermons are, really.”

So Phila wasn't lying when he said that she was in love with the way I preach. I can't help but wonder how come I always bump into him. It must be a sign of something as Koko told me the day she came to visit me.

David: "What brings you two here?"

Phila: "Oh, just some business I needed to take care of and since my wife just loves holidays, we turned it into a splendid holiday. What about you?"

David: "Well, I have decided to surprise my wife with a wedding – just the two of us right here in Turkey."

Ziyanda: (excited) "No way! You know, my Phila did that to me as well years ago, but in Italy. My goodness, if only you could get hold of Francesca. She is a beast when it comes to such things. Oh, now this makes me crave another wedding."

Phila: (chuckling) “Aowa (No), hayi (No), love. How many weddings do you want to have?”

Ziyanda: “As many as I possibly can.”

They both laughed as they kissed each other. This is how I’d like our love to be a few years down the line. I just can’t wait.

David: “Do you mean Francesca, as in Thee Francesca Ricci?”

Phila: (frowning) “Yes, how do you know her?”

David: “Well, I get my suits tailored by her. She and Gianna are with my Ziphora as we speak preparing for our surprise wedding. Wow, small world, huh?”

Ziyanda: (excited) “Are you serious?! Francesca is here? P, baby, can I go greet her? I mean that is if it is okay with you, David. I don’t want to interrupt nor impose.”

David: “Don’t be silly. The more the merrier. She’ll love the idea of having you around. She has spoken about you and your lingerie line a few times. Besides, it would be nice to have someone to relate to on her special day since her family isn’t here – yet.”

She seemed so excited. I can’t help but wonder but then I’ll just say that it is a small world indeed.

Phila: “You can go, I’ll see you later.”

Ziyanda: “Thank you, baby.”

Phila: “Ngiyakuthanda angithi (I love you, okay)?”

Ziyanda: “Always, baby. I love you too. Dave, it was nice to meet you. Later.”

I chuckled as she walked out of the bar, leaving Phila and I alone.

Phila: "Mind if I join you?"

David: "Not at all."

There is just something about this man. A small hunch is telling me that something is brewing. I can't call it trouble yet, because he is just not the kind of man associated with any bad dealings; well, not anymore. According to my knowledge, he was a gangster, but he is not one anymore. I just don't know what to make of his mysterious appearances almost everywhere I go, but then again, Koko did tell me that he would be a much needed alliance to me. I guess time will tell. My question is: what is he really here for?

Ziphora

Gianna took me to the back, where I was met with a very overly gay, but gorgeous man. His skin was flawless.

Antonio: (excited) “Oh, Francesca! You always bring me the best of the best. Look at your skin, love! And that hair – oh, what a bold, bold move, and I love bold!”

Francesca: “Don’t mind him, fiore (flower). He is just over the top with everything.”

Antonio: “I’m Antonio by the way.”

He shook my hand and I noticed a wedding band. I don’t mind gay people at all. They are the most sensible people when it comes to beauty and fashion.

Antonio: “What shall we do with you today?”

Francesca: “Pamper her, remember what Dave said? She hungover – so pamper first!”

Gianna: (chuckling) “I’ll be right back – si (yes)? I bring you Mama’s favourite and best hangover cure.”

She walked out. I was a bit overwhelmed by the attention. They didn't give me much room to speak, not that I minded, though, I was just so hungover. The headache just wouldn't go away.

Antonio: "You remind me so much of Dea."

Francesca: "I say very same thing when I meet her. This reminds me so much of Mamba and Dea (goddess's) wedding. Some men are so romantic. Ai, my Pierro was also loving, but romance – nothing!"

Antonio: "I am still amazed at how you forgave Mamba for killing Pierro."

Francesca: "He save me from life of filth. I'm happy now. Don't ruin the moment, Antonio."

Antonio: "Sorry, Mamma."

Francesca: “You are going to have so much fun today, fiore (flower). By end of today, you be beautiful bride.”

Did she say bride? What is happening here? Before I could even ask, a very familiar face walked in.

Ziyanda: “Did someone forget to invite me to the party?!”

Suddenly so much screams and excitement broke out. Both Francesca and Antonio ran towards this woman. She was so beautiful, and full-figured. Wow, her skin. I don't know what the secret is around here, but these people have amazing skin. Her accent tells me she is South African, probably and they called her Dea. She must be the Dea they keep referring to. Gianna brought me some soup, apparently it is a famous Turkish soup good for hangovers.

Ziyanda: “You must be Ziphora. Hi, I'm Ziyanda.”

When she brought her hand for me to shake and smiled at me with such grace, I immediately recognized her.

Ziphora: (shocked) “My goodness! Oh, my gosh! This can’t be! It’s you! It’s actually you!”

I even did something as stupid as hugging her out of much excited.

Ziyanda: (frowning) “Uh, yes, it is me.”

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to get carried away. It’s just that I recognize you from a few media spots as well as Dave’s show. You are indeed a goddess and my word! The shooting you endured, your lingerie line, I mean all the bullying you survived! You are a legend and I really admire you!”

Ziyanda: (chuckling) “I am really humbled, Ziphora.”

Ziphora: “Oh, look at me behaving stupid. I’m so sorry.”

Ziyanda: (laughing) “Honestly, it is okay. I get that a lot. A lot of people just love making me seem like some celebrity, hence I decided to become a housewife. I just couldn’t handle the pressure at some point.”

I totally understand her. I mean I could never. A lot of people have made fun of her body, but wow, she carries her weight so well. She is not fat at all, she’s just busty and has hips. My goodness, I have never seen such beauty upfront.

Ziyanda: “Enough about me. I didn’t mean to impose. I just came to say hi to Francesca. I am shocked to see Gianna here and Antonio.”

Gianna: “Shocked why? This is my shop.”

The three of them laughed. I could tell they have such an amazing story behind their relationship.

Ziyanda: “Well, then. I should get going. I guess we shall see each other around, Ziphora.”

Ziphora: "Wait. Don't you mind, staying? I mean if that's okay with you."

Ziyanda: "Oh, no. Today is all about you, love. I don't want to impose."

I don't know what she meant by that, but she said it like she knew what was happening.

Ziphora: "Please. It would be rude of me to keep you from your friends."

Ziyanda: "Well, only if you're sure."

Ziphora: "The spirit of Ubuntu (togetherness), right? Besides, I'd love to hear about your love story with your husband, if you don't mind."

Ziyanda: (chuckling) “Mind? Honey, I have told countless people that story. I know it at the back of my head.”

We all laughed and for once, ever since I walked in here, I felt a sense of relation to all of them. Perhaps it was the Turkish soup, but my goodness, these people were good company. I ended up getting a foot massage and back rub, along with a manicure and pedicure. I’m not big on long nails, so I settled for gel overlay, along with subtle make-up. I don’t even know why I am supposed to be getting my make up done, but I guess it is all part of David’s surprise. While Ziyanda was telling me her very emotional story about how she and Phila met, I just couldn’t shed a tear – literally. Antonio pinched me every time I attempted to cry. I mean wow, people go through so much pain out here, it is just amazing how they kept it going, fifteen years later.

Antonio decided to give my hair a boost, by giving me a metallic grey hair colour and since my hair had grown a little bit, it came out curly. I love it so much. Who said a bride must have a weave on or long hair? I’m all for short hair and I can’t wait for September.

Ziphora: “Now, can someone tell me why I am getting all dolled up today? I am dying in suspense.”

Antonio: “I think it is time to show her.”

The way I came in here, I never thought I was going to have a few glasses of champagne. I didn't even want to see alcohol in my life ever again.

Ziphora: “Show me what?”

Francesca walked out and a few seconds later she came in holding a garment bag. It looked a little heavy for her petite body. For some reason I felt immediately anxious. Francesca slowly unzipped the bag and I just saw the most beautiful yellow dress I have ever seen.

Francesca: “Behold, fiore (flower), your wedding dress.”

I took a moment as I was overwhelmed with so much shock. Words just couldn't explain how I never saw this

coming. Tears started flowing down my cheeks. Fuck, Antonio is so going to kill me for ruining his master piece, but wow. How on earth did David manage to do all this in such a short space of time?

Ziphora: “Forgive me, Antonio for crying and ruining your make up, but I am just in so much shock. How did you all get this right?”

Francesca: “We have our ways, fiore (flower).”

Ziphora: “Oh, I don’t deserve David.”

Ziyanda decided to step in and say the most beautiful words.

Ziyanda: “Don’t say that. Only God can decide who is deserving and who isn’t. Out of so many woman in the world, he chose you. David chose you. I believe in soul mates and yes, some have more than one while some have just one. What did you think God meant when he said what he said in Jeremiah 29:11? “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,

plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” For God knows what each one of us wants and needs. He will never ensure you have a shortcoming until you have what He has planned for you. For it is said in Proverbs 16:9; “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” Only God can forge your way through this life, take it from me. I could never see myself away from a man like Phila. David is the one you are meant to be with, and take it from me, you bring him so much calamity and peace, you just don’t know it yet.”

She spoke so much sense as if she knew David personally. I was just so overwhelmed and at peace, that I just wanted to find out what David had planned ahead for me. I love this man. I am so in love.

Ziphora: “You sound like you were raised by a very good woman.”

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Women, my mother is a gentle soul, but my grandmother is something else, although she forced me to become the tough cookie I am today. I have learnt to fight for my man, Ziphora. At times, he won’t have any willpower to do any fighting, so you will have to do that for him.”

She is such a wise woman. I cannot wait to get to know more of her, should God permit it.

Song of Solomon 8:6 – 7 – “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.”

Ziphora

I got dressed in my wedding gown and my goodness, Francesca is really a miracle worker. She managed to design and make this dress in a day. I mean, who does that? I am in absolute awe as I stared at myself in the mirror. I feel so happy, although I wish I could spend this day with my family and friends. Either way, perhaps we will have a ceremony with them all present at the wedding – the church wedding we’re supposed to have.

Ziyanda: “You look so beautiful.”

Francesca: “Absolutely stunning.”

Gianna: “Great work, Francesca.”

Ziyanda: “I should get going.”

Ziphora: “Please, don’t go. You don’t have to. You can attend my wedding if you wish. I mean, I don’t really know anyone and it would be an honour having you there.”

Ziyanda: “As long as you’re sure, dear. I’ll just let Phila know.”

I was very happy that at least someone from South Africa, someone I can relate to would be there to witness the most special day of my entire life. It is a bit unorthodox. I mean, he still hasn’t paid lobola, but we’ll make do with it when we go back home. For now, I’d like to focus on my special day. Ziyanda, Francesca and Gianna walked out with me and as expected, a big surprise awaited me right outside the Boutique. A beautifully modern four-wheel horse carriage stood before me. It was white in colour, and reminded me so

much of the tooth fairy's carriage. This man just had it all planned out. I got in the carriage alongside Ziyanda, while Gigi and Francesca got in their own car following us. I had no idea where we were headed, but all I knew was that I was so excited.

Ziphora: "Were you also this nervous when you had your own wedding?"

Ziyanda: (chuckling) "Of course, love. It happens to the best of us. That is the day I'll never forget, to be honest."

Lo and behold we went right back to the hotel, but it just looked so different. Instead of heading right inside, we went to the beach. I had to follow the yellow rose trail that was set for me. With every step I took, I felt as if my heart was going to fall right into the pit of my stomach. As I walked closer to the beach, I saw him standing right there, on a beautiful man-made chapel, full of yellow roses. He was dressed in such a beautiful Turkish tuxedo, with a yellow tie. He is so good with improvising and matching outfits, it is just crazy. I thought it would be a woman's job, you know. I was just about to walk towards my handsome husband to be, until he shocked

me. David took the microphone in his hand and started singing Soul Kutlure's Gugu. That was the very same song we danced to a few months ago at his house. That very same day we were live on Instagram and had such a great time dancing to this song. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that David could sing – ever. That alone, just made me tear up. I walked slowly towards him just so I could hear him sing the whole song. When I walked up to him, he was still finishing and I let him. He stared me right in the eyes and as usual, it was as if he was staring at my soul.

David: (smiling) "I know you hate being ambushed, my love. I'm so sorry, but I love making you happy. I love surprising you and I love seeing you smile. I'd like to do that for the rest of our lives, if only you let me."

Ziphora: (teary) "I love you too, David Mosue. I'm so ready."

David: (smiled) "From the very first moment I saw you, I just knew you were a feisty girl. Believe me, I came across as cocky, disrespectful and just someone who wouldn't even be a good husband to you. I want to give you the world, as I promised you and I promise you, that I'll be the person you expect me to

be. I know, I am not perfect and you accepting me with all my flaws shows just how blessed I am. I want to love you until kingdom come, Ziphora Mokoena.”

David always talks about himself having flaws, but I just don't get what he means by that. I haven't seen any side of him that has actual flaws he always talks about.

Ziphora: (teary) “David, you have been the perfect man for me. I have never met a man like you before in my life. I have actually never been with any man before and I have prayed my entire life that I meet someone half as good as you. I thank God for giving me someone like you, someone who loves me unconditionally. I promise to love you and be faithful to you. You are one in a million.”

I didn't even realize that we had a pastor standing right there. I was just so absorbed in David's eyes.

Pastor: “Well, then. It seems as if we got all the vows out of the way. You may present the rings, Mr. Mosue.”

David took out a box of the rings and rolled a beautiful, yellow diamond ring on my finger. I have never seen such a huge diamond before in my life. Our rings were engraved with our wedding date and I absolutely love his thoughtfulness.

Priest: "By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you Mr. and Mrs. David Mosue. You may kiss the bride."

He kissed me so passionately, but it felt so different. I think occasions make kisses and certain moments feel different, though you have been doing it for a while. I could hear people cheer and chant at us, but I heard people on what sounded like the phone. When I pulled out of the kiss, I saw a laptop with my mother, my sisters and Faith and Desiree, as well as Gogo.

Susan: (smiling) "Congratulations, my baby!"

Ziphora: (surprised) "Mama? How did you guys... how? I mean?"

Susan: "It's okay. David asked me if he could do this for the two of you. Don't worry, have fun and you'll have the actual and big wedding when you get back. Just know that we love you so much and I am so happy you are finally happy."

That made my heart melt. David told me he didn't want to impose on their schedules since it was a last minute thing, but I was happy that Mama of all people approved. They all sent us good wishes, along with his father, his uncle John and his brother Jacob and his wife. The twins are really growing and they just couldn't be happier. The only person I didn't see or speak to was his mother

and I can't say I am sad at all. I am very happy we didn't get to say a word to her.

Ziphora: (smiling) "You are something else, Mr. Mosue."

David: (smiling) "I just wanted to surprise you. I'm glad you like it."

Ziphora: "Are you kidding me? I love this so much."

David: "Take this as a pre-birthday surprise."

This sly, man. He actually did this on purpose. My birthday is exactly tomorrow and wow, I didn't anticipate such a surprise at all. I didn't even realize Ziyanda and her husband were part of our very small bridal party. To be honest, I enjoyed this intimate ceremony. David knows me all too well if I could say.

Phila: (smiling) "Ziphora, how lovely to finally meet you."

Ziphora: (smiling) "You must be Mr. Zwane, the running Mayor of Gauteng, right?"

Phila: (chuckling) "I have many more titles than that, but well, yes, I am."

Ziphora: "I didn't mean to offend you."

Phila: “No offence taken. I am just happy to be of witness to this beautiful ceremony. It reminds me so much of my own wedding with my darling wife.”

Ziyanda: “Well, good memories.”

David: “I am too happy to see you guys, but I am even more excited to just spend my night with my wife. Come, it’s party time.”

I was too happy to even be Mrs. Mosue, in another country to top it off. I knew that we were going to have a more formal ceremony with our family and friends. Tonight was about Dave and I, a chance for us to be happy and care free.

Ziphroa: “Where to next?”

David: “I’d love it if we could eat, but I want us to do what you want to do for a change.”

Ziphora: (excited) “Are you sure?”

David: "Of course. Whatever it is you want us to do – we'll do it."

Ziphora: "I want to eat a little bit of everything and drink a little bit of everything – as much as I can in this town. I want to explore this town and just have fun."

Francesca: "Well, that is a call for me to end the night. I am not young anymore."

Gianna: "I agree with Francesca. I am so happy for the two of you and I hope you have a good Turkish night. Be safe and God bless you."

David: "Phila? What about you and Ziyanda?"

Ziyanda: "Oh, I don't know about Phila, he might doze off since he is becoming old. He can't stomach the party scene anymore. I mean, he is forever wearing suits now."

Phila: “Excuse you, Ma (Mrs) Zwane, speak for yourself. Mina (I), I’m more than happy to play along and be the fun guy I used to be. I can’t wait to show you ukuthi (that) I still have it in me.”

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Is that a dare, Mr. Zwane?”

Phila: “It’s a promise. Let’s go.”

And just like that, our wedding night turned into a splendid night of partying. We hit the town and painted it red indeed. We flocked bar to bar and took amazing pictures. I felt like my heels were wearing me out, and I decided to travel barefoot. It was just too memorable. Indeed, as promised, I ate a little bit of everything and drank a bit of everything and before I knew it it was midnight.

David: (excited) “Happy Birthday, my baby.”

He gave me one of his magical, passionate kisses and awoke my vagina as usual. This man’s tongue is so amazing, it just brings

life to almost everything. Phila and Ziyanda felt as if they had enough partying for one night so we all called it a night. My Dave and I headed back to the hotel, most probably sloshed. Before I could even drop dead onto the bed, he stopped me.

David: "You're not planning on sleeping on our wedding night, do you?"

Ziphora: "Technically, our wedding night was last night."

David: "Well then, you owe me a wedding night. Come."

He looked at me in the sultry way he always does and gently pulled me to the bathroom. He slowly took off my dress and as drunk as I was, I felt as if I was halfway to heaven and literally in the middle of earth. I took off his clothes and just stared at his beautiful, ribbed body. This man is too beautiful. The way he always smiles at me makes my heart jump for joy. We got into the shower, which was pretty much twice the size of ours back home. They never lie when they say that a nice shower after a night of drunkenness makes you feel a little sober. We

showered together as we always do; he kissed my neck, rubbed my breasts and every other part of my body as he always did. The steam and warm water did such a good job on my skin and I managed to think straight, for a little bit. However, it made me feel so much hornier than I usually am. We got out of the shower and not once did we lotion ourselves. I think we were at that level where we had hit the last straw. His balls must have been so blue for so long, I guess it had been long overdue. I wasted no time as I lay on my back right on the bed. David kissed me in so many ways, I never knew our tongues could play such tricks together. He finally went down on me like he did just the other night. I felt a huge explosion rush through my body as I squirted in his face. Not once did I feel embarrassed or try to close my eyes. He came up and positioned himself in between my thighs. This was it. The big moment had finally arrived.

David: (softly) "Are you ready?"

Ziphora: (nodding) "I've been ready, baby. Make love to me, please."

He smiled as his lips landed on mine while he gently spread my legs further apart. I felt his penis push a little deeper into my vagina. I felt it sting a bit and my body automatically moved back.

David: "I can stop if you want me to."

Ziphora: (shaking head) "No, please don't."

I knew it was going to be a bit painful, but I had no idea how painful. As he kept pushing himself a bit deeper into me, I felt his penis finally go in. I gasped a little bit as it felt a bit odd. His kisses and gentle touches made the pain a little more bearable. He thrust back and forth and I would be lying if I said it wasn't painful, but it had to be done.

David: (moaning) "Shit... I love you, Ziphora Mosue."

Ziphroa: (breathing heavily) "I love you, David Mosue."

After a while, he climaxed and landed right on top of me.

David: “You make me so happy, Ziphora Mosue. I want to love you forever and ever.”

He kissed me and took a towel to wipe the both of us clean. I finally lost my virginity to someone I love. That is the only thing I had hoped for when it comes to such a moment.

Ziyanda Zwane

Seeing Ziphora for the very first time today, made me realize just how wrong my husband is about the whole thing. We found ourselves heading back to our hotel for the night. It was such an amazing night and I can't recall the last time Phila and I had so much fun.

Phila: (smiling) “Ucabangani kangaka (what are you thinking of)?”

Ziyanda: “Just thinking about the amazing day and night we had.”

Phila: (chuckling) “That still doesn’t change my mission, Ma (mrs) Zwane.”

Ziyanda: “Come on, Phila. I didn’t ask you to let me do this with you if my hunch was wrong. I know I am not wrong.”

Phila: “Ziyanda, you know how much this means to me. I am running for Mayor to make a difference, to make a change. You know just how much I feel about helpless girls being taken against their will. I am very much against trafficking.”

Ziyanda: “And I am not? Come on, Sthandwa sami (my love). You know very well that I am not in favour of crime, but I know that David is innocent. You know that too.”

Phila: “Only time will tell, love.”

Ziyanda: “All I am asking you is to wait a minute, just a little longer before you actually make up your mind. Please?”

Phila: “Fine. I am only going to wait a few more months, but once I am elected, I have to bring this whole syndicate down.”

Ziyanda: “You know I am working on getting all the girls back. Just trust me, please.”

Phila: “Zee, you know this life is just not for the faint-hearted. You should stop being so nice all the time. You remember how it ended for you back in the day?”

Did he really just have to remind me of the past? I have grown a lot in the past 15 years and he of all people should know that. All I know is that I feel like shit for befriending Ziphora under false pretences, but it just had to be done.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and thorough the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned or scorched, nor will the flame kindle upon you.”

One week later...

Ziphora

David and I had the best week ever. Apart from extending our holiday/honeymoon, we travelled all over Turkey and experienced the magic of this beautiful country. Ziyanda and Phila had to go back to South Africa two days after our wedding, but we didn't mind. We had so much fun and I myself didn't want to go back home. My biggest reason for that was that I just didn't want to face his mother. If I had it my way, I'd make her disappear and go live elsewhere. I just enjoyed the peace of mind this wedding of ours had brought in our lives. We have been having tons of sex daily. I didn't even know it would be so much fun and that I would get to learn so much in a matter of a few days. I mean, I have just turned 26 and already I can say I have become a bit of an expert, thanks

to David. He is such a wonderful teacher and I got to learn what he likes as well. Apart from enjoying pleasing me, he loves blow jobs. I don't think I have mastered it yet, but I did ask him to guide him of which he did. He showed me how to do it just the way he likes it. The tips I had been reading from magazines and the advice I have followed from Faith and Desiree really helped me a great deal. I can say that I am halfway there. Apart from everything, I am pleased to say that I love being married – even though it has just been a week. We went to the airport and got into our jet immediately as we were headed back to South Africa.

David: “Why do you seem so nervous?”

Ziphora: “No reason. I just don't know how your mother will feel about what we just did, you know.”

David: (firmly) “Forget about her. This is our lives. She has no control over us – not anymore.”

I still don't get why he gets so tense whenever we talk about his mother, though. It is almost as if I hit a very deep nerve

whenever I ask or talk about her. And what does he mean by 'not anymore'?

Ziphora: (smiling) "Okay."

He kissed my hand as we enjoyed our meal in the jet. I feel a bit bad for him because he did miss out on so much work. His mother tried playing the low-key uninterested part, but she didn't last long. Three days in and she was already bombarding him with calls. When she realized that he had actually blocked her, she started calling me non-stop. I can't say I am surprised as to where she found my number, since I am registered online with my private cellphone number. David told me to ignore her of which I did. She even sent me one insulting message. At least she is getting better, I mean one message is better than a heapful. I must have dozed off once more because David woke me up and I realized it was already sun down in Jo'burg. We headed to our car and just when I thought we were headed home, we of course had to join our family members. I mean, it wouldn't be appropriate to come back after a week-long honeymoon and not see them. I am tired – exhausted rather, but I decided to make the most of it. I mean, they are family after all. David booked us a table for dinner at Kreme. This place brings up such distasteful memories, but one of them is

that I got to meet my wonderful husband. As soon as we arrived, I saw Mama, Charisma, Keo and Koko of course standing in the parking lot. I assume they knew we were already on our way and they just couldn't wait. The moment I walked out of the car, Mama was the very first one to run towards me with her face beaming with so much pride and joy.

Susan: (joyful) "Oh, ngwanaka (my baby)! You're finally back. I have missed you so much."

Charisma: "Tse dintshe ka di bona (forget that), ke batla go bona ring nna (I want to see the ring)."

After they all hugged me, Charisma, pulled my hand immediately and was in awe.

Keo: "Yoh (wow)! That is one amazing ring. Sbari (brother-in-law), you have so much taste. I have to applaud you."

Koko: "Applause can wait. You do know that you two didn't do things accordingly."

Ai, there she goes again.

David: (looking down) “Eya (yes), Mme (mom).”

Koko: “O patella neng magadi (when are you paying lobola)?”

Really? She is doing this right now?

Susan: “Nke o tlogele bana ba, Mama le wena man (leave these kids alone, man). We can deal with this later.”

Koko: “Aowa ne ke no bua fela (I was just saying). Phela ke mo godisitse ngwana yo (I raised this child).”

I saw Mama give her a very stern look and that was her que to just shut up.

Keo: “A re tseneng, please (let’s go in). It’s still a bit cold.”

It might be August month, but wow it is cold. We walked in and I saw Faith and Desiree, along with Jeannette and Jacob holding their beautiful daughters. I love babies – it's crazy. His father was standing right beside his uncle John, and his mother was nowhere to be seen.

Everyone: (shouting) "Surprise!"

They were so happy for us, embracing us and wishing us well.

Ntate Moruti: (smiling) "You did well, my son. Makoti (daughter-in-law), welcome to the family."

I feel so odd as I don't even have a doek on and I am shaking my father-in-law's hand without being properly dressed as a bride.

Ziphora: "Kea leboga, Ntate (Thank you, father)."

Jeannette: “Welcome to the family, love. It is about to be a bumpy ride.”

She said that as if she was trying to give me a code for something, I don’t know. But I could hear the sternness in her voice. She was not kidding.

David: “Jeannette, give me my niece o tlogele go tshosa mosadi wa me (and stop scaring my wife).”

She chuckled and handed the one baby to David. I stared at that child with so much awe, that Jacob must have noticed.

Jacob: “Would you like to hold her?”

Ziphora: “Please.”

I smiled as he handed the one twin to me. I felt an immediate connection. Seeing the way Jacob stared right at those babies made me realize that he really adores his children. Apparently he is so involved with the babies. I can tell by the way he is so hands on all the time. He even wakes up in the middle of the

night to feed and change them. It has been about two weeks, and already they know which one is which, but I am still yet to see the difference between the two as they look so identical.

Ziphora: (smiling) “She’s so beautiful.”

David: (smiling) “I can’t wait to see you carry our own like that.”

Just as David and I were admiring Remofilwe and Rethabile, the devil herself walked in with the most least expected people.

Mma Moruti: (smiling) “Hello, family. I hope I’m not interrupting anything!”

She was too jubilant for my liking. I could tell she was just up to no good. Everyone seemed rather taken aback with her distasteful grand entrance. Of course, she was dressed to impress, with a designer white gown as if she was the bride, along with gold stilettos and a new hairdo, with a white hat as if she was going to the Soweto Derby. The way this woman really has no shame. I could tell just how David became instantly

irritated. He handed the one baby back to Jeannette, while Julia walked up towards me.

Mma Moruti: “Oh, honey. I heard about your little wedding. Congratulations are in order. Jacob, take the baby away from her. I mean she is technically still unmarried and o tshilafetswe (she is unclean). I mean, no offence, you are no longer a virgin now, are you?”

I felt myself become overwhelmed with so much annoyance and hatred. How dare she speak to me like that in front of everyone? I thought she could try and pretend to be nice and happy for me at least, but she was blatantly rude towards me – in front of everyone. I felt instantly broken and felt like crying. The tears were right at the tip of my eyelids. I handed the other baby to Jacob while looking down and forcing the tears back.

Jacob: “I’m sure she’s just kidding

Advertisement

Zee. Don’t take her to heart.”

I just nodded, while David held my hand.

David: “Mama wa reng (what did you just say)?”

Mma Moruti: “Hao (Goodness), did I offend her?”

There she goes again, talking about me in third person as if I am not here. How dare she?

Susan: (infuriated) “Mama weh! Kgala mpya e o e bitsang motswala pele ke mo phara (talk to this dog you call a friend before I beat her up)!”

As usual, Julia was about to respond, but things were about to become messy. Luckily for her, Ntate Moruti intervened.

Ntate Moruti: “Family, please. Let’s all calm down, please. Julia, behave yourself, please.”

Mma Moruti: "I am behaved, Mac. Or keng (or what)? You can't handle the truth?"

While Ntate Moruti was still calming her down in much annoyance, I felt myself feeling rather hurt by her. I have never really entertained her much, but what she just did and said about me was truly uncalled for.

Ziphora: "Excuse me."

I tried letting go of David's hand, but he held it firmly and walked right alongside me. I rushed to the ladies room and surprisingly he walked right in with me. I held the basin tightly and felt like I had to get rid of this huge knot in my throat. I tried to stop my tears from flowing down, but they forced their way out of my eyes.

David: "Zee..."

Ziphora: (crying) "David, please. Give me a moment alone. I beg of you."

He looked rather sad and teary, but decided not to push.

David: (sadly) “Okay. I love you.”

He walked out and within minutes, I saw Charisma and Keo walking right into the toilet.

Keo: “Oh, ngwaneso (sis). O llela eng (why are you crying)?”

Charisma: “You shouldn’t do that to yourself.”

Ziphora: (crying) “Did you hear what she said? Did you see how she acted? She couldn’t even be happy for me.”

Charisma: “Don’t do that. You know very well my mother in law hates me with everything within her. What she says and does shouldn’t matter. You just have to suck it up and pretend not to hear her. Once you officially become the wife as she says you still have to be, then you can show her flames – but

not in front of David. Her time will come, Zee. You are a threat to her – a huge one. It's nothing to do with you, but everything to do with her. You're showing her that you're weak and she has power over you. Get yourself cleaned up, so we can do your make-up all over again. Show her gore wena o ngwana wa Susan Mokoena (show her that you're the daughter of Susan Mokoena). You won't let an old hag like her mess with you like that."

Keo: "For the first time in a very long time, I actually agree with you, Charisma. She's right, Zee. Come on."

I managed to pull myself together and clean myself up. I knew they were right deep down, but it still didn't take away the feeling I had. They wiped my face off and redid my makeup. Within a few minutes, I was back in top shape. I just have to pretend until the time comes – I just have to. We walked out and my poor David was waiting for me right at the bar. As soon as I appeared, he stood up quickly.

David: "Are you okay?"

Keo: (chuckling) “You still have a long way to go with this cry baby, Dave. She’s fine.”

He still looked at me and waited for me to actually confirm to him if I was okay, so I nodded.

David: “Okay, if you ever feel like leaving, I’m all for it.”

Ziphora: “Don’t be silly, love. Our friends and family planned all this for us. Let’s make the most of it by appreciating their effort.”

He nodded and kissed me. While we walked back towards the party, we heard a bit of commotion. Mama was shouting while Koko was holding her back.

Susan: “A ke tlo utlwa ka wena, Julia (I won’t let you bully me)! O Mma Moruti o mo jwang (what kind of a pastor’s wife are you)?!”

David: “Can we all please just do what we came here to do? Let’s have fun and enjoy ourselves.”

Mma Moruti: “David, I – “

David held his hand up right in her face and stopped her.

David: “My wife and I just got married. You have no right to come in here and disrupt what our family and friends decided to do for us. If you feel you don’t recognize our marriage, it’s best you leave right now.”

Everyone became silent and I was so proud of David for standing up for me right there and then. I even forgot all about Luvo and her mother and the baby. I don’t even know why they were there, but I assumed that since she was one of the beneficiaries of David’s foundation, she had come to wish us well. Julia stood there and remained quiet for a while.

Mma Moruti: (shocked) “David, I’m your mother.”

David: “A mother wouldn’t do what you’re doing right now. I won’t hesitate to have you thrown out of here. What’s it going to be?”

She sat down quietly and embarrassed.

David: “Ladies and gentlemen, my wife and I are delighted to meet you again today. We didn’t expect all this that you have planned for us, but we are so grateful. As planned, we plan on doing things the right way, so we cannot wait to officially involve you on our wedding ceremonies. Let’s get drunk and be merry!”

At least we saw a few of them chuckle and smile. I decided to walk up to Luvo, who seemed to have lost quite some weight and she even looked uncomfortable, as if she didn’t want to be there.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Luvo. How are you doing? I am so happy to see you. I was actually hoping to see you right after your call –
“

I was about to finish my sentence, when her mother rudely interrupted me.

Luvo's mother: "Luvo isn't well and she doesn't want to talk to you."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Surely she can tell me that herself, Mme (mother)."

Luvo's mother: (annoyed) "Like I said, Luvo is tired. She should get some rest."

Ziphora: "Well, at least the baby is growing. May I see him?"

She was rude once again and covered the baby the moment I walked closer to her.

Luvo's mother: "You heard Julia, you can't see the baby. You're unclean and the baby is still young. Perhaps when you have your own, you'll understand."

Wow, that was a big blow to my already fragile heart. I couldn't believe it. Luvo walked right after her mother looking down in shame, while David tried to console me.

David: "Don't mind her. She just appreciates the handouts she gets from my mother."

Ziphora: "What handouts?"

David: "She and Luvo now live in my parents' house apparently."

Okay, this family is weird. Perhaps they just take everyone in as part of their duty to the church, I don't know. We walked towards Jeannette and Jacob, who were trying to speak to the already annoyed Julia.

Jeannette: "Mama, I've been meaning to speak to you about the twins' baptism."

Mma Moruti: (annoyed) “Oh, Jeannette! What makes you think I’d possibly want to speak about your brats right now!”

She got up and walked out while Luvu and her mother walked right behind her. Jeannette was so sad, but my Dave is always there to calm everyone down.

David: “When did you two want to baptize the baby?”

Jeannette: (sadly) “I was thinking this Sunday, you know. I mean, the earlier the better.”

David: “Okay then. I’ll do that especially for my nieces, plus Ziphora has to be introduced formally as my wife. The sooner the better, right?”

He said that smiling and honestly I don’t know if I actually want to be a part of this family’s church anymore. I am afraid to find out what exactly they might be hiding behind closed doors. Something does not seem very right and I am afraid that the secrets behind this family and also behind David’s childhood is a lot deeper than I thought.

“For there is a time and a way for everything, although man’s trouble lies heavy on him.”

A few days later...

It had been a few days since David and I had our welcome home party as newlyweds. My, oh, my it has been a little full of drama. We have been avoiding Mma Moruti like crazy. Since David has blocked her completely, she has started bombarding my phone with messages and calls. Ever since her rude outburst at the party, my mother has been on my case about her. Today is Sunday, our very first Sunday back in South Africa as a married couple, and David has planned a special baptism for Jacob and Jeannette’s twins. Mma Moruti has been acting really oddly all week, and thank goodness we don’t stay with them. I’m just a bit anxious that we’re going to the house straight after church, to celebrate the twins’ birth and baptism officially. David is at church, so I told him that I’d fetch my mother and sisters before church, just to see how Mama is doing. I drove in one of David’s cars, since insurance was still processing my claim for the car that burnt. I hadn’t needed a car in a while, since David is either driving me or has a driver for

me. I arrived at Mama's house and was about to knock, when Charisma and Keo rushed out and got straight into the car.

Charisma: "Yoh (Oh), finally! Wa be o fihlile (you finally made it)!"

Ziphora: "Hello, sis. Did I miss anything?"

Keo: "Ai, Mama is just complaining non-stop. I still don't know how you managed coming back here straight after Res, bra. Like wow, that woman wa balabala (complains too much)."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "She's your mother, bathing (goodness). What is she raving about?"

Charisma: "Isn't it obvious? About you joining an evil church family. She says she sort of curses the day you met David because he was birthed by an evil woman. Apparently when we were in the toilet with you, they were at each other's throats."

I foresee danger here. I mean how will we have peace when Julia is forever starting fights with literally everyone?

Keo: “Don’t worry too much about her. It gets worse before it gets better. My mother in law was a pain to me as you all know until Kenny totally cut her off financially, emotionally bona (look)! He wasted no time. His wife’s sanity was more important than anything else. We have our moments, but I know he will always come up for me no matter what.”

I guess she is right. It will blow over eventually. Mama came after dragging her feet.

Susan: “Dumela (Hello), Ziphora. Starter koloi re tsamaye (Start the car so we can go). Re ya di heleng (we’re on our way to hell), so I was asking God for protection.”

Wow, Mama can be so dramatic, honestly. I decided to say nothing and just drive. Of course, she went on and on about how Julia is a mad woman and how she is just uncalled for. I decided to just let her be, and thankfully Charisma and Keo didn’t respond to her as well. I am just glad Koko wasn’t here,

because she is always just on Julia's side. It's like she has no idea how evil that woman is, or she is just pretending to be blind. We finally arrived at church, I thank my fast driving skills for that, otherwise Mama was never going to finish.

Ziphora: "A re ye (let's go), Mama. We're here."

Susan: "Rena ro dula kae (where are we going to sit)?"

Ziphora: "You'll be in the VIP area. I have to sit with the family, unfortunately, but we'll be together soon and Koko will be there with you along with other church wives."

Susan: "Oh, great. Another cult."

I suppose she was trying to be sarcastic, but then, this is my new family. She should honestly not be so negative all the time. I was a bit displeased with her comment, but I kept my cool. Keo noticed as always and whispered in my ear.

Keo: (whispering) “Ska mo tseyela hlogong, akere (don’t take everything she says to heart, hey). You know we’re here to support you. Be brave and enjoy.”

I smiled at her while they walked in. I had to obviously head to the back of the church quarters to get dressed with the family. David luckily told me everything I needed to know in detail, about what to wear and what to do. Luckily, he took me shopping to the most amazing boutiques back in Turkey, and I have a few outfits specially made for me by Francesca and Gigi. I am wearing a custom made white knee-length dress with red Prada heels. He did tip me saying that on baptism days, we have to dress in white. My make up is on fleak, thanks to Faith’s skills and I am ready to go. They couldn’t be here today as they have to work. I was nervous, but ready for Julia. The moment I walked into the room, I found them getting dressed, and oddly, Luvo and her mother along with the baby were once again with the crew. Julia’s permanent sour taste in her mouth reappeared as soon as she saw me walking in.

Mma Moruti: “Oh, finally, you decided to grace us with your presence, “makoti” (daughter-in-law.”

She put very poor emphasis on the whole “makoti” (daughter-in-law), like it just has no meaning. I know she doesn’t recognize me as her daughter-in-law, but she doesn’t have to be so nasty towards me all the damn time. David reacted immediately.

David: (firmly) “Ma weh. This is the house of the lord. This is my sermon and if you honestly won’t behave towards my wife, I’ll have you out of here.”

Mma Moruti: (shocked) “You wouldn’t dare throw me out of my own church! The church I built with my bare hands?!”

David: “Actually, Papa (dad) built it and not you. You can’t even lift a finger to save your own life. Now, I am warning you. That is my wife. Please, respect her.”

Mma Moruti: (angered) “Mac, are you honestly allowing – “

Ntate Moruti: (interrupting) “Yes, I am and I will do what he says. Julia, you have become a real pain lately and quite frankly,

it is ungodly. We have a sermon to prep for, so I'd honestly appreciate you being quiet."

She looked around and everyone was literally staring at her without saying a word. She figured out she was outnumbered, even Luvu and her mother were quiet. I still don't know why they are here, though, but it is not my place to ask. David smiled at me and kissed my cheek.

David: (smiling) "You look beautiful."

Ziphora: "Thank you."

Mma Moruti: "If I were you I'd have chosen a better dress."

David: "Well, she's not you, and she is dressed just perfectly."

Once again Julia refrained from retaliating.

David: "Let us pray before we lead today's sermon."

I held David's hand, while the shaking Luvo had to hold my hand. She seemed really nervous and uncomfortable everywhere we go and she seemed to lose more weight with every appearance she makes. I am rather concerned about her. Her 7 week check up is coming soon and I think I need to speak to her – alone.

David: "Dear God, our Father, we are gathered here today because you made it possible. You are the only one who can fuel our journey when we run out of energy, faith, trust and everything holy."

As David was praying, I just felt Julia's eyes piercing right through my skin. I opened my eyes slowly and there she was, staring right at me with bloodshot eyes. She seems to do that a lot, and it is very creepy. I mean, for someone who preaches every single verse in the Bible, she sure has a lot of hatred for someone whom her son loves. I mean my only sin was to fall in love with David. She doesn't even seem to hate Jeannette this much. She makes rude comments towards her every now and then, but she is not this bad with her. I didn't want to show her

I'm weak, although I was shit scared. I stared her right in the eye as well.

David: "Give us your blessings today and let us enjoy this day with all your might, in Jesus' name, amen."

We all said Amen and my David walked right beside me, with our hands together. Jeannette and Jacob walked out holding their babies, while the rest of them followed. I was nervous, but David told me to relax as he whispered to me while we were walking out. We could hear the choir start singing Lebo Sekgobela's Lion of Judah. I can never get over the way they just make every song sound so authentic and brilliant. We walked onto the stage, and people were clapping hands for us

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while rejoicing in the song as well. We sang along and I saw David smile right at me. He likes talking about this church as both a blessing and a curse. He says it is a blessing because God has carried him through his deepest days, but at the same time it is a curse because a lot of the bad things happened to him right here. I still don't know what he means by that, but I am guessing he will tell me when the time is right. Julia was pretending as always and she wasn't too happy being at the

back seat, unlike being in front like every other church service. I was right next to my Dave, in the front seat on stage, with Jeannette and Jacob right next to us, and Ntate Moruti, Mma Moruti, Luvo, her mother holding Junior right at the back. It was blissful to see her stare at me with her hidden hatred in front of the world. The choir stopped and David got up smiling. My husband is so handsome.

David: "Hallelujah, Bazalwane (congregation)!"

Congregation: "Amen!"

David: "Today is a very special day, my people. Oh, for the Lord has favoured it. We are all alive and God has granted us the favour of life by making possible for all of us to be here. As Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day the lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Congregation: "Amen!"

David: “Today, is a very special day for two reasons; one, I am officially married to my darling wife.”

I could hear a few gasp in shock, but they clapped anyway.

David: “Yes, indeed I am now a married man. The second reason is that I get to do the honours of baptising my twin nieces – Remofilwe and Rethabile.”

Everyone clapped and I could tell that a lot of them were not pleased with only hearing about this bombshell wedding announcement right now.

David: “A child is a blessing as we all know, but it is an even bigger blessing when he or she enters this cruel world with both parents who love him or her. We all know that the world is cruel, and if you the parents can’t protect the child, who do you expect to do that for you? For God trusts those he deems worthy to carry and protect the body and soul of children while this life is only lend to us.”

David was speaking with such passion about protecting children. I don't know, but he really hates hearing about abused children. It is something really close to his heart.

David: "Without further ado, may the babies be brought forward."

Jacob and Jeannette stood up and stood right in front of the church facing them with the babies.

David: "May you please state the God parents of the children."

Jacob: (proudly) "I pledge my brother, David Mosue as the godfather to my daughters."

I didn't really know who Jeannette was going to pledge as the godmother, and I already knew that David was automatically the godfather. But then, they dropped a bomb that I didn't expect at all, and judging by the reaction of everyone, they also didn't expect it.

Jeannette: (smiling) “I pledge my sister-in-law, Ziphora Mosue, as the godmother to my daughters.”

I could hear my mother screaming all the way from the balcony.

Susan: (screaming) “Hallelujah!”

I side-eyed Julia and I could see how displeased she was, meanwhile Ntate Moruti, was so happy. He was overjoyed. Well, David looked at me without any surprise, so he just signalled for me to get up. He did brief me on the procedure of godparents in the process of baptism. I guess he wanted it to be a surprise, because he didn't seem shocked by the announcement at all. I stood up and went to stand right behind Jacob and Jeannette, while David stood right beside me with the small microphone attached to his robe. We stood right before a small pulpit, that had a big glass bowl of water and one of the ushers had a towel to wipe the babies' heads gently after baptism.

David: “May we say our pledge, parents.”

Jacob and Jeannette: “We pledge, to love our children and honour our God for entrusting us with the lives of our babies. We pledge to raise them into Godly children, and mould them into the best beings they can be. We vow to put God first, and to teach them that throughout their lives.”

David: (smiling) “My wife, may we say our pledge as the godparents.”

I smiled, as I chuckled internally. This may is really sly. He prepared me for this entire ceremony knowing that I’d be chosen as a godparent as well.

Ziphora and David: “We pledge as godparents to love our god children and honour our God for entrusting us with the lives of our god children. We pledge to raise them alongside their parents, into Godly children, and mould them into the best beings they can ever be. We vow to put God first, and to teach them that throughout their lives. We vow to enforce love above all.”

I was a bit nervous, but looking right into my David's eyes made me relax. It was time for David and I to hold the children while he prayed for them as he baptized them.

David: "May the good lord bless you with a good and holy life, may you honour your parents and be the best person you can be. May you live a long life and live long enough to fulfil your dreams and make your parents proud. In the power vested in me, I bless you with life and baptize you today."

He poured water on Remofilwe first, and then on Rethabile. The crowd ululated and the choir started singing. David and I had to hug Jeannette and Jacob as custom procedure.

Jeannette: (whispering) "Thank you for accepting this. I'm sorry for ambushing you."

Ziphora: "It's okay, I'm honoured."

We had to wait for only few selected members of the church to come and shake Jacob and Jeanette's hands, while David and I

held the babies. they were not allowed to hold the babies as they were still young and under the age of 3 months. So, only VIPs were allowed to come and greet us, so only the church wives and their husbands, along with mama and my sisters. Nonetheless, none of the congregation members took it personally, as they knew it was the way it was done. Julia was so annoyed as she wasn't the star of the show, but what do I care? I officially made my new mark as David's wife and as a church wife of Agape Church of Christ. I don't know if I even fit in here or not, but then Jesus didn't fit in anywhere and yet he still became our leader, and sacrificed his life for us. I guess only time will tell. The church service continued and David was great as usual. He preached and it was a lovely sermon. After church, I decided to walk out with my mother and sisters, instead of David and the family. Thankfully, he understood. I was about to make my way out of the church to meet them, when I saw two familiar faces.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Hah (wow)! You guys are regulars now, hey?"

Ziyanda: (chuckling) "I couldn't miss my favourite pastor's sermon, could I?"

Ziphora: “How are you, Phila?”

Phila: “I am still recovering from our night of painting the town red back in Turkey, but nonetheless, I am doing just fine, thank you. Wena unjani (how are you)?”

I keep forgetting he is Zulu.

Ziphora: “I am just fine, thank you.”

Ziyanda: “Well, we should get going, we shouldn’t keep you with your new duties.”

I did the unexpected, I mean surely they wouldn’t mind.

Ziphora: “Well, actually, I’d like to invite you to our family lunch today. I mean, it is only fair since you guys came all the way here, right?”

Ziyanda: "Phila? Is that okay with you?"

Phila: "Only if it won't cause any problems."

It might with Susan, but I'd like to see her squirm for a moment.

Ziphora: "Oh, we are all children of God here. Come, they won't mind. Let me introduce you to my family."

As I walked out Charisma nearly fainted when she saw me smile alongside Phila and Ziyanda. Apparently she has been wanting to meet Ziyanda and her husband has been wanting to make an acquaintance out of him for ages. I could hear a few ladies of the church whisper and gossip about my dress.

Woman: "Umbonile (did you see her)? She's wearing the most expensive dress in here. It must be the church offerings."

Woman 2: "Hayi wena (No), man, don't talk like that. Her husband has money. If they hear you, you'll be tickets."

Ziyanda heard them and was very displeased.

Ziyanda: (annoyed) “Bazalwane (my people), surely you wouldn’t want God to strike you with lightning for gossiping about the pastor’s wife, do you? More especially you are barely out of the church. You don’t want to pollute your hearts of evil right after hearing the word of God.”

They noticed who she was and instantly changed their tune, but she didn’t want to hear it.

Woman: “Wow! Ziyanda Zwane! May I get your autograph?!”

Ziyanda: (firmly) “No, I don’t give autographs to haters. Excuse us, we have a lunch to attend.”

We left them flabbergasted right there and then. I think I am going to like her.

29

"Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms."

Ziphora

My Dave finally walked out of the church and had to just completely avoid all the women and all their mothers who were trying to speak to him and actually interrogate him regarding our marriage. I am honestly so over black people. Why can they never just embrace two people getting married? Yes, we didn't start with lobola, but it will come.

David: (smiling) "My love, will you be okay with your mother and sisters?"

Ziphora: "Yes, but who will you be driving with?"

Phila: "He can drive with us, if that's okay."

David frowned a little bit as I quickly remembered that I didn't inform him about inviting Ziyanda and Phila to the lunch. I surely hope I didn't overstep my mark.

Ziphora: "Oh, honey, I asked Ziyanda and Phila to join us. That is if it is okay with you."

David: (smiling) "Why wouldn't it be okay? Mayor, it is great to finally see you again."

Phila: (chuckling) "Don't jinx it. My election is coming up real soon."

David: "We don't believe in jinxing, we believe in speaking things into existence. Am I right, Mrs. Zwane?"

Ziyanda: (smiling) "Indeed, Pastor. Well then, shall we get going?"

David: "You don't have to tell me twice. Moratuwa (My love), I'll see you in a bit, okay?"

I nodded and he kissed me briefly.

Susan: (clearing throat) “Ai, lena bana ba ka jeno (you children of today).”

I blushed as I got into the car and Mama sat in front as usual. Just when I thought she couldn't make things any more awkward, she hit me with the one question she had been dying to ask me.

Susan: “So, I assume ga o sa le le virgin (you're no longer a virgin)?”

I choked on my saliva a little bit and I really hoped she would ignore the question, but not my mother. Instead, she patted my back and waited for me to answer. I looked right ahead, but she just kept staring at me sternly, while Charisma and Keo were about to burst into laughter. I could see them in the rearview mirror. How amusing it must be for them to witness this painfully awkward moment between my mother and I.

Susan: (raised eyebrow) “Well?”

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “Eish, Mama, can’t we do this another time.”

Charisma and Keo burst out in laughter, but Mama just kept going.

Susan: “If not now then when, Zee? Phela I know my daughters. These two most probably taught you how to do di blow job le di (and) deep throat. Ke sure o star (I’m pretty sure you’re a star) when it comes to the bedroom now.”

By now I was already so flushed, my entire face had turned pink. I just didn’t know what to say while Keo and Charisma were laughing at the back.

Susan: “Aowa (No), Zee. This is not the time to be ashamed and embarrassed. Akere o mofa yona e ohle bjanong (You give him all of it now)? Bona mo (Look here), until that man pays

full lobola, ska mo jesa thata (don't feed him too much). A ka tla a kgamega (He might just choke on it)."

Wow, just wow. Charisma and Keo were having an awesome time, while I just felt like burying myself right in a big hole and never coming back out of it. I just remained quiet and absolutely defeated. I trust my mother to say it like it is.

Susan: "Ai, le ge o ka thola (even if you keep quiet), ka tshepa ong mametse (I trust you're actually listening)."

I just nodded reluctantly and thank goodness we arrived at the house. My word, my mother just ended me right there.

Susan: "Hmm, a go Tshwane Julia o nale style nyana (At least Julia has some sense of style). Although the water fountains are a bit much, but then, she is the Pastor's wife. A re yeng (Let's go)."

She was surprisingly the very first one to walk out of the car and I took a moment to just breathe. Ziyanda and Phila had

just drove in right behind me, and Charisma and Keo were dead with laughter.

Keo: (laughing) “Yoh, ngwaneso, (Oh, sis). Ska wara hle (don’t stress, though). She did that to Charisma and I as well.”

Charisma: “Speak for yourself. That was epic, bathong (my goodness).”

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “Are you two seriously having a good laugh at this?”

Keo: “You are a wife now, babe. She is going to be as blunt as they come. At least she is always there for us – no matter what.”

Charisma: “Yes, o tlo tlwaela (you’ll get used to it).”

They really tried to cheer me up, but nothing will ever be more embarrassing than that. David came rushing to my side and opened my door for me.

Keo: "Eish (Gosh), David is such a gentleman."

Charisma: "Ai, Kenny is also a gentleman, isn't he?"

Keo: "Ah, he has his moments."

David: "Are you okay?"

Ziphora: "Yes, I am."

David: "Bjanong (So), why are you so pink?"

Keo: "Let's just say she just had the birds and the bees talk with our mother."

David: (shyly) "Oh, nothing too hectic, I hope."

Charisma: “Oh, don’t you worry, your turn is coming right before sunset.”

I felt as if I was about to die right there once again. Are they actually being serious right now? David just smiled and walked alongside me hand in hand. Keo and Charisma were walking with Phila and Ziyanda, while Mama was seen mingling with a few of the church A-listers. Jacob and Jeannette were nowhere to be seen and apparently they were upstairs changing their outfits along with the twins. I don’t know if I will ever get used to all this diva drama. Right across us, I immediately spotted the famous trio Boitu, Akanyang and the ever sour Amo. Goodness, that girl was born with so much hatred towards me nje. The moment Boitu shouted my name and waved at me, she gave me a sour look from head to toe. It wasn’t all that bad, I mean everyone was raving about how well I was dressed for the occasion, so she must have been really unhappy about me actually getting something right. The ring on my finger also didn’t do any justice. We walked towards them and introduced ourselves. They immediately recognized Ziyanda and Phila and Amo was really low key impressed that I actually know such elite people, but she didn’t want to show it. I truly think that her almamater is making everyone hate her just so she can have some sort of attention. Her husband is

anything but attentive towards her. Phila and David went to join the other men while we ladies stood right there with the three. Waiters were walking around serving us anything desirable on the menu. It is really not such an orthodox function, because alcohol is galore. The setup is awesome and even though Julia is a real pain, she does know a thing or two about décor. I'll give her that.

Boitu: (smiling) "Girl, congratulations on getting married. May I see the ring?"

Ziphora: (excited) "Sure."

I handed her my left hand and she was in absolute awe. So was Akanyang.

Akanyang: "Wow, my husband never even bought me such a big ring. Girl, you'd better guard that with your life. You know South Africa is. I bet even a blind beggar could spot that ring all the way from outside your car."

We all had a light laugh – except for Amo.

Amo: (annoyed) “It’s just a ring – no biggie. Besides, it isn’t that big at all and the marriage isn’t really a marriage without lobola.”

Wow, just wow. All of us suddenly looked at her and our smiles just faded away.

Amo: “What? I’m just saying.”

Ziyanda: “Pardon me, who did you say you were again?”

Amo: (smiling) “Amogelang Phiri. The wife of the famous – “

Ziyanda: (interrupting) “Well, then, Amo. Out of everything you could have told me in your mini introduction, all you could firstly come up with was that you were the wife of someone? Girl, I don’t want to overstep my mark here, but I hate women who look down on one another. When a woman shares some exciting news with you – you embrace it and you

congratulate her – no matter how much of a sour taste it will leave in your mouth. For someone who claims they are happily married, you sure do look and sound bitter as fuck. Excuse my language

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but I just can't stand such nonsense.”

Wow, she was so serious and I could tell just how annoyed she was. She was staring Amo right in the eye, not even blinking a bit. Amo could tell she had met her match, and she just didn't have a comeback for the very first time ever.

Amo: (embarrassed) “Excuse me, I'd like to check up on my husband.”

She walked away and it felt like the only toxic mould was eliminated from our presence and we could finally breathe and talk about interesting things without being shut down. Julia walked down from the stairs and right onto the lawn, where we were waiting in the marquee. Of course, she was dressed in an entire new outfit – also custom made. This woman's wardrobe must be full of custom made clothes.

Julia: “Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to my humble abode.”

She walked right past the girls and I and just gave me one of her wicked sneers.

Ziyanda: (whispering) “Your mother in law doesn’t like you much.”

Ziphora: “Tell me something I don’t know.”

Julia: “I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Mosue and my beautiful, blessed, grand daughters.”

They walked out while we were clapping and cheering for them. Wow, as I expected. They were dressed in matching outfits, and so were the babies. This is some grand elite shit, if you ask me. The music was playing and I don’t mean from a speaker and a laptop playing in the background – no. I’m talking a real-life orchestra that was hired to play for us. This

woman has no limits. No wonder some of the women in the church think that I am also chowing the collection money. Jacob and Jeannette walked down to say hello to the rest of the people. She walked straight to me and handed me Remofilwe.

Jeannette: “Babe, do you mind holding her for a while? Gosh, this woman just won’t quit. I have to walk around in these heels and carry her around all day. That time she is sleeping bathing (goodness).”

Ziphora: (chuckling) “It’s fine. If I ever need help, I’ll shout.”

Jeannette: “Thank you. I owe you one.”

She smiled as she walked away to mingle a little bit with her family and friends. I could see Julia was immediately displeased with me holding the baby. I didn’t see any sign of Luvo and her mother as yet. They must be somewhere in the house. Julia walked right up to me.

Julia: (smiling) “Ziphora, are you sure you are going to be able to hold that child carefully? I mean, you’re used to wearing crocs and flats all day. Heels can’t be your thing.”

She faked smiled at me, and of course, my sisters were so displeased with her nasty attitude, while Ziyanda was really annoyed. She just had a thing of looking someone right dead in the eye, while Boitu and Akanyang just looked down. They were really afraid to voice their opinions.

Ziphora: (smiling) “I’m perfectly capable of holding a baby, Mme (mother).”

Julia looked at Ziyanda from toe to head, quite the opposite of what she is used to doing. Ziyanda was not in the least impressed. I could see her eyes become bloodshot instantly.

Julia: “Hmm, Ziphora, who might you be, dear?”

Ziyanda: (annoyed) “Ziyanda Zwane.”

Julia: “Oh, you must be the face of the whole BBW campaign, right? And the wife of that handsome mayor. Hmm, pity.”

Ziyanda was a woman of class. Yes, she is a bit bigger than most women, but her figure is to die for. She is not even in the least unhappy about her weight at all and she embraces the way she looks at all times.

Ziyanda: “Hmm, is that all you got, Mrs. Mosue?”

Julia: (shocked) “Pardon me?”

Ziyanda: “I mean, for a woman of your stature, you surely can’t go around insulting women and bodyshaming them. You honestly think that after all I have been through, I become saddened by the likes of you calling me fat? Honey, my husband right there (pointing at Phila), chose me. ME as in all of this. He has been with all of this for the past fifteen years. He came back from Italy just to put a ring on all of this. I am an ambassador, motivational speaker, millionaire, a mother and most importantly I am a woman of God. A Real woman of

God. You don't scare me. I actually feel like praying for you. And yes, you are pardoned."

Julia was seething with anger. She stared at Ziyanda who was staring at her right in the eye. Not once did Ziyanda blink or give her the benefit of having any power over her. I like this woman. Julia looked so irritated and then turned the attention to me.

Julia: "And then wena (you), Ziphora? You're a paper wife for just a mere two minutes and now you invite low lives to come and insult me in my own house?!"

She was shouting and caused the baby to start crying.

Ziyanda: "Speak to me, Mme (mom), tell me to leave right here and right now and I'll gladly do it, but you are not going to turn my friend into a victim of your bullying. I dare you to do it – I double dare you. You'll be amazed just how much I know about you – "Hashib".

The moment Ziyanda said that to Mma Moruti, was the moment I experienced something I never thought I would. She immediately changed, like she became so worried and honestly shocked. She looked at Ziyanda and I saw a tinge of fear in her eyes. What on earth is Hashib? Or is it perhaps one of Mma Moruti's names? It most probably brings back really bad memories for her because she immediately changed her tune.

Julia: (fake smiling) "Forgive me. I must have forgotten to take my pills today. Ziphora, please, forgive me for my impudence. Ziyanda, please find it in your heart to forgive me and make yourself at home."

Ziyanda: "With great pleasure, Hashib."

There is that word again. I honestly hope I can remember it long enough to google it later, or even ask David about it. This is why I just jot almost everything down. I am so forgetful, though. I just wonder what kind of power Ziyanda actually has in life, so much power that she managed to get Mma Moruti to humble herself in an instant.

Julia Mosue

I can't fucking believe this! I curse the day David brought that skank into my life! I just can't help it. I honestly try to humble myself and remain steady, but the moment I see Ziphora, I just lose it. To make matters worse, she just invited that fat girl without even consulting me. How dare she? She is not even my daughter in law, by culture. She thinks she is all that. I honestly thought that the fat girl was just a nobody, but then she called me by my code name. Only my clients and cartel know my code name. Who the fuck is she? I mean to my understanding she is just a pretty face and a wife to the running mayor. I had to humble myself before her and act calm, but my temper was flaring from the inside. So, I decided to rush into the house and pretend to go to the rest room in my bedroom I found Luvo's mother with the sobbing Luvo. I honestly don't have time for this right now. I called the one person I knew would have an idea of who this elephant is.

Buda: "Buda."

Julia: "Do you know of anyone named Ziyanda Zwane?"

Buda: “The running mayor’s wife? Yes, I know her. Everyone knows Mamba’s wife and everyone knows not to fuck with her.”

Julia: “She called me by my code name.”

Buda: (worried) “Fuck. Which means she either knows about your other life or you must have fucked her over.”

Julia: “How when I don’t know her, Buda? I just met her today.”

Buda: “Okay, I’ll dig up what I can find, but in the mean time, you stay as far away from her as possible. Or else, you’ll have Mamba to deal with. He is not so nice.”

Julia: “That giraffe?”

Buda: “Eh mon (Hey, man). Stay the fuck away from her if you know what’s good for you. You don’t want to wake up ugly. By

ugly I mean without any teeth, eyes, a tongue and no limbs. Stay away from her.”

He hung up leaving me even more frustrated. Who the hell is this Mamba guy?

Julia: “And then nina (you two)?”

Luvo’s mother: “Luvo is losing it, Julia. We have to do something.”

Julia: “I have a party to attend. Pop her some tranquilizers if you have to.”

Luvo’s mother: “Maybe we should ask David to speak to her.”

Julia: (angrily) “You’ll do no such thing! Remember the plan – you had better stick to it if you really want more money out of me. And don’t you forget Luvo, I feed you, I clothe you! You could be a fucking slay queen out there! Out of all my girls, I

chose you. I gave you a choice to get out and leave. What more do you want from me?"

Luvo: (crying) "I want my baby. I want my life."

Julia: "That is not your baby. You made that choice the moment you agreed to sleep with David."

Luvo: "But I, I didn't agree to anything. It was my mother."

I was so frustrated by all her nagging, so I slapped her across the face.

Julia: "Don't forget what happens to those who fuck with Julia Mosue."

I walked out leaving those two pathetic bitches right there. I have bigger fish to fry.

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

Ziphora

The party was really nice, and for some odd reason, Julia decided to behave right after Ziyanda called her by some kind of Arab name. I really don't understand, but I am honestly glad that I have met her. She seems to know how to put people in their place – for real. After all the festivities, I finally got to have a short moment alone with Ziyanda.

Ziphora: "Ziyanda, may I ask you a question?"

Ziyanda: (smiling) "Of course, love."

Ziphora: "Why do I get the feeling you know David's mother more than I actually think?"

Ziyanda's smile slowly disappeared and she looked a bit firm. I honestly hope I didn't overstep my mark.

Ziyanda: "Ziphora, you're a wonderful woman. Let me just say that that woman is not the woman she claims to be. All this Bible and holy queen mother shit she portrays is not real."

She really said it like she meant it. I really do hope I could find out what actually is wrong with this whole family's set up.

Ziphora: "I honestly didn't mean to upset you."

Ziyanda: (chuckling) "Stop being so apologetic, love. I was once you, you know. When I say that Phila and I have been through the most – I mean it. He is one person who has managed to help me overcome my low self-esteem. Well, he and my crazy grandmother, of course."

Ziphora: "I do hope to meet her very soon."

Ziyanda: "Oh, in due time, sweetheart. I must warn you, though. She is quite something. Plus, she is dating a Ben 10."

Okay, I didn't expect that, but who am I to judge?

Ziyanda: "I really need the rest room. Care to show me where it is?"

Ziphora: "With great pleasure."

I took her up to the only bathroom I know. I mean, I have never been taken on tour in this house, and I actually prefer it that way. I took her to the bathroom and waited for her right outside, but I was rather caught off guard when I heard a baby's cry from the room just across the bathroom. I figured it must have been Luvo's baby boy Junior. Whom he was named after I have no idea. I knocked on the door a couple of times, but she didn't respond. Instead, the baby cried louder. I opened the door and found Luvo curled up on the floor not attending to the baby.

Ziphora: “Luvo, are you okay? The baby is crying right next to you.”

She looked up at me and what a sight of horror. Her eyes were bloodshot, her bright face was swollen, almost like she was hit or something. She just looked a real mess.

Luvo: (crying) “Just take him away – please!”

I decided to carry the baby and gently pat him back to quietness.

Ziphora: “Luvo, you might be experiencing post natal depression. Why haven’t you called me yet?”

Luvo: “Because... I’m not allowed to.”

Ziphora: “What do you mean?”

She seemed like she was about to say something when Ziyanda walked right in.

Ziyanda: "Ziphora, I thought you had left. Is everything okay?"

Ziphora: "Oh, yes. Ziyanda, this is Luvo."

She looked at Junior and almost looked pale immediately.

Ziyanda: (shocked) "Whose baby is this?"

Ziphora: "Oh, this is Luvo's baby. She is a family friend of the Mosue's."

Ziyanda: (worried) "I see. And who is the father if I may ask?"

Ziphora: "I... uhm, I don't know."

Luvo: "You should leave before they come back. Both of you."

Ziphora: “Luvo, I don’t think it is a good thing to leave you alone right now.”

Luvo: “Please! Go now.”

Ziyanda: “Ziphora, I think we should give her space.”

Ziphora: “Okay.”

I gently placed the baby right back in the cot and I walked out with Ziyanda. While headed towards the stairs, Luvo’s mother appeared looking rather livid.

Luvo’s mother: (angered) “What the fuck were you two doing in Luvo’s room?! Heh?! Are you trying to kill my grandson?!”

I honestly think there is something wrong with this woman.

Ziphora: “Ma, I was just trying to – “

Luvo’s mother: (interrupting) “Save it! You are so jealous because he is the only Mosue heir!”

What a blow to my ears. Did I hear her correctly? The only Mosue heir? I am so lost right now. What on earth is she talking about because there are only two sons in this house – Jacob and David. David has no children and Jacob just had his twins.

Ziphora: “What are you talking about?”

Ziyanda: “I really think you need to shut your mouth before you say anything further damaging, don’t you think, Mrs. Phasha?”

Luvo’s mother: “You hippo! You are walking around here like you know us all! I know the likes of you – “

Ziyanda: “The likes of me? What about the likes of you? I wonder what the world would actually think if they found out

how you sold your only daughter to a monster. Better yet, I wonder what your daughter's father would do if he found out what you did – to his only child? Her actual father.”

She immediately backed off and looked at Ziyanda with so much shock. What is it with her knowing so much about these people? Who is she really? Is she a spy? What is she actually?

Ziyanda: “Let's go, Ziphora.”

She grabbed me and dragged me out of there before I could ask any more questions.

Ziphora: “Ziyanda, what was that?”

She was about to answer me, but Phila sternly walked towards us and interrupted us.

Phila: “I'm sorry, Ziphora, but my wife and I have to go. Family emergency. We'll see you soon.”

I was about to say goodbye, but it didn't seem like he was about to give me a chance to even say goodbye. Instead, he pulled Ziyanda away from me right away and left. David came to me also looking oddly confused.

David: "I wonder if everything is okay with the kids or something. They just looked oddly worried."

I just stared at them until they got into their car. I just can't shake the feeling that something just isn't right. Those two know something – something big. Right after that, it was David and I's queue to leave as well and head to our house. I just couldn't wait. Mama and my sisters had left an hour before. Nonetheless, she never started any drama soon after Ziyanda's stern comment.

Ziyanda Zwane

My husband just dragged me out of there like an animal. Phila never does that to me – ever. He gets really upset, but never grabs me like that. Perhaps I overstepped my mark. As soon as

we got into the car and he reversed out of the gate in high speed, I knew then that it was Mamba talking and not Phila.

Phila: (angrily) “What the fuck, Ziyanda?!”

Ziyanda: (calmly) “Phila, since when do you talk to me like that?”

That time he was driving like a maniac. I hate it when he does that.

Phila: “How many times?! How many times am I supposed to tell you to play it cool, Zee?! Heh (huh)?! You’re going to blow my cover and mess up my chances of becoming Mayor. Is that what you want? Weren’t you the one who told me to take this case on?! Weren’t you?!”

Ziyanda: (softly) “I’m sorry, Phila, but I just couldn’t take that woman’s attitude anymore.”

Phila: “You are used to women trying to belittle you, Zee! Powerful, rich women. I have seen you tell Mafia wives pure shit and now you want to be phased by some fake church woman?!”

Ziyanda: (teary) “Phila...”

Phila: “You told me you’d try to keep calm throughout! Now you’re the one messing things up!”

I couldn’t take the shouting anymore. I just burst into tears and he pulled over from the highway. It is night time, but this dude is not even bothered that he just pulled over in the dark on the side of the highway.

Phila: (deep sigh) “Sthandwa sami (My love), I didn’t mean to shout at you like that. I know you hate it when I shout at you.”

Ziyanda: (crying) “Phila, you just don’t get it. You don’t get it. She is the reason Olona got kidnapped. Did you forget about that?”

Phila: “That’s not fair and you know it. She is also the reason why Sbu is still in a wheelchair right now, did you forget about that?”

I slowly shook my head, while he was gently wiping my tears off my face.

Phila: “Look, I didn’t want to involve you in this investigation in the first place. You know that. I don’t want to endanger your life and the children’s lives, but you practically begged me to be a part of it. I am trying my best and all I am asking you is that you just keep a low profile. We’re very close to nailing them.”

Ziyanda: (frowning) “Them?”

Phila: “Yes, she, David and Jacob.”

Ziyanda: (shaking head) “I told you

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those boys have nothing to do with it.”

Phila: “And what proof do you have, Zee? Because my election is practically in three months time?”

Ziyanda: “I know it. Just give me time and I will get you all the information you need.”

Phila: “Fine, but if you mess up again, I’m taking you off this case.”

Ziyanda: “Deal.”

Phila: “Manje (now), sula inyembezi lezo ucabuze indoda yakho (wipe away those tears and kiss your husband).”

I chuckled and kissed him.

Phila: “Ngiyakuthanda yezwa (I love you, okay)?”

Ziyanda: "I love you too."

Ziphora

David and I got home and immediately hopped into the shower. As always, we had our love making session and I am just getting better by the day. We headed straight to bed and I lay my head on his chest, while we were watching tv.

Ziphora: "Dave, can I ask you something?"

David: "Of course, baby. What is it?"

Ziphora: "Well, your mother was being her usual self when Ziyanda called her this weird name."

David: (chuckling) "Weird name? What kind of name?"

I knew I should have jotted that name down.

Ziphora: “Eish, she called her Hasha – something. Hash... Hashib! Yes, Hashib. That’s it.”

Immediately, his heart was racing like he was running a marathon. His tone had changed and he looked a bit nervous. He remained quiet for some time, until I actually had to stare him in the eye. He looked pale for a second.

Ziphora: “David, what’s going on?”

David: “Nothing.”

Ziphora: “What are you hiding from me?”

David: “What gives you the impression that I am hiding something from you?”

Ziphora: “You look tense. Something is just not right. I can feel it in my bones, David. You promised me – no secrets.”

David: (nervously) “I am not hiding anything, but what I can say is this. If I tell you something that happened to me – something really devastating. Would you still love me?”

Ziphora: “Of course, David. Why else would I judge you for something that happened to you?”

David looked at me and for a second I honestly thought that he would burst and tell me what was really bothering him, but I was wrong. He quickly got up and wore his shorts.

Ziphora: “David.”

David: “I can’t lose you, Ziphora. Some things are better left unsaid.”

He just walked out of our bedroom, leaving me lying right in the bed, numb. I felt so hurt, that tears were streaming down my

face. My own husband does not trust me with a secret that is weighing heavily on him. What if I am married to a serial killer or something? Perhaps I should have waited before marrying him. I guess it is too late now.

A few weeks later...

Life seems to have gotten rather easier but a whole lot busier ever since the twins' baptism. Julia has been nagging David about the lobola proceedings and of course, our wedding. So, we decided to do everything in one weekend. Go big or go home, right? Of course, David did not want to tell me his deepest, darkest secret so, I let it go. We have been normal ever since and I guess married life has been treating me well since everyone around me keep saying I have gained weight and that I am even glowing. Julia has been trying to be nice, well, only when Ziyanda is around. I haven't seen much of Luvo, but her mother does bring the baby to every bloody function. She comes to almost everything of mine, until I told David that I don't like her being around, so he stopped her from coming.

Of course, Julia was not very happy about that little adjustment I made, but then, this is my wedding and I am not about to have anyone mess it up. So, today is my lobola negotiations and then tomorrow is our official wedding – you know, joining the two families together. David being David asked me to choose one destination country where I'd like the wedding to take place. So, I chose Jamaica. I don't really know why I chose that country, but who wouldn't want to get married in the Caribbean soaked with lots and lots of weed, right? Everyone will be flying there with us later tonight, so I am not too worried about that. I have been stuck in my bedroom at Mama's house, while texting to David every few seconds. Charisma and Keo are busy helping Mama and Koko with the preparations, while Faith and Desiree are keeping me company in my bedroom. I mean it is spring already and my goodness, I feel so hot with this blanket wrapped around me. I simply can't deal with this heat, but what can I do? I have been dressed like this from 6am. I feel like Koko did this to punish me, really. Every now and then Desiree and Faith walk out to check what is happening.

Faith: "Yoh, friend. It is serious busy out there. I think I don't want to get married after seeing so much going on."

Ziphora: "O ra jwang (what do you mean)?"

Faith: "I just mean that. You worry too much."

Desiree took out a bottle of wine she had been hiding in her bag, and three wine glasses.

Ziphora: "Really, Des?"

Desiree: "You can stay sober if you wish. Your grandmother is a tyrant!"

She was right, so I opted for a glass. While sipping on it, I was chatting to my David when I suddenly heard some commotion. It sounded like my mother was throwing all kinds of insults one could think of. I know when she does that, only one person can be around. I was about to get out, when Charisma ran straight to my room.

Ziphora: "Sesi (sis), what's happening?"

Charisma: “Eish, ngwana mma (my sister), your father just pitched up – along with his entire entourage.”

Ziphora: (shocked) “Eng (what)?!”

It felt as if I had lost my mind almost immediately. So much could go wrong right now. I mean he wasn't even invited, and now he just came with his entire family. I didn't even allow my sister to block me from walking out of the bedroom. Upon entering the lounge, I saw Mama livid. She had a bread knife in her hand and was trying to stab my father. It feels so weird calling him that. Luckily, my grandfather was trying to stop her from doing so.

Susan: (shouting) “O ntlwaela gampe (you're so full of shit), Frank! O nale sebeta (you have quite the nerve)!”

Ziphora: “What's happening here?!”

The main focus was no longer me walking out of my room before being summoned, but everyone was focused on Frank and his whole family. Indeed, his entire family was there. So, they all decided to pitch up on the most important day of my life and I haven't even met any of them.

Susan: (angrily) "Your so called father is here o re ene o batla share ya gae ya magadi a gago (saying he is demanding his fair share of your lobola). Mptsa ya monnna (a dog of a man)!"

Then I remembered, my dream!

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- "Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Ziphora

I was astounded. Can people really be that selfish? To make a baby and then neglect them basically their entire life and then come back demanding money?!

Ziphora: "Heh (excuse me)?"

Susan: "Ke tsona tseo, ngwanaka (that's the story, my baby). Nkabe ke go bolaile kgale (I should have killed you when I had the chance)!"

A rather older version of my father was standing next to him. He doesn't look old enough to be his father, though. Perhaps brother or cousin.

Uncle: “Kopa re dule re bue ka taba e (may we please sit down and talk about this)?”

Ziphora: (teary) “Papa, after everything you did to me – to us. You still have the nerve to pitch up here and demand money?! How dare you?!”

Uncle: “Mosetsana (Girly), o ska bua jana go rragwe (don’t talk like that to your father).”

Susan: (angrily) “You don’t get to walk into my house and talk to my daughter like that, wena (you) Frans! Ke tla go gobatsa (I’ll hurt you – badly)!”

Uncle: “Look, all we want is just what is rightfully ours. Ngwano o bitsa ka sefane sa rragwe (this child is using her father’s surname).”

Susan: “Would you have rather let me use her my maiden name instead? When she is you brother’s daughter?! Le tletse

masepa lena ba ga Mokoena (you Mokoena's are full of shit)!
Ga le kereye sente (you're not getting a single cent)!."

Koko: "Calm down, le wena Susan. Don't you see you're making it all worse?"

Susan: (livid) "Askies (excuse me)?!"

Koko knew just then to keep quiet. I felt so hurt. While the commotion was carrying on and Mama was arguing with Frank's brother, he just stood there to look at me. He didn't even look remorseful, instead he just kept quiet and kept looking down. I doubt he even knows what shame feels like. All my life he never bothered to even ask me how I was doing or call even just to say happy birthday. I am the one that never received a father's love. I was always unbothered by it all – until now. Keo and Charisma can say a thing or two about him, but I on the other hand don't even know this man. I rushed to my bedroom and locked the door behind me. I could hear my friends and my sisters banging down the door trying to get in, but I just felt an immense feeling of grief. Call me crazy, but it was as if I was grieving for all those years I didn't have a father. I mean, he managed to even raise Dineo, a woman who is the

same age as I am, but failed to even see me once ever since I was born. I just wailed, and I must have forgotten how loud I was crying. I could hear them talking and ranting outside my door, but I was just in my own world for a moment. In a few minutes, David called me, but I didn't answer. I then heard Keo telling me that David would like me to answer my phone. Indeed, he called again and I answered. This time it was a video call.

David: (frowning) "Moratuwa (my love), you have ruined your make-up. What is wrong? Why are you crying?"

Ziphora: (sniffing) "He... he... he was never there, Dave. And now he just barges in here with his entire family demanding money!"

David: "Is that all?"

Ziphora: (frowning) "What do you mean is that all?"

David: “You’re crying because your greedy father walked in there trying to extort you on the most important day of your life?”

Ziphora: (sniffing) “But David, o kare ga o nkutlwe sentle (I don’t think you’re hearing me properly).”

David: “I hear you very well, my love. Money is not an issue. This is the most important day of your life – our life and you are going to allow that idiot to ruin it? Give him whatever he wants, otherwise you won’t have any peace in your life. Remember, his family has never met you and his annoying sisters and aunts will probably make sure ba go tshwara ka pelo (they curse you) til eternity. Imagine having to go back to ask a man who never raised you for forgiveness just so you could bear children. I’m not saying what he is doing is right, but in this case, do it. For us.”

I hate it when David speaks sense. I just hate it.

Ziphora: “This explains my dream.”

David: (frowning) "What dream?"

Ziphora: "Your grandmother visited me again last week."

David: "And you didn't tell me?"

Ziphora: "It slipped my mind."

David: "Hang on, let me get Uncle John to join this conversation."

I nodded and waited for him to call his uncle.

Uncle John: (smiling) "Mma Mosue (Mrs. Mosue)."

Ziphora: (smiling) "Le kae, Ntate (how are you, sir)?"

Uncle John: "I'll be a lot better when I see all those tears dried up. Now, please tell me about your dream."

Ziphora: “I dreamt of David’s grandmother, she came to me in a dream telling me that the least expected people will come to my lobola celebration and I must give them a share; half of whatever is given to my mother as lobola. She said that if I didn’t do it, my father would make life hell for me.”

Uncle John kept quiet for a while, as he was looking down and started speaking again.

Uncle John: (to David) “I told you, she is the chosen one. Ziphora, don’t you worry. I now know what to do. Keep well, pull yourself together. We are on the way.”

I nodded.

David: “I love you, Mma (mrs) Mosue, see you soon.”

I hung up and remembered all the noise right outside my door. I opened the door and found Mama, Keo and Charisma right

there. It seems as if Desiree and Faith were helping with serving our uninvited guests some tea and biscuits.

Susan: (teary) “Oh, my baby. I am so sorry. So sorry, you have to go through this. I didn’t think he’d still have it in him to fight over your lobola like he did with Charisma and Keo. My goodness, I have failed you – all of you.”

She burst into tears and I actually saw my mother become vulnerable. She never cries in front of people – ever. Unless it is actually a dire situation.

Keo: (teary) “Mama, ska lla hle (don’t cry).”

Charisma: “Please.”

Susan: “I have failed as a mother. Your deadbeat father still walks in here like he knows you.”

Ziphora: “Mama, it’s okay, really. I know what to do. Let’s just give them at least half of what they demand. A ke nyake a ntshware ka pelo (I don’t want him to curse me).”

Susan: “Over my dead body!”

Ziphora: “Please, kao kopa (I’m begging you).”

She saw me pleading and she knew that I needed the ceremony to be peaceful.

Susan: “Okay.”

Keo: “We’ll be alright, Zee. You just have to pray. Now let me go call Faith to fix your make-up.”

Susan: “First, let us pray.”

So, Mama led a prayer for us – her daughters. Thank goodness my nagging grandmother was not there with us.

Susan: (praying) “Modimo wa rona yo a rategang (Our loving God), rea go leboga mehleng (we thank you daily). I specifically come before you, oh, lord, hand in hand, with my dear daughters. My own daughters that I have raised all on my own. I have shared their pain their entire lives, and I made sure I give them love, joy and a whole lot of peace. All I ask is that you grant them the life they deserve, oh, lord. Their past does not define them. You have been so merciful and so graceful to me, that you have blessed them all with loving husbands, great careers and a life full of blessings. I ask you that you protect them all, I ask that you bless my Ziphora’s new marriage, I ask that you strengthen Keorapetse’s marriage, but also

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I ask you to finally bless my Charisma with the one thing she desires most – a child. It has been so long and she has her moments, but she has remained forever grateful and obedient to you, lord. I ask that you open many doors for my children, so that one day when I am no longer able to comfort them, they shall be comforted by your love and my prayers for them. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

That was one of my mother's powerful prayers for us. Yes, indeed I saw Charisma shed a tear. I know how long she has been yearning for a child. Ten years of marriage and still no children in sight. Her husband truly loves her, though he spoils her rotten. I truly do hope that she one day receives that blessing. We hardly talk about it because it is such a sensitive topic. It is not nice being asked what she has tried to be able to conceive. Her mother in law has been nothing but evil towards her, but that is a story for another day. Faith indeed fixed my make-up and then it was time for us to wait for David's family. He texted me to let me know that his uncle John, Ntate Moruti and Brother Jacob had finally arrived.

David: "I can't wait to see you in a few minutes, hopefully."

Ziphora: "I just want this to be over."

David: "It will be very soon."

Faith: "Stop texting your man and have another glass of wine."

Ziphora: "I'm so anxious. What are they saying there?"

Desiree: "Let me open the door slightly so we can hear."

Faith: "You do know that a woman is not supposed to know how much her lobola is, right?"

Ziphora: "So much has gone wrong already, so it can't hurt to just keep going, can it?"

She shrug her shoulders. Her, being a diligent Zulu girl, she does things by the book, even though she is quite a party girl.

Desiree opened the door slightly and I could hear what they were saying.

Uncle John: "Thank you to the Mokoena family for meeting us."

Frans: "Of course, it is only a pleasure."

Susan: (calmly) “Just to clarify, by the Mokoena family, they mean us. They don’t know you, so o ska phapha hle Frans (don’t be forward).”

By his silence, he saw my mother’s annoyance. She meant every word and wouldn’t hesitate to show him what she meant.

Uncle John: “Thank you, as I have said. Here is our “vula mlomo”.”

He must have handed my mother, grandmother and grandfather some money and whiskey as an offering to start negotiations.

Grandfather: “What brings the Mosue family here?”

Uncle John: “Re tlile go bane Moshimane wa rona o bile le kgahlego go moradi wa lona (Our son has found an interest in one of your daughters). He’d like to make a wife out of her – officially.”

Frans: (interrupting) “Re utlwile (We heard)! Susan, o nyadisa bjang ngwana a so ntshetswe magadi (How do you marry your daughter off without lobola)?”

Susan: (angered) “Wa itebala neh, (you’re starting to forget yourself) Frans. Ke ga ka mona (this is my house). Akere ngwaneno o paletswe ke go nkagela motse (your brother failed to build a house for me)!”

Uncle John: “Let’s not fight, please.”

Susan: “I agree. I fight when I am provoked. Tswela pele wena (keep going), Frans. And this time, o wela ke mpama (I’ll slap you instead).”

I could hear a moment of silence.

Grandfather: “So, how much did you want to pay for my grand daughter.”

Uncle John: “Well, since we already know her and our son has already married her despite asking for your permission first. We do acknowledge the fault on our part. So, we’d like to pay R250 000.”

Frans: (shocked) “Heh (huh)?! Le nale tshelete mos (you have money, though)! Add another hundred and we’re sorted.”

Susan: (annoyed) “Frank, kgala abuti wa gao (call your brother to order).”

Frank: (softly) “Stop it, please.”

Frans: “Hao (Goodnedss), you called me because you said that Ziphora owes you for bringing her into this world. Bjanong wa baeza (you’re starting to flop).”

Susan: “R250 000 is a bit much, Malome.”

Uncle John: “I have strict instructions to either increase or leave the amount as is. Otherwise, the deal is off, mme.”

Frans: “Nna ke re (I say), add another hundred thousand.”

Susan: (angered) “I gave you guys a chance. I tried to be calm for my daughter’s sake but you have been testing me! Does my daughter look like a cash cow to you?!”

Uncle John: “Mme, please. We’ll give you R250 000 and them R100 000. How is that?”

Susan: “They deserve nothing!”

Frans: “Why do we get such a little amount?”

Uncle John: “According to my knowledge, Mr. Mokoena, you never raised the bride. In fact, you never even introduced her to your ancestors. If I were you, I’d be very happy that you are getting something. Now, we are only doing this for Ziphora’s sake, but on one condition.”

Frans: “What?”

Uncle John: “You have to stay out of her life – for good. You are also not welcome to the wedding. After you receive what you have come for here, you should leave immediately.”

I could hear the displeasure in Frans’ voice.

Frans: “But she is one of us!”

Uncle John: “One of you by blood, unfortunately, but nothing else. Do we have a deal or not?”

I could hear Frans breathing heavily all the way from my bedroom, but it seems as if he nodded because he didn’t say anything further.

Uncle John: “Good, Mme Mokoena, if you don’t mind, I’d like to give these people their half first?”

Susan: (smiling) “With the utmost pleasure. Do go ahead.”

I could hear him counting the money and within about fifteen minutes he was done.

Susan: “Le se kereile se ne le se batla (you have gotten what you came for). Now, ntsweleng ka motse (leave my house).”

I could hear them mumbling under their breath while leaving. The door was closed and I could hear my mother ululating.

Susan: (ululating) “Yah! Modimo wa ka (My God)! My powerful God! O mpereketse (You have done the job for me)! Kea go leboga (I thank you)! Mma weh (Mom), please, go fetch the Mosue bride.”

I heard Koko stand up as she was ululating as well. I gulped my glass of wine and hid it underneath the bed.

Faith: “Vala umnyango wena (Close the door)!”

Desiree: “Eish, sorry. I got carried away.”

I could hear Koko ululating as she opened the door.

Koko: (ululating) “A re ye (let’s go), my baby! O monyadi (You’re a bride) now.”

I smiled as I saw the joy in her face. It was not the most conventional lobola ceremony, but all I am thankful for is that I am now officially David’s wife. I don’t see why he had to pay so much money, though, but who am I to disagree? We finally made our way to the lounge, and I saw no sign of David. I am guessing he is outside. I was about to take a step further, but Koko stopped me.

Koko: “No, baby. You have to wait for his family to come fetch you.”

I nodded and stood there alongside them. She made me kneel onto the floor, while I could hear a group of people ululating. I

saw a group of women I didn't know, but they looked alike. They must be David's family. They were all ululating, singing and had plenty of gifts in their hands, while Julia walked in with a sour face. I could see immediately that she just didn't want to be there. I honestly didn't care. All I wanted was for us to have the smoothest day ever. I can't wait for the future as it begins now, even though I have a funny feeling that trouble awaits. I just hope my destination wedding goes smoothly by God's grace.

“Through love serve one another.”

Ziphora

After my in-laws came bearing gifts, I had to immediately be taken to their home. Thank goodness I left with Koko and Mama alongside my sisters and my two best friends in Charisma’s Hundai H1. She pretty much has everything – except the one thing she really desires in life. I have no doubt that she would be a great parent. We have our moments but I know they’d do absolutely anything for me. We were in the car with my grandfather driving us for a change. Oh, I felt so nostalgic. I know, I haven’t lived with Mama for months now, but this feels like I am being given away and I am going to belong to another man; be part of another family. What’s even worse is that I’ll belong to a family that has the worst Mother-in-law ever. Oh, I don’t know how to feel, but I just feel a bit sad.

Charisma: “So? How do you feel? I know, you have been married for quite some time now, but I know the wedding

jitters. You're thinking about your horrible monster-in-law, aren't you?"

Koko reprimanded us from the front, but Mama drinking her wine was not having any of it. I felt as if she was trying to act brave, I mean her last born is officially getting married. I can't relate, but I feel her.

Koko: (firmly) "Charisma! Stop it."

Susan: "Tlogela ngwana a bue, Mama (Let her talk). Since when do we stop the children from speaking from the heart?"

Koko: "Don't you think you should stop drinking for a while?"

Susan: "I think you should start drinking. I can't believe you're so blinded by your friend. She's evil, but God will protect my baby girl."

Koko: "Yoh (Oh)! Modimo thusa hle (God help us)!"

Susan: “Vele (Of course), He should help us. More especially you. Wena (You), Ziphora, don’t be afraid to tell your husband when that witch starts trouble. And don’t ever be afraid to stand up for yourself. I know I wouldn’t hesitate.”

Ziphora: “O ra bjang (What do you mean), Mama?”

Susan: “If a go tlela ka masepa, o ema eme le wena (If she starts shit, you also need to stand up for yourself). If it comes to this (showing her fist), use it.”

Keo and Charisma laughed so hard, knowing very well that I am the soft one out of the three of us. Keo took right after Mama. She used to fight my battles back in school. Charisma is feisty, but she can insult a person. I have never seen her beat anyone up.

Koko: (sigh) “Susan, weh (please). Don’t poison the child. She isn’t even welcomed into the family yet and already you’re telling her to use her fists. O bjang mara (what kind of a person are you, though)?”

Susan: "I'm honest. Did I ever tell you what I did to Frank's mother?"

I shook my head, but Charisma and Keo died in laughter. They most probably knew the story.

Susan: "E re ke go bollele (Let me tell you). One night I was so distraught, I had even lost weight. I was crying and I went to her, you know, as her daughter-in-law. All these bitches make promises they can't keep on your wedding day."

Koko: "Language!"

Susan: "Mama, ema nyana please (wait a minute). Anyway, I walked in crying and she just looked at me like I was crazy. She asked me why I was crying and I told her that your father was cheating and when I confronted him about it, he hit me. Imagine that, that low-life, creepy motherfucker hit me."

Wow, my mother had always told me about how my father was abusive, but I never thought that she was abused physically. I mean she was even chuckling in between while my sisters were laughing. Faith and Desiree were laughing too. Am I too sensitive? Because wow, I really felt touched by her saying the hit me part.

Susan: "You know what she said?"

I didn't answer, but instead shook my head.

Susan: "She said to me, that I need to woman up. Her exact words were; "o rile o tla kgona akere? Mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bogale. Ikokobetse, girly (you said you'd manage him, didn't you? A woman holds the knife by its' sharp edges). Just because o (you're a) nurse doesn't mean you shouldn't respect your man. He hit you and cheated on you because there is something you're just not doing it right. I have raised three boys and not one of them has hit a woman. You're the first one to complain."

I was dumbstruck. Am I going to get a fucked up speech like that too? I felt my heartbeat race immensely, as I was starting to sweat.

Susan: “Then guess what I did afterwards? I left and walked back to our house. I decided that was the very last day anyone, more especially my mother-in-law would ever bully me. So, I put Charisma and Keo to bed. You weren’t even born yet. I took out a bottle of wine I had hidden because he didn’t want his wife to drink. I decided to fuck everything that night. He was dead to me. I cooked and ensured that I left nothing for him. I ate a very nice piece of steak and I washed the dishes. He found me drinking wine with the bottle half empty. He came home and he was drunk as usual.

He started demanding his plate of food, so I told him that I cooked, but just not for him. He saw the bottle of wine and went crazy, calling me all sorts of names you could ever find in the dictionary. He came closer and lifted his hand, but I was ready. I took the half-empty bottle of wine and I hit him on the head with it. The bottle broke after I had hit him with it several times, but I just wasn’t done. I was crying for all those times he had abused me and I made excuses for him. So, I took one of our pans and I beat him up so badly, his nose was bleeding. I

made sure not to touch his head much, so I aimed for the body. By then, he was so drunk and had fallen down. He tried screaming, but even a baby could wail better.”

Keo and Charisma even my friends were laughing, while I just looked at my mother in disbelief. I thought I knew my mother, but I guess I don't. It must have taken years of hurt to do that.

Susan: “After I was done beating him up, I dragged him out of the house and left him right outside our gate. I locked the house and went to sleep.”

Faith: (laughing) “What happened after that? I mean, did he receive any help?”

Susan: “Most people around our neighbourhood didn't like him much, because he was just annoying and very troublesome whenever he was drunk. A lot of them just thought he got too drunk to even open the gate. He was only sent to the hospital at around 6am in the morning, when one of our neighbours saw him as she was walking to work. That was the very first night I had had a peaceful night's sleep in ages.”

Desiree: "I wonder what his mother said."

Susan: (laughing) "Oh, that old hag? She called me countless times and I only decided to answer the phone at midday. She was yelling at me, telling me that Frank had told her that I beat him up when he was drunk. So, I used her exact words. I said to her, "Mme weh (Mom), o rile o tla kgona go godisa Frank nako eo o mo belega (you said you'd manage the day you gave birth to Frank). Gona jwale a go sa kgonega, o paletswe ke lenyalo (Now it's impossible for me, his marriage is over). I hung up before she could even respond. When Frank saw me enter the ward to fetch him, he was seething with rage, but little did he know that I had come to serve him with a protection order. A few days later, I served him with divorce papers which he refused to sign, up until Zee was 16. He wanted to ensure that he got a very fat settlement of my pension, but then, look at him now. He is worn out and does not have a single dime to his name."

Ziphora: "I'm sure your mother-in-law hated you even more from that day onwards."

Susan: “Quite the opposite, actually. She called me one day when we had moved here and told me that she was ill, dying to be exact. She was begging me to come see her, but I told her I’d come alone. Indeed, I went to see her in the hospital. She was barely hanging onto dear life. She was old, bedridden and most of all – guilt ridden. She confessed everything about Frank and how she knew of all his infidelities. Basically, she asked for my forgiveness and told me that the problem was not me, but it was her. I cried so much that day, it was most probably the very last time I ever cried like that. Even today I still dream of her often, but I am glad she made peace with me before she died.”

Wow, that was a rather moving story. I doubt Julia would ever ask for forgiveness from me. I guess only time will tell, but it seems to me that I’m going to have a very tough time before she actually pretends to like me. We finally made it to the Mosue household. Another car behind us had brought all the food we had to eat for the day, but to my surprise, we had already found a setup with a buffet in the backyard. Mama didn’t have any of that, immediately, she told all our relatives to start taking out the food and placing them wherever they could find space. Julia was deeply annoyed, but I think David put her in her place, for she didn’t even say anything to me. I

was led into the house while David came to walk in right next to me. My Dave was so happy, words can't even explain. He whispered to me while I had to look down.

David: (whispering) "You look beautiful, Mrs. Mosue."

I just smiled as I was not allowed to say anything to him yet. We were dressed in our beautiful custom made traditional Sesotho attire, and man, the house was beautifully decorated. I had to go into the house in order to be given a lengthy speech by David's aunts and women of the family. That is the one thing I am dreading the most. I could see his entire family sitting in that big lounge, along with mine that had just entered. Julia was being quite petty, there weren't enough chairs or couches for my side of the family, but they stood and decided to keep quiet for my sake. I saw one particular woman who stood out for me.

She looked a lot like David's grandmother, the one who visits me in my dreams. She looks a bit old, though, most probably in her 80s or so. She was sitting down with a walking stick right next to her. She was old, but my goodness, she was still a beaut. I could tell she was not from Julia's side of the family,

because she smiled at me the moment I walked in. Julia didn't even stand next to her. She opened her arms for me and I looked at David for a signal. He nodded, so I walked closer to her. She smiled at me so warmly and looked at my face. It was as if she was examining my entire face or something, from wrinkle to wrinkle and even the top of my head.

Woman: (ululating) "Ja (yes)! Ba buille ba ga Mosue (The Mosue's have spoken). Di Tau (The lions), Badimo ba rona (Our ancestors). Adelaide, ngwaneso (my sister), o buile (you have spoken). You, my darling, are the chosen one. You were specifically chosen for David by his ancestors. Your situation is very odd; for your ancestors and his met even before you were married. They had a discussion and came to an agreement after my sister, the late Adelaide whom you always dream about, begged for you to be the chosen one for my dear David. Today, is a great day for the Mosue's. Miracles will occur and you are the one missing puzzle that will endure even the most. Unfortunately, life's obstacles will be thrown your way, but you are strong enough to handle them. You are the calm in David's life, my baby. God will bless you with so much more for what you're going to do for this family. May you restore kindness, truth and selflessness into this family. The ancestors have spoken. Your new name is Relebohile."

I felt so honoured and deeply touched even though I have no idea what she meant exactly by me being the chosen one and all those things. Now I finally know David's grandmother's name. Adelaide. What a beautiful name. I could tell just how envious Julia was. Everyone was ululating, and my mother was just extra. She was so happy and I guess she was allowed to be. I felt my heart jump for the joy by the warmth that David's other grandmother gave me. Thankfully, she was by my side and refused for Julia to give me a speech. In black culture, they call it "go laya ngwana", it simply means that when a woman is getting married, she is given the rules of marriage and lessons on how she is supposed to keep her husband happy.

Woman: "No one is going to give this child any pathetic speech. Wena ngwanake (you my child), you make sure that your husband stays your best friend. You don't involve your mother-in-law in your problems, talk to your father in law instead. Joy is coming, and very soon."

I think she deliberately said that about me not having to speak to Julia about my problems with David. I honestly didn't really care about her. For once, she had someone to keep her on her

toes. We danced and ate and it was a very good day. By 5pm, David had organized the entire family – both mine and his to board the plane. Instead of using his private jet, he hired out an entire business class plane for us all, in order for us to fly to Jamaica. I didn't know money could make someone this happy, but I am just happy that my David would do anything to make me happy. Of course, Luvu and her mother were nowhere to be seen during the traditional wedding and thank goodness, they didn't come with us to Jamaica. I have nothing against Luvu, but I just want a drama free wedding weekend.

The press wanted to cover our wedding, of course and Ziyanda and Phila couldn't be there as they were preparing for his election campaign, but we had a great time. Instead of the media coming to take pictures and bombard our special day, David had someone stream our wedding live. It was a great feeling having to experience my wedding all over again, but with all my loved ones around. I even completely forgot about Frank gate crashing my lobola ceremony. We indeed had a great time and whenever Julia tried talking to us, we managed to just go away and explore the best weed in Jamaica. I couldn't even understand why I felt so extremely tired when we had to fly back after the wedding.

I just felt so nauseated by everything and anything. People's colognes and perfumes were just giving me a splitting headache. I thought it was the alcohol, but I didn't even drink that much. I just decided to sleep the entire flight through. Even when we landed back in Johannesburg, I still felt so queezy and really tired. Once we landed and I could smell fresh air, I just couldn't hold it in anymore. I walked right out and vomited right in the middle of the crowd. It really isn't one of my proudest moments. I thought David would be embarrassed, but the idiot looked at me smiling.

David: (smiling) "Here, drink some water. You just need to rest."

Koko: "Ai (Oh), Zee. Niphuza kakhulu (you drink too much)."

Susan: "Jah, neh (oh, yes). David, stop overworking my daughter in the bedroom without protection. You'll bless us too early."

She just said that and walked away. My mother sure knows just how to embarrass me. Really, mother? I just felt so sick

from there onwards. Even in the H1, I just didn't want to do anything. Everything and everyone just irritated me. David was fussing over me, the music seemed too loud, my stomach felt like I had eaten some horrible rotten fish and I just felt like a bus had rode over me. I just wanted to get home.

David: "Would you like to pop by my mother's house first?"

Ziphora: "I'd like to get home, if you don't mind."

David: (smiling) "Of course."

I just couldn't wait for everyone to be dropped off. Thank goodness Dave and I were the very last ones to be dropped off, so we had some sort of peace on the ride home.

David: (smiling) "I love you, you know that?"

Ziphora: "Ai, David. I just feel like complete shit right now."

David: (chuckling) “I know just the cure. Wait til we get home.”

As soon as I headed home, I just rushed to the toilet and vomited once again. I got into the shower and didn't even bother to listen to what David said. I felt a bit better with the cold water running over my body. Once I got out, I could smell the gorgeous aroma of food, and David was not there. So, I decided to dig in, but I didn't touch the eggs. They just didn't smell right for me. David walked in looking very morbid.

Ziphora: (frowning) “Dave, what's wrong? What is it?”

David: “That was my mother. Apparently Luvo is dead. She was found hanging in her bedroom at home. She committed suicide and fed Junior poison. He's currently in ICU as we speak.”

What a huge blow for us. Just when I thought that life could turn out really good for us, this happens. I feel like shit now for leaving her behind. Perhaps the trip would have done her well. This was the beginning of a horrible whirlwind for us all. Little did I know that Luvo would always be part of our lives – even in death.

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- “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is in the head, into Christ.”

Ziphora

What a way to remember my wedding weekend. Luvo committed suicide right after we came back. It just doesn't make any sense, though. I mean, yes, she looked a bit depressed, but suicide? There are cameras in the house, so has David said and what I can't seem to understand is why she didn't eat the poison as well if she really did feed the baby some poison. Oh, my goodness. So many what ifs are going through my head.

Ziphora: (shocked) “O ra bjang (What do you mean)?”

David: “Exactly that. Get dressed. We have to get to the hospital.”

Okay, perhaps my husband feels a sense of responsibility towards Luvo because he was her mentor, but I am drained and I really don't feel well. Yet, I have to get dressed and go to the hospital. I just don't get this. I got dressed reluctantly, because David just didn't seem to be taking no for an answer. It was as if something in him had changed – like he just went blank for a few moments. I don't understand, but this feels like it really hits home for him. He loves children, I totally get that, but this – oh, honey, it feels way too personal. I didn't even bother to wear a cute outfit, but instead, I just put on basic jeans and a simple Tshirt with a pair of sneakers. My hair had grown a little bit into a mini curly afro, and it was still wet, so, I just didn't bother drying it. From the moment we walked out to the long drive to the hospital, David did not say a single word. I even tried to switch on the radio, but he stopped me.

David: (firmly) "Leave it."

He was so cold, I have never seen him like that. I could see him vigilantly staring at the road ahead, but it was as if his soul just was not present.

Ziphora: "Are you okay?"

David: "No."

He just kept his answers as brief as possible, so I didn't want to bother him any further. I just stared out the window and before I knew it, we had arrived. He walked out and I sat in the car, expecting him to open my door for me as always, but he was standing right in front of the lift, staring at me with wonder. I looked through the window and he said the most bizarre thing to me.

David: "Aren't you coming?"

What the fuck was happening? This is not my David. No ways. I slowly opened my door with an achy heart, and walked ahead. The lift door opened and he walked in without letting me walk in first, as he usually does. Does this mean that our honeymoon phase is already over before it has even begun? The lift ride was so tense, I could have heard a needle drop to the floor. We arrived at the ward and to my surprise we saw Luvo's mother crying her eyeballs out along with Jeannette and Jacob. There was no sign of Uncle John, Julia nor Ntate Moruti. They must be handling the situation with Luvo's

body hanging from the ceiling in their house. Mma Moruti must be hysterical. I greeted them, and as understood, Luvo's mother didn't respond as she was just wailing, but Jacob greeted me with a smile. Jeannette on the other hand, was just oddly cold towards me. I could barely hear her greeting. If it were another case, I'd say that she was devastated by the situation at hand, but no, her anger seemed directed at me, because when David greeted, she smiled at him with no effort whatsoever. What on earth did I do now? I just sat down next to the morbid David.

David: "How is he doing?"

Jacob: (shaking head) "It doesn't look too good. The nurses say he was barely responsive when he got here."

Jeannette: "I mean, he is barely even two months old."

Ziphora: "Who is the Doctor in charge?"

Once again Jeannette looked at me with disgust, while Jacob answered.

Jacob: "Dr. Nhlapo. She said she'd be back in a moment."

David: "I can't wait that long. I have to see him."

David and Jacob looked at each other and I could tell only they both knew what they meant. Jacob nodded and stood up.

Jacob: "Come."

David: "I'll be right back."

That was the very first proper sentence he has said to me ever since we got up this morning. I just smiled briefly at him as he walked away. I looked at Jeannette who just looked at me with utter disgust each time her eyes looked up.

Ziphora: "Did I do something wrong?"

Jeannette: (snappy) “I don’t know, did you?”

Okay, petty aren’t we?

Ziphora: “I don’t understand, Jeannette. I mean, we’re both adults, aren’t we? If I have done something to offend you, don’t you think it would be better for you to speak to me about it than to act in such a childish manner?”

Jeannette: (angrily) “Childish?! Are you serious right now?! You just had to worm your way into this family and be the golden wife, didn’t you?! I mean, you get all the attention now and my own children don’t even get the attention they used to anymore! You were given a name the very same day as your lobola celebration, while I had to wait months. You must always receive everything, don’t you?!”

Okay, wow. I honestly didn’t expect that. I really thought that Jeannette and I were vibing, but clearly I was wrong. I was rather shocked and a bit hurt for her to say such things to me. I didn’t even force anyone to give me a name. So

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I decided to be passive about it and just keep quiet. I could feel her rage seething all the way through her from across the room. I decided to go to my WhatsApp, and Ziyanda was online.

Ziyanda: “Hey, honey. I’m sorry I couldn’t make it to your wedding, but I do hope you got my gift.”

Ziphora: “Yes, I did, thank you.”

Ziyanda: “You sound a bit down, what’s up?”

Ziphora: “Ag, my sister-in-law is just behaving really funny towards me and besides, Luvo just committed suicide and we’re at the hospital waiting to hear what the status is regarding the baby. Apparently she fed the baby poison.”

Ziyanda was in such disbelief.

Ziyanda: “OMG, where are you? Are you still at the hospital? Which hospital, though?”

Ziphora: “Wilgers.”

Ziyanda: “I’m also here checking on my mother-in-law. I’m on the top floor, I’ll be there in a moment.”

It is rather odd that she is always around wherever I am, but perhaps it is just a coincidence. A few minutes later, she did come to the ward. I was so glad to see her, to be honest. She hugged me instantly the moment she arrived. She greeted Jeannette and Luvo’s mother, and Jeannette just gave her a very cold “hi” back.

Ziyanda: (frowning) “How are you doing?”

Ziphora: “Honestly, I’ve had better days.”

Ziyanda: (surprised) “Despite everything, I thought you’d be pleased to be married.”

Ziphora: “Yes, I am, but I just am not feeling well. I mean ever since we got up today, I have just felt like shit. I even vomited a few times.”

I could tell Jeannette was starting to show a bit of interest in our conversation, but I just decided to treat her the way she treated me.

Jeannette: (shocked) “What do you mean you have been vomiting?”

I completely ignored her and decided to speak softer to Ziyanda.

Ziphora: “I just woke up feeling like complete shit, you know. It was almost as if a bus had drove over me. I’m still tired and I still feel like I just ate something weird, but I took a cold shower and David made me some food the moment I arrived home.”

Ziyanda looked at me with such amusement.

Ziphora: (frowning) “What is it?”

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Are you even serious right now, Ziphora? As a doctor do you not get what could be wrong with you?”

I shook my head since I felt seriously lost. Jeannette got up and walked away, huffing and puffing like someone stole her snacks. Luvo’s mother was crying and I was not close to her, so I didn’t want to comfort her and have her spew the nonsense she did the other day when I tried to comfort Junior.

Ziphora: “I honestly don’t know.”

Ziyanda: “You work here, right?”

I nodded.

Ziyanda: “Where is your office?”

Ziphora: "On the 7th floor."

Ziyanda: "Let's take a walk."

I got up and went up the lift with her to my office. David was most probably still busy with the baby and Jacob, but I was sure that he would call me or something once he was done. Ziyanda and I arrived at my office and she immediately closed the door.

Ziphora: (frowning) "What is it?"

Ziyanda: "Where is your mirror?"

Ziphora: "Right in the change room."

Ziyanda: "Come."

She pulled me towards the change room, and took my top off. I felt a bit awkward, I mean I don't even get naked in front of my own sisters.

Ziyanda: "Take off your bra."

I looked at her frowning.

Ziyanda: "Relax, I won't do anything bad to you. After all, I am no lesbian, rest assured."

I was still confused, but I went with it. I slowly took off my bra and just stared in the mirror as she told me to.

Ziyanda: "I want you to take a good look at yourself in the mirror right now. What do you see?"

Ziphora: "I see my nervous self, naked in front of another woman."

Ziyanda: (laughing) "Honestly, Dr. Ziphora Mosue, what do you see? Feel your breasts, and take a good look at them. Take a

look at your stomach, and tell me what you see. Look closely at your face and tell me what you see?”

I examined my body as she told me to, but I was still confused. I could see that I had gained a little bit of weight. I have been bloated for a while and my breasts seem a little bit fuller. It must be PMS – oh, my goodness. I gasped in shock.

Ziyanda: “Yes?”

I had a moment of silence to myself after the shocking realization I had just made. I started counting my fingers all the way to two months ago.

Ziphora: (screaming) “Shit!”

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Uh-huh. You, my dear, are pregnant.”

Ziphora: “What?! No, Ziyanda, this can’t be! I mean it is so soon and his mother will think that I deliberately married him because I wanted to trap him. Oh, no! What do I even tell

David? People will think we got married because I fell pregnant. How stupid was I to even have sex without protection?!”

I felt so incredibly overwhelmed, that I just burst into tears.

Ziyanda: “Hey, don’t do that to yourself. It is just the hormones talking, I mean, surely you and David would be delighted to have a child of your own.”

Would we? I don’t know for sure. I am just so confused and just totally overwhelmed.

Ziyanda: “Look, take a few pregnancy tests from here and then you will take them at home. This moment is very important and it is even more important that you get to share it with him first.”

I guess she was right. I was so glad she was there, otherwise I would have just burst into tears. I got dressed, took a few pregnancy tests, three to be exact.

Ziphora: "I don't have a bag with me."

Ziyanda: "I'll put them in mine and you can take them just before you go back home. Don't worry, I got you."

Ziphora: "Thank you so much, Ziyanda. I honestly don't know what I'd do without you."

Ziyanda: "You don't have to thank me, that's what friends are for."

I guess I have known her for quite some time – long enough to call her my friend.

Ziyanda: "By the way, what's up with your sister-in-law?"

Ziphora: "Oh, that one."

I explained everything to her as we walked back down to the NICU.

“For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?”

David

I can't believe how wrong things have gotten in just a matter of a few months. I never meant for any of this to happen. How was I going to even bond with a child I never intended on having? A child I conceived under duress while drugged? How do I even tell my wife that? How do I even make peace with that fact and how do I get Luvo to forgive me now that she is gone? I have failed her, I have failed Junior. I feel so empty, so helpless. I walked into that room and saw Junior's tiny body connected to all sorts of tubes. This poor boy. He is innocent in all this, and now, because of me, he is fighting for his life before it has even begun. I never even took the time to even look at him, and my goodness, he really does look like me. I will never be able to do right by him because of how guilt-ridden I am. I held his tiny hand for the very first time and felt so much disgrace. I have failed my own son – my first born son. Scorching hot tears burned my cheeks as they forced their way out of my eyes. I don't know what to do.

David: (crying) “Junior, ngwanaka (my son), I have failed you. Please, forgive me and fight. Fight, son. Fight so that I can make up for everything and give you the life you deserve. I may have failed your mother, but I won’t allow myself to fail you too – not again.”

I don’t even know what happened, but as soon as I stopped speaking, I heard a whole lot of beeping sounds from his machine. His body was shaking as if he was having a seizure. The nurses rushed towards him as well as the doctors.

Doctor: “Sorry, sir. You’ll have to step outside.”

I found myself crying right in Jacob’s arms, as he consoled me. I am not one to cry, but today, I have reached my wit’s end.

Jacob: “It’s okay, brother. He is going to pull through. You just have to have faith.”

David: (shaking head) "I don't think he is going to be alright, Jacob. I really don't think so."

Jacob: "Have faith, please."

David: "What do I tell my wife?"

Jacob: "The truth. Ultimately, it will be painful to start, but once the truth is out, you yourself will be a lot less stressed. I can assure you."

We sat right outside the ward, but as soon as the doctor came, I could see her face. I can read faces very well and I just knew that it was not good news.

David: (anxious) "Doctor, please, tell me he is going to be alright?"

Dr.: (shaking head) "I'm afraid it is bad news, sir. I'm sorry, but your son is gone. We tried everything, but the poison had already ate through most of his organs."

It felt like I was living in a horrific dream that just didn't want to end. Everything she had said from that point onwards, I just couldn't hear.

Jacob: "David? Did you hear anything she just said?"

David: "I have to breathe. Please, take Zee home."

Jacob: "Where are you going?"

David: "Somewhere where I won't have to think about all this pain."

Jacob: "David, don't do this – please."

Everything everyone said to me from that point onwards fell onto deaf ears. I found myself marching right out of the ward. I saw Ziphora calling my name, but I just wasn't hearing her. I walked right into the lift and didn't bother to look at any of

them. I had one goal and only one goal in mind, to get rid of all my problems – even if it was just going to be temporary.

Ziphora

I was talking to Ziyanda and catching up a little bit, when David just walked past us like a maniac. He didn't even respond to me calling him, but instead he just stormed right into the lift and walked away. I have never been so confused in my entire life.

Who does that

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though? Perhaps I am dreaming. I felt so heartbroken, I didn't know whether I should cry or not.

Jacob: "Ziphora, Jeannette and I will take you home."

I am guessing he either feels pity for me, or David told him to do so.

Jeannette: (annoyed) "Why do we have to take her home?!"

I could sense the annoyance in her voice. I was honestly speechless.

Ziyanda: "It's alright. I'll take her home."

Jacob: "I couldn't bother you like that, Ziyanda. Besides, she is my brother's wife. He'd never forgive me if something happened to her."

Ziyanda: "It's honestly okay, Jacob. I'm a very careful driver. My husband keeps tabs on me everytime and besides, your wife is really not happy about your suggestion."

I could tell how embarrassed Jacob was due to his wife's untimely outburst.

Jacob: (shyly) "I think she must be tired. Please, forgive her."

He said that last statement as he gave her a stern stare.

Jacob: "As soon as you get home, please do call me, Ziphora."

I just nodded.

Jacob: "Once again, thank you, Ziyanda."

Ziyanda: (smiling) "Don't mention it. I'll see you around."

Ziyanda held me by my hand and walked away with me. Once we parted ways with Jacob and Jeannette in the parking lot, Ziyanda started consoling me.

Ziyanda: "The nerve of that woman. The way I hate women who don't see the need to stand together. I can't stand such. Who does she think she is?"

I remained silent, forcing the tears to remain right where they are.

Ziyanda: “Ziphora, don’t do this to yourself. Do not under any circumstances beat yourself up about this. David is going through a lot. The baby just died.”

Ziphora: (teary) “Why is he behaving like he has just lost his own child?”

She kept quiet for a while. Silence is loud, as my mother always says.

Ziyanda: “Look, men are different. They deal with pain very differently. Give him time and he will come and tell you why he did what he did. Once you are both calm, you can express your views and let him know that you do not approve of him walking out on you – no matter what. It takes years of practise and good communication to get to the stage where Phila and I are. Even now, our marriage is not perfect whatsoever. Everything takes time, but believe me everything that is worth fighting for, doesn’t come easily. Take heed in the verse from Joshua 1:9 – “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. All I say is learn to be resilient even when you feel you can’t carry on anymore.”

I could hear her, but I just couldn't comprehend what she was saying at that moment. I just felt too hurt, but I understood where she was coming from. She drove off as I wandered deep in thought.

David

I just can't take it anymore. I feel so much pain within myself. I feel as if I have failed my own son. What do I tell Ziphora? Luvo killed herself because of me. I've never felt like such a loser before. I have failed as a father even before I could actually be one. What kind of a man am I? At times I wish God had taken me when I had asked him to many years ago. I feel so worthless, so helpless. I feel even worse for what I am doing to Ziphora. I am a liar of a husband, and now I am about to commit my very first sin against her ever since we got married. I got into my car immediately and shut down everything that was happening towards and around me. I drove to the only place I knew I'd find solace. I swiped my access card. I can't believe I still have it. The gate opened almost immediately. I sat in my car for a few minutes before walking out. While I was

about to open my car door, I heard a very scary yet familiar voice.

Grandma Adelaide: (furious) “David! O batla eng mo (What are you doing here)?! O itebetse gore o nyetse jwale (Have you forgotten that you're married now)?”

David: (panicky) “Koko (Granny)? Is that you?”

Grandma Adelaide: “Is that you ya masepa (shit)! O batla go kwatisa badimo (do you want to anger your ancestors)?”

David: “Aowa, nkgono (No, granny).”

Granda Adelaide: “Then do what is right. Get in your car and head back home. The next time you find yourself in this mess, I won't be here. You don't want to anger your wife's ancestors when I vouched for you. Grow up, ngwanake (my child). Face your fears and confide in your wife. She has some life changing news awaiting you. Go home now, before you face the wrath of her ancestors.”

David: (ashamedly) “Yes, grandmother.”

Grandma Adelaide: “Next time, think twice before you mess with your chosen one. You won't like the outcome.”

With that said, she just left me. Her entire spirit just left me. I saw Nova open the door and wave at me. I contemplated going out, believe me I did, but then I decided that my wife matters to me most. I am going through a rollercoaster of emotions right now and it is high time I tell my wife what actually happened to me.

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“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.”

John17:17 - “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

Julia Mosue

I couldn't believe my eyes the moment I walked into Luvu's bedroom. Fucking hell! I curse the day I brought this girl and her trashy mother into my life. I only let David fuck her so that she bear me a child, besides, she was a virgin. I couldn't have a harlot bear me my first grandchild. Since David thinks he is clever now, I decided long ago that I'd find him a replacement. He was and will always be the one for me. How dare he leave me hanging like that. I am very fortunate that my stupid husband never walks into people's bedrooms, because what I saw was horrific and beyond. I walked in and saw Luvu holding a few remains of rat poison in her hand. I saw little Junior barely moving on the bed, with foam coming out of his mouth.

Julia: (shocked) “Luvo! What the fuck do you think you’re doing?!”

Luvo: “I’m doing what I should have done a long time ago. I’m ending the curse you created. I refuse to let my child become a pawn in your sick game.”

I became so infuriated. I rushed towards Juior and felt a weak pulse. I placed him on his tummy so that he wouldn’t choke on his foam. I didn’t even care about Luvo, but once I turned my head I saw her already swallowing the poison, so I became angry.

Julia: (angered) “No one messes with Julia Mosue and gets away with it! You took the very last chance I had to another David and you killed it?! “

I did what I felt was right and I still don’t regret it. I doubt I ever will anyway. I took one of the ropes of the curtains, I got on top of a chair and punched a hole in the ceiling. I grabbed her by the throat, and wrapped the roped around her neck, tightly. I made sure that it looked as if she did it and I let her

hang from the ceiling. She didn't even contest, I mean the poison was already chowing her entire intestines in any case. I left her there and decided to call for help. Baby junior can still be helped.

Julia: (screaming) "Mac! Jacob! Thusang (Help)!"

They came rushing into the room and saw the horror before their eyes. Jacob rushed to Junior's aid, while Mac called the ambulance. She was too useless to save, but I could at least try to save Junior. I had to pretend to be hysterical, otherwise it would just be suspicious.

Jacob: "Ma, the ambulance is here. I'm going with them."

Jeannette: "I'll go with you. Can you check on the babies while we're gone, Ma?"

Julia: "Of course, dear."

I don't know what Jacob sees in that stupid girl. She does everything and anything he says.

Mac: "I just called her mother. She's hysterical. Julia, come. You can't sit in this room with that girl's body hanging from the ceiling like that."

Julia: (crying) "I just blame myself, Mac."

Mac: "I know, but it is really not your fault."

Julia: "Can I just have a minute? I'll be down soon, I promise."

Mac: (nodding) "Okay."

As soon as my stupid husband walked out, I couldn't even be bothered with that stupid bitch's body hanging from the ceiling. My main aim was to search the room for any concrete evidence. For all I know, she could have written a suicide note with everything in it - I mean EVERYTHING. I know, she is not that smart and indeed while I was searching for the letter, I found it right underneath the bed. It must have fallen off or

something. I quickly took it and put it in my bra. I quickly took her notebook and her pen and headed straight to my room. I locked the door and sat right on the bed. I had to construct the perfect letter, especially after the bullshit she wrote in her actual letter. How dare she try and expose me like that? Thanks to her stupidity, she will never live to see another day. I may not be perfect, but I know God still favours me.

Julia: (chuckling) “Rest in peace, dear Luvo, you have been nothing but a real pain ever since I met you.”

Ziphora

What an odd day this has been. I can't believe that I am all alone in my bed right now instead of enjoying my honeymoon phase with my husband. Thank goodness Ziyanda dropped me off instead of Jacob and his weird wife. It is bad enough she treated me like trash today, I can't imagine what would have transpired had they dropped me off. Ziyanda is such a darling for someone I have only met a few weeks ago. She even wanted to stay over just until David comes back home, but I couldn't expect that from her. She is also a wife and mother. I can't do her like that. Instead, I headed straight to the

bathroom the minute I walked in and I took out the four pregnancy tests I took home with me from my office. I sat on the toilet seat for quite some time contemplating a million scenarios. So many what if's were spiraling out of control in my thoughts. I mean, with what David actually did today, am I even ready to welcome his child into this world? Am I even ready to welcome any child into this world at all? Now I totally understand how my clients feel when they tell me the story of how they first found out they were pregnant. Most of them say they were horrified, but overall, they adjusted to the news a few weeks later. It is always the younger clients who have a hard time with the news of their unplanned and unexpected pregnancies – no matter their marital status or financial status. Oh, well, I guess it is now or never. I headed down to the kitchen to get one of the polystyrene cups that we seldomly use, and I headed back to the bathroom. I wanted to dip all four of those tests in the urine at once, so I urinated in the cup and dipped them in the cup one after the other. I emptied the contents of the cup, and flushed

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and then I got rid of the cup. I washed my hands and sat back down on the toilet seat, while I thought of everything. How could I have missed all the signs? I mean I never really got any nausea up until this morning when we were packing our backs

and preparing to leave Jamaica. I guess we can't see everything. I anxiously stared at the time on my phone, while contemplating texting my mother. At this point, she is the one who can console me and let me know that everything will genuinely be alright. No one can put my heart at ease the way my mother can. I logged into WhatsApp, and saw that she was online. I contemplated typing the perfect words, while erasing back and forth. Then, I saw her typing and my stomach felt as if it was in an instant knot. I don't even know why I feel so nervous when she hasn't said anything. I guess my mother has that effect on me.

Susan: "Out with it."

My heart started beating way too fast.

Ziphora: "What are you on about, mama?"

Susan: “You have been typing for over 5 minutes now. You never type a sentence that long unless you are in deep thoughts. Out with it.”

I chuckled nervously on my own, while I checked the time. It is about 22:45 and a bit way past her bed time.

Ziphora: “It’s alright. You have to go to work tomorrow, I don’t want to bother you with anything silly. Goodnight.”

I logged out and thought that she would leave it at that, but as usual, she didn’t. She called me right away instead. I answered nervously.

Susan: “I know.”

Ziphora: (nervously) “Mama?”

Susan: “I know what you want to tell me.”

Ziphora: (nervously) "I don't know what you mean."

Susan: (laughing) "You think I'm stupid, neh (hey)? I know you're pregnant, Ziphora. I have known all along."

My heart started beating so fast, that words failed me tremendously.

Susan: "I know, you're dumbstruck, but in all honesty, what did you expect from having raw sex every day without a condom? Pipi ga e rote jelly, ngwanaka (a penis does not ejaculate jelly, my child)."

I just had to burst out in laughter right there and then. Did she really have to, though?

Susan: "I was just waiting for you to tell me."

Ziphora: "To be honest, I didn't realize it yet until Ziyanda told me to get checked today. So, I am waiting for my results as we speak."

Susan: “It’s honestly understandable. Most people expect doctors and even nurses to be able to see the signs when they are pregnant, but I hardly noticed with either of you three. So, di results di reng (what are the results)?”

Ziphora: (panicky) “I am afraid to check, Mama.”

Susan: “O tshaba go fihla neng (You are going to be scared until when), Zee? You’re no longer a little girl, you are a married woman now. You have to take the bull by the horns almost everyday, you have to be your husband’s pillar of strength when he can’t do that for himself or either for you. You are my daughter and I most certainly didn’t raise you to be a weakling. Now get up off that seat and go check those results.”

She had a point, no matter how I was aching to hear her softspokenness. I got up slowly and just from a mere distance I saw two lines – on all four of them. It was so clear that none of them had any faint lines. I felt an immense surge of tears building up from the pit of my stomach. I felt as if my throat was closing in on me.

Susan: (anxious) “And?”

Ziphora: “I... It’s... You’re right. I’m pregnant.”

I had mixed emotions, while I could hear my mother ululating over the phone. I don’t even know how to feel.

Susan: (excited) “My baby, Modimo a go lakaletse mahlatsi le mahlohonolo (May God grant you many more blessings and grace).”

I suddenly heard the door open from downstairs. That must be David.

Ziphora: “Ma, I have to go. I’ll call you right after I am done speaking to David.”

Susan: “Okay, my baby. I’ll be waiting.”

I quickly hung up and hid the pregnancy tests in the towel cupboard. We hardly open it because I hate using new towels. I walked out of the bathroom and he looked like a disaster on steroids. He didn't greet me, but instead he sat down on the edge of the bed and looked down. He buried his head in his hands.

Ziphora: "Hey."

David: (softly) "Come, sit."

I went to sit next to him as he held my hand. I could sense his nervousness as he was even shaking.

Ziphora: "What's wrong?"

David: (deep sigh) "There is something I have to tell you."

Those words are not the most pleasant words anyone wants to hear.

Ziphora: "I'm all ears."

David: (sigh) "Zee, I don't even know where to start, but before I start, please tell me that you won't judge me or leave me, please."

He looked me with a huge sense of pleading. His eyes were filled with tears and the moment he blinked, they fell down uncontrollably. The more I remained silent, the more his hands kept shaking.

Ziphora: (nervously) "I promise."

I don't know, but if I most probably hadn't reassured me, he wouldn't have told me. Nothing prepared me for what I was about to hear.

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“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.”

Ziphora

I sat next to him with my palm sweating profusely in his. I think what he has to tell me goes way deeper than what I have in mind. Oh, God, please don't let him leave me. Not now at least.

Ziphora: “I reassure you, David, I won't judge you nor will I leave you.”

David: (nodding silently) “Let me start from the beginning. I didn't always grow up in such a seemingly normal family. I am pretty sure you have noticed my mother's overbearing behaviour – especially towards me.”

I just nodded in silence, while listening attentively.

David: "It all started when I was four. Many people don't recall what happened to them at that age, but I remember everything; from what she wore to what I wore. Father had taken Jacob out, while I was left behind at home because I had flu. Mama wanted to ensure that I was completely healed, since it was a bit chilly that day. I was a child, Zee. She... She fed me my food, even though I was more than capable of feeding myself. She always used to say that I was so special to her and that I had gone through the most with her, apart from Jacob. If I didn't know better then, I'd say she favoured me more than she did Jacob. I remember watching her pour herself a generously large glass of red wine. She looked at me and asked, "Do you want some, Davey?" Before I could even answer, she said, "Of course you do", and she poured some for me in my cup. I had my own special cup and so did Jacob, but I don't recall a day where she fussed over Jacob as much as she did over me. As obedient as I was, I drank that wine and it went down quite well. She poured a bit more for me, but I refused. She forced me to take it, but I cried and she immediately apologized. She would always say, "you belong to me, Davey. You always have and you always will." Later on, Jacob and Papa came back, and she put me in bed because I dozed off a little. That wine most probably had its effect on me. An entire four year old. She put me to bed, read me a story as usual, while putting me in her lap. I had stopped breast feeding a long time ago, but she

would take out her breast and forcefully put it in my mouth. She said it calmed me down as she read me a bed time story, but she could occasionally moan while I sucked on her nipples. I didn't realize that at first, up until I started going to therapy. She would always kiss me longer than usual, but only at night whenever she would read me a bed time story. She then left. I dozed off, but I was woken up in the middle of the night when I felt someone touch me. I felt a bit scared and I quickly turned on the light. There she was – my very own mother; stark naked, right on top of me in my very own bed.”

I was too horrified to even speak or question him. The further he went into describing the horrific details, the shakier his voice became, but the tears kept flowing.

David: “My pants and underwear were off. She was smiling at me while I stared at her in a very shocked manner. I was too afraid to even ask what the fuck she was doing. I recall her words very well. “Relax, Davey. It's going to be alright. I wanted to wait til you got a bit older, just like my father did with me, but I just can't help it. I promise, I will make you feel good if you promise me to always remain my Davey.” I had no idea what to say; how do you even explain to anyone that your own mother started giving you a hand job when you were four? What is

even more disturbing is that I got an erection. She kept going while she was moaning and I was staring at her in a deep state of shock. Oddly, I ejaculated. I was still very scared and confused. What confused me even more is that I kind of liked it. She kissed me, passionately and dressed me again. Then she said; “Goodnight, Davey. I’ll see you in the morning.” That was my very first sexual encounter with my very own mother. I never managed to tell anyone – not even my own father, until this day. The only person who knows what happened to me is Jacob, but he only found out because of what happened to him.”

I was so shocked – beyond words. Just when I thought he was done, he continued.

David: “It all continued until I was about 18. I would always ensure that Jacob sleep with me, from when I was about 10. She would give me oral sex and force me to perform on her. Despite my therapy sessions, she then moved onto penetration. How the fuck do you even tell anyone that your very first everything was with your own mother? I can’t even phathom that, I can’t even stomach the thought – even now. Things became worse when I was 16 and she fell pregnant with my

child. Imagine that. She had an abortion, of course – long before my father knew about it.”

I felt as if I was being suffocated by everything I was hearing. I kept blinking as hard as I could just to check if I wasn't dreaming at all.

David: “That is just to summarize everything, you know, the highlights. I can never let you into my entire dark world like that. You'd never look at me the same ever again.”

Ziphora: “I see.”

David: “That's not all.”

I looked at him wide-eyed while awaiting more shock.

David: “There's something you need to know about Luvo. I didn't want to tell you for obvious reasons – the main one being that I was afraid you would leave me. I should have told you, I should have been honest with you from the get go. But

then, regret is nothing but a haunting emotion. I stopped my mother from treating me like trash; like a fucking sex object when I was 18. She made sure never to touch me ever again, after I beat her up one night. I am not proud of it, but what was I to do? After numerous and countless therapy sessions I decided to forgive her

you know. I honestly believed that we could move on. I tried so many things to numb my pain, Zee. From alcohol and I nearly turned to drugs, to even being promiscuous. I literally tried it all, but nothing came to my rescue. One day, I found her sitting in our lounge with Luvo and her mother. I obviously noticed her because she was one of my beneficiaries. My foundation helps young girls mainly to study overseas and become the best they could ever be. Believe me, Luvo was beautiful and intelligent. Not once did I ever think of her in a sexual manner – not even once. My own mother proposed something extremely atrocious that evening. She asked me to impregnate Luvo and then she would give me my blessing and allow me to live freely with another woman. Believe me, I was tempted to do that, but why would I use another innocent girl for my own personal freedom? I refused right there and then, but the poor girl was already brainwashed. I refused and left them. Luvo and her mother became frequent visitors in the house. It is only one particular night when I came home extremely exhausted. We had just had a family dinner, and I had literally half a glass of

wine. I retreated to my bedroom and I felt really drowsy. I was dead asleep until I woke up in the middle of the night, with Luvo grinding on top of me. Can you fucking believe it?! An entire 18 year old having sex with a semi-conscious man. I struggled to move, I felt so paralyzed and my head was so heavy. To make matters worse, my own mother and Luvo's mother were right there in the room, watching. I was a bit drowsy, but I could hear them. My mother was instructing Luvo on what to do. Who does that?!"

I felt my pulse race the instant he said that. Please, let it not be what I think it is.

David: (teary) "I had been in and out of consciousness throughout the entire night. I woke up the next morning and I suddenly had flash backs of everything that happened. Luvo had had sex with me multiple times while I was unconscious. I couldn't even believe it. I stormed down the stairs and asked my mother if it actually happened. To my surprise, she didn't even deny it. I was so tired, Zee. Emotionally, physically and spiritually, I was drained. Right there and then, I was prepared to tell my father everything, but then she took out her phone and showed me the footage. She had recorded the entire, vile act. She had been blackmailing me, telling me that should I tell

a single soul, I'd get arrested for raping and molesting minors. Imagine that. I built my entire foundation from scratch, on merit and on the sole basis of helping underprivileged girls. I had no idea she would entrap me like that one day."

Is this going where I think it is?

David: (teary) "This was all last year. Before I even met you. Believe me, I wanted to tell you so badly, but she had already been so far along."

Far along? Oh, no.

Ziphora: (shaky) "What are you trying to say?"

David: "The aim for my mother to do what she did to me – to violate me like that, was to ensure that I impregnated Luvo. Yes, Luvo was pregnant with my baby. Junior is – was my son."

I felt as if my entire world had collapsed right there and then. What kind of fucked up woman is Julia?

David: “Luvo wanted me to love her. She had created this illusion in her head that she and I will get married and have many more children together. Once she realized that I wasn’t about that life with her, she went beserk. Everything just fell apart on her side. What I am saying is that I know, I lied to you. I betrayed you, but please, forgive me, Zee. I promise you, I won’t ever lie to you ever again.”

This is all too much to handle, but at the same time, I simply cannot abandon my spouse like that. I just can’t. David was so vulnerable and he really just stripped bare for me. I simply applaud him for that. He just buried his head in his hands and started sobbing. Never have I ever seen any man cry like that before – apart from movies.

Ziphora: “Dave, I had no idea you went through so much trauma. Had you told me before it still wouldn’t make any difference, and perhaps the situation with Junior would be different by now. I don’t judge you for anything. You were a victim – a victim of your own mother’s vile and sadistic ideas. Please, don’t ever beat yourself up about all of this. We’ll get through this – together. We just have to get her arrested, you know, tell the police, or - “

I didn’t even finish my sentence when he immediately jumped up and stared at me with bloodshot eyes.

David: (anxious) "Promise me, Zee. You will never tell a soul about what I have just told you. You can't ever do that. You don't know my mother. She is more dangerous and more powerful than you think. You honestly think that Luvo killed herself? You honestly think that your car exploding a few months ago was just an accident? If so, then you don't know my mother."

Oh, my God. What kind of family am I married into? Have I made the mistake of my life?

David:"I don't know how we'll deal with this, and I don't even know how we will carry on with our marriage, but one thing is for sure. I am not so sure that I even want children ever in my life. I failed Junior, so how will I even be deserving of any other children?"

And just like that, my whole world became shattered in one night. My first night home, right after my honeymoon had turned into a nightmare. A young girl lost her life, an innocent baby died, secrets were revealed, and now, my entire marriage is being tested way before it has even begun. How do I even begin telling him I am carrying his child?

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

Ziphora

I hardly slept right after David told me what he told me. I did not know how to look at him. I still loved him, no doubt, but I just didn't know what else to do. I was still on leave since my wedding, so I guess I had plenty of time to think. David just became really weird ever since he told me his secrets. It is almost as if he became – distant. He got up in the morning and made me breakfast as usual, but only this time – he left before I

even woke up. I was surprised, because usually he wakes me to eat, but I guess he had missed out so much from work, it is understandable. I checked the time and it was about 8am. I got into the shower and did my business. I got dressed and headed down to the kitchen. Upon arrival, I found breakfast on the table, carefully laid out with dishes covering everything. He went all out; waffles and strawberries, scrambled eggs and some sirloin steak and baby tomatoes. He topped it off with some fruit juice. The smell of eggs just put me off right there and then. He left a note at least; “Hope you have a great day. See you later. xoxo D.” It sounds so detached, and so formal, though, but I decided not to dwell on it. I ate everything else – except the eggs and I was so surprised that I could eat all of that. I had never had a big appetite. I washed the dishes just to keep busy and pass the time. I hardly even checked my phone ever since David’s big confession. I found so many messages from my mother. She was mainly asking me if I had told David yet and what his reaction was. I honestly just couldn’t tell her about David’s past. I can’t tell anyone right now; not even my two best friends nor my sisters. They’d never look at him the same ever again. I can’t let him be subjected to that – ever. I decided to just laze around, watch tv and eat some popcorn and snacks. By midday, I received a call from Ziyanda.

Ziphora: “Hey.”

Ziyanda: “Hey, hun. I hope I am not interrupting your day off.”

Ziphora: “Not even. What’s up?”

Ziyanda: “Nothing much, I was in the neighbourhood and I thought I’d come see you. Are you available?”

I could use some company right now. Perhaps she can give me some pointers.

Ziphora: “Sure. Come on in. I’ll text you the code and let the security know you’re coming in.”

Ziyanda: “Alright. See you soon.”

She hung up and I didn’t even bother to doll myself up. I guess stress and every negative energy makes a woman feel this way. Within minutes, she arrived. I opened the door, and

found her standing there with Woolworths shopping bags in both her hands.

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Well, I was thinking of you and I thought I should come by and bring you a few goodies.”

She is very thoughtful. I like that about her.

Ziphora: “Thank you.”

Ziyanda: (frowning) “You seem a bit down. Care to share?”

It was the very first time since David’s confession that I could actually allow myself to feel vulnerable. I know, I vowed to myself and to him that I’d never tell anyone about what he told me, but all this is weighing heavy on me. I found myself bursting into tears right there and then. I just couldn’t contain myself anymore. I suddenly became so excessively emotional.

Ziyanda: (surprised) “What’s wrong? I hope I didn’t upset you.”

Ziphora: “No, it’s noting like that at all. It’s just... I don’t even know how to say it.”

Ziyanda: “Come, take a seat and I’ll make you some nice chamomile tea. It always calms me down.”

Ziphora: (sobbing) “I don’t even have any.”

Ziyanda: (chuckling) “Hence I bought for you, sweetie. My mother-in-law always ensured that I take some whenever I was pregnant. Thanks to her, most of my children have that calm nature.”

Ziphora: “But, I didn’t tell you I’m pregnant yet.”

Ziyanda: “No need. I knew you were long before you took those tests. I saw it in your face. I’ll be right back.”

I nodded while she headed back to the kitchen and made me some tea. She was so thoughtful, that it seemed so effortless to her. Once she was done she handed me a cup and sat right next to me with a glass of wine for herself.

Ziphora: "You're torturing me with that glass of wine, aren't you?"

Ziyanda: (laughing) "No, love. It will only be for a little while for you, don't you worry. Drink up and take a deep breath. What seems to be the matter? I thought you'd be overjoyed that you're expecting."

I took a deep breath and spilled everything to her. I guess it was the after shock as I just wasn't this emotional when David told me. I think it took me a while to actually process everything he had gone through. The cherry on the cake was him telling me that he wanted no kids.

Ziphora: "I mean he just decided that on his own, Zee. Who does that?"

Ziyanda: (shocked) “I am shocked, honestly. I mean, I know some people have it hard, but your husband has been through the most. Look, I know it looks way too bleak at this moment, but you have to tell him.”

I expected that from her, but that was not really the answer I was hoping for.

Ziphora: “I know, but I just can’t Ziyanda

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especially not after he blatantly told me that he doesn’t want any children anymore.”

Saying that just feels so surreal, so agonizing.

Ziyanda: “You know, I have learnt that secrets never stay hidden forever; in fact, when they are eventually revealed, they seem like lies. It doesn’t matter how you perceive it or how much you were trying to protect the other party, but it just never ends well. Men are something else, but what I can tell you is that babies just change them. Not all men are destined

to become utter failures in life. David is not his past. He is just going through a very difficult phase where he has to face his trauma all over again. He is just consumed with guilt over what happened with Junior. It honestly is not him talking right now. You know, I don't know if you know this, but I was married to a very abusive man. His name was Lunga and he also was under the claws of his very own mother. He had tried to break free, but he just wasn't strong enough and in the process, he hurt me – badly. I lost a few pregnancies because of him, but then I never hated him. I tried my best not to let my past become my future. He would tell me how fat I was, but I rose above it. He cheated on me and I found a man who loved me wholeheartedly. I know, these are two very different situations, but at least it is something to hold onto. Be there for him and he will come around. Remind him why he chose you. You are not his chosen one for no reason. You were chosen because his ancestors knew that he was not going to be able to do this life thing alone. Isaiah 41:10 says; “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

She always makes everything seem so black and white. I don't even know how I am going to attack this situation. I just hope I take her advice and make use of it.

Ziphora: "I hear you, Zee."

Just then David walked in. My eyes were so bloodshot and my face was partly swollen, that I completely forgot to clean up so he wouldn't see me like this. His face looked so different; as if there was just no affection there. He usually smiled whenever he saw me, but that time, he just had this cold look on his face. What has Julia done to my David?

David: (coldly) "Hello, Ziyanda. Nice to see you again."

Ziyanda: (smiling) "Hi, David. Likewise."

She saw his reaction as he just walked straight to the kitchen and took out a cold beer from the fridge.

Ziyanda: "I have to go. Please, don't forget what I said. I'll call you later."

I nodded as she hugged me. I was about to get up and walk her out, but she insisted I stay on the couch.

Ziyanda: "I'll see you around, David."

David: "Aren't you staying for dinner?"

Ziyanda: "Some other time, my husband is waiting for me."

He nodded as they exchanged their goodbyes. As soon as the door closed, he walked straight up to and stared me right in the eye. I felt a cold shiver down my spine. It was as if I was staring at his ulter ego instead of the real him.

David: (frowning) "What were you two talking about?"

Ziphora: (nervously) "Nothing, just girl stuff."

David: "Hhmm. You didn't tell her about last night, did you?"

I had to lie to my husband for the very first time. They say the first time is always the hardest.

Ziphora: "No."

David: "Okay. Did you eat?"

Ziphora: (shaking head) "I just had some chamomile tea."

David: (frowning) "Why? Are you stressed about something?"

Is he for real?

Ziphora: "No, Ziyanda just bought some stuff for me. She thought it would be good for me."

David: "Hhmm. Please go freshen up and get dressed while I make you something to eat. We have to go to the house for a prayer for Luvo and Junior."

I can't believe how nonchalant he is about all of this.

Ziphora: "Do we really have to?"

David: "Yes, If I don't go, I'd never forgive myself. I'll understand if you don't want to go."

At last. The very first sight of emotion I have seen from him ever since he came back home.

Ziphora: "No, I'd love to go with you. For support."

He just nodded and carried on with his business. Not once did he kiss me and ask me how my day was. I couldn't help but feel a bit heartbroken. I feel like I am slowly losing my husband. I don't even know if prayer will help us this time. I slowly walked up the stairs and forced the tears back. I got into the shower

once again just to feel the relief of the warm water, while I tried not to think too much. I can't stay home for another day, otherwise I'll go mad. I have to cut my leave short so that I go back to work and keep myself busy. I will have to figure out when I tell David that I am expecting before it blows up in my face. I finished taking a shower and headed back down the stairs. I immediately smelled chicken and I became nauseated immediately. I tried forcing it down, while I took a sip of milk from the fridge. Milk helps a lot with nausea at times. David just looked at me with a weird frown on his face.

David: "I thought you like chicken kiev."

That is just a fancy way of saying crumbed fried chicken fillet.

Ziphora: "I do, but I haven't been feeling so well. I can't seem to keep much down."

I thought he would get the hint, but his mind was far from pregnancy.

David: "I'll make you a salad and add some vinegar. It must have been all the alcohol from Jamaica."

Ziphora: (disappointed) "I guess so."

He made me a salad and we ate together. He didn't ask me for prayer, so I just decided to pray to myself in silence. We had our meal and washed the dishes. After that, we headed out. I was dressed in a shirt and a headwrap just to be respectful since we were going to pay our respects to Luvo's family. He didn't open the car door for me, so I just pretended not to notice, but it did cut me deep. I had gotten so used to his chivalrous ways, but then, I was starting to think that people literally meant that the marriage becomes crumbles straight after the honeymoon. We had a long, quiet drive all the way to his parents' house. I didn't even know what to say, but I just kept staring at the window with an achy heart, hoping for a better outcome at the end of that day.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

We finally made it to the house, and as expected, David got out of the car, but didn't open the car door for me. I assumed he forgot as he had a lot on his mind, so I just let it go. I walked out and closed the door. He didn't hold my hand as we were walking into the house. My heart was being cut deep piece by piece. I didn't know how much longer I was going to be able to hold on, but I was soldiering on. As we walked in, there were quite a few people. Some from the church, along with Boitu, Amo and the oh, so atrocious Atlegang. Of course, Boitu smiled as soon as I walked in and rushed to hug me. She surprised me as she hugged David in a very sympathetic manner.

Boitu: “How are you holding up, Dave?”

David: (coldly) “Getting there.”

Boitu: “It’s okay, we’re all here for you if you ever need anything.”

David: (nodding) “Thanks. Come, let’s go look for Jacob and Jeannette.”

I don’t get it. Am I missing something here? Why do I get the feeling everyone knew about Luvo and Junior being David’s son, but me? I reluctantly walked alongside him as he held my hand. That time, I didn’t feel the usual electrifying feeling I usually did whenever he touched me. Instead, his hand felt so cold, deathly rather. We walked alongside one another, towards the dining area, only to find someone I had never met before. He looked a bit dark, much darker than Julia, but they shared a striking resemblance. He looked a bit old, way older than Ntate Moruti. Jacob and Jeannette were not there yet, though, but Julia and Ntate Moruti along with Malome John were there.

Julia: (fake smile) “My children. You finally made it.”

She rushed towards David as she opened her arms readily for an embrace, but David firmly stepped back while firmly holding my hand. She saw that and was rather displeased, but kept her cool. Since when is she so happy? Do funerals make her this happy?

Julia: “Well, then. I am so glad you both came. How have you been holding up, Makoti (daughter-in-law)?”

She must be joking. If this is how happy she becomes whenever there is a funeral, then fewer people should die around her. I didn't understand Julia's sudden behaviour towards me and it actually made me nervous. Luckily David kept me right beside him the entire time.

David: “Where's Jacob?”

Julia: “Oh, I'm sure he will be down in a moment. By the way, Zee. I was hoping we could discuss your stance in the church. I mean David is going to take over from his father soon, and you will be the next Queen Mother.”

I was dazed, but something in me told me to be very careful. She didn't seem genuine at all and she didn't seem very convincing to anyone. Thankfully, Julia and Jacob walked down the stairs together, each carrying one twin. I smiled excitedly, but as soon as my eyes met with Jeannette's, she immediately returned a cold expression. I knew right there and then that I needed to remember my place. She didn't like me for whatever reason, so I would learn to keep my distance.

Mac: "Good, now that you two are finally here, we can get started. The guests have been waiting."

Julia: "Oh, not yet, Davey. We are still waiting for one more guest. One more important guest. He should be here any minute now."

David: (angered) "How many times should I tell you not to call me that?"

Julia: (chuckling) "Sorry, it's no big deal, though, is it?"

Uncle John: "Calm down, Julia. You might just trip and fall and never make it back up."

Julia: "Is that one of your "premonitions"?"

Mac: "Can we all just relax. Who is this guest, Julia? We can't be waiting around here forever. I don't mean to sound insensitive, but people have things to do."

Just as he said that, someone I had never seen before walked in. He was rather dark, and much older than Uncle John and Ntate Moruti Mac. He looked so much like Julia, just way older. I figured he must have been her brother or something. I don't know, but the moment he walked in with his cane banging the floor, everyone around us just became mute. It was as if the aura around us had changed. David held my hand a bit tighter, while Jacob and Jeannette immediately tensed up. Julia was the only one smiling widely, while Ntate Moruti Mac didn't look at him in a weird way at all. He seemed normal. Uncle John was displeased as well.

Malome Jack: “Greetings, family. It has been such a long while.”

Julia: (smiling) “Brother! You took too long to come le wena. I mean, Welkom is really not so far.”

Malome Jack: “Well, you know I hate being driven around. It takes a while to get here by taxi.”

He greeted Ntate Moruti first, and then Malome John, but Malome John just didn’t respond. He then turned and looked at me.

Malome Jack: “You must be our new bride. How lovely to meet you.”

He held out his hand, and as polite as I tried to be, David shrug my hand away. I knew then that I had to keep calm and follow his lead. Something just didn’t seem right with their relationship with this uncle of theirs. I did however recall his name as it rang a faint bell in my head.

Malome Jack: “Hmm, o montle (you’re beautiful). The way you’re glowing so much, if I didn’t know better

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I’d say you were pregnant.”

I felt a bit flushed immediately, but David didn’t take note of him. Julia on the other hand looked at me and immediately saw my reaction. Her facial expression changed from smiling to sour.

Jacob: “What is he doing here?”

Julia: “What do you mean, dear? He’s family.”

Malome Jack: “As the eldest here, I’d like to bless your children, if that’s okay with you, Jacob.”

Jacob: (angered) “You’re not welcome around me nor my children – ever! Ma, if this animal is sleeping here tonight, Jeannette and I are moving out with immediate effect!”

Julia: “Come on, now, Jacob. Don’t be ridiculous. Besides, you can’t be so rude when we have just lost Luvo.”

I saw Jeannette trying to intervene and she made one of the biggest mistakes in her life that day.

Jeannette: “How can you say that when Luvo wasn’t even family?! We all know that Luvo was your pawn since she was the mother of David’s baby!”

Wow, what a bombshell. No one acted surprised – except poor Ntate Moruti. I tried reading his face and indeed he looked like he was honestly shocked. The rest of them looked down in shame, but not Jeannette. So, everyone knew but failed to mention it to me?

Jacob: (firmly) “That’s enough, Jeannette.”

Jeannette: “No, it’s not! I’m sick and tired of this! You always bow down to your mother and David gets forgiven now matter how much he fucks up! I wouldn’t be surprised if his darling new wife is also pregnant now since well he walks around shooting his load into everything with a hole in it!”

Okay, she had gone way too far.

David: “Jacob, I think it is high time you reminded your wife who wears the pants in your marriage.”

Jeannette: (fuming) “You don’t get to tell me anything about wearing pants! I am so sick and tired of always being side-lined! I do everything – EVERYTHING in this church; in this family! I gave birth to the first grand children, but what thanks do I get?!”

Jacob: “Jeannette, I said that’s enough!”

Jacob roared so loudly that the twins started crying, but Jeannette didn't stop.

Jeannette: "Had you never joined this family, Ziphora, everyone would still be happy. I curse the day I met you and I hope and pray to God that you never get to experience the joys of motherhood."

I was so hurt; her words stung me like a poisonous bee. Wow, people can be so cruel, but David was so angry, that he charged at her. Malome John stopped him. It was about to be a blood bath, meanwhile everyone was quiet in the house. They were probably eavesdropping and overheard everything. Jeannette looked at Jacob and hoped that he would come to her defence, but he just looked at her with so much annoyance.

Jeannette: "You WILL choose – tonight even or else I'm out. I'm done trying."

She walked up the stairs with one of the twins in her arms, while Jacob looked at the quiet Malome Jack.

Jacob: "You don't belong here. If I so much as even smell your presence here, I will kill you this time."

He walked up the stairs leaving us all dumbfounded. What was he talking about? And what exactly did he mean by "this time"? Does that mean that he had tried it before? What was so bad that Jacob despised his uncle that much?

Mac: "Can you tell me what the hell is going on here, Julia?! Why is Jacob so upset?! And wena(you), David?! O imisitse Luvo (you impregnated Luvo)?!"

I didn't know what to say. I was battling to keep the tears from falling, while my hands started shaking. I could feel a surge of anger making its way up my esophagus, leading to instant nausea.

Julia: "Not now, Mac."

Mac: “Well, clearly you have been talking quite more than enough without me. This stops today! You’d better tell me what is happening!”

Julia: “Or what? Or what, Mac?”

Mac: “Or I walk away.”

He seemed so serious and just left us standing there as he walked out. He was probably too angry to revolt and needed some air. I just felt so suffocated, I immediately rushed to one of the bathrooms on the ground floor.

Ziphora: “Excuse me, please.”

I ran to the bathroom, locked the door behind me and vomited. I felt as if my entire marriage was a lie before it even began. I mean, everyone, literally everyone knew, but me. I mean what do you even call that? I found myself seething with rage; shaking uncontrollably with tears flowing down my eyes. It’s funny how hot tears seem whenever you are hurt or

angry. I splashed some water on my face and asked – actually begged God to make me calm again. I needed to be okay; at least for that moment. I did some breathing exercises, and then I heard a stern knock on the door.

David: “Zee, please come out.”

I kept quiet for a moment. His voice just made me irritable from that moment on. How dare he subject me to such embarrassment without any warning?

David: “Please come out so that we can go home and talk.”

I took a deep breath and walked out. I found him right at the door looking like he was about to burst into tears, but honestly, I was having none of it.

Ziphora: “Let’s go.”

He held my hand, and as much as I tried to jerk mine out of his, he held mine firmly. As we were walking out without even

bothering to say goodbye to everyone, who was looking at me with pure pity by the way, Julia came running towards us.

Julia: "Oh, Zee. I almost thought I'd miss you."

Since when does she even call me Zee?

David: "What do you want, Julia? Make it quick."

Julia: "Oh, I just wanted to wish you two good luck and give you my blessings."

We both looked at her confused.

Julia: "Oh, I assumed what Malome Jack said about you being pregnant is true."

Oh, she was most probably trying to fish, I see.

David: "Zee is not pregnant, and even if she was, she was going to tell me. I don't see how that is any of your business."

Julia: "Oh, I'm sorry I pryed, but anyway, have a good evening, makoti (daughter in law)."

She did something really uncalled for and unexpected. She tried to force me to hug her, but I stepped back and when she noticed that I just didn't want anything to do with her, she forcefully grabbed my hand and touched it. She literally held my hand in both hers and smiled. Her smile always resembled that of the devil and that day, it was really scary seeing her smile like that. For some reason I felt as if she was trying to make it a point to touch me. David moved my hand away from hers.

Julia: (smiling) "Keep well. I will see you two at the funeral."

From that moment onwards, I just felt weird. It was as if my sixth sense was awakened, and I just didn't feel like there was a good aura around me. Mind you, Julia had never touched me before, not even a handshake whatsoever. Why would she even want to touch me now?

A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.”

Ziphora

My blood was boiling, but even when I had the chance to attack in the car – I didn’t. I remained quiet throughout the entire car ride home and so did he. What am I supposed to think now? Does everyone see me as a joke? The moment he parked the car I didn’t even expect him to open the car door for me. I was already getting used to our new normal. It must have been the hormones, but dammit, I was boiling and so ready to divulge in my rage.

David: “Can we talk?”

He had followed me all the way to the bedroom. I was taking off my clothes and getting ready for bed. Yes, we had a rule – we sleep naked unless I am on my period, but then I just didn’t even want to think of all that. I couldn’t bear the thought of him touching me even.

Ziphora: "You can do whatever you want to do."

David: "Don't be like that, Zee."

Ziphora: "Don't be like what?"

David: "Childish. Please, you're my wife. I'd like to talk to you."

He should not have said that. Calling me childish out of all things? Who does he think he is?

Ziphora: (enraged) "Excuse me?! You're the one who told everyone that you impregnated Luvo and had a son with her yet you call me childish! Everyone in your life now looks at me like I'm an idiot and you call me childish?! "

I wanted to scream and shout at him. Oh, I wanted to tell him so badly of the little miracle I had been carrying inside of me,

but then it just didn't feel like the right time. I looked at his face as he started to cry.

David: "Ziphora, if only you knew what really happened. If only you knew how deep and how dark my family's secrets get."

I totally forgot that I was stark naked right before him. I didn't even want to talk about myself anymore. My anger subsided and my heart sank. I knelt down before him and held his hands.

Ziphora: "What is it?"

David: (crying) "My poor father knows nothing. I don't know what he might do the day he actually finds out."

Ziphora: "Find out what?"

David: "The same way my mother had molested me, is the very same thing Malome Jack did to Jacob. Seeing him like that today awoke the wrong emotions in Jacob's mind. He had tried

so hard to bury all those thoughts and traumatic moments, but this will be a huge setback for him. Malome Jack sodomized Jacob. He is the reason why Jacob thinks he is gay. He has tried so many times to let go of all those thoughts; he was taken to therapy even at the church, but he still hasn't let go."

My God, this is worse than I would ever have thought.

Ziphora: "Does your mother know?"

He nodded. I mean

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of course the bitch knows.

David: "She didn't even defend nor protect him."

Ziphora: "And Jeannette?"

David: (nodding) "She knows everything. She married him out of love, but also because she believed that she could "cure"

him. You don't want to know how he gets rid of those urges – even now. Jeannette has no idea he still does those things. I'm afraid we're going to see the ugly side of Jacob real soon."

What kind of fucked up family is this? I mean Julia is just twisted. Surely she did something to her husband; I mean how can he not notice anything at all? As for Jeannette, I am astounded. I am not judging her in any way, but wow. I am even afraid to ask David how he gets rid of those urges; you know, he might like older women now that he has been through all that.

Ziphora: "And you?"

David: "What about me?"

Ziphora: "Do you have any of those? Urges?"

I saw the look in his eyes and it was a dead giveaway. My worst fears were confirmed. I can't even think of what he actually does to relieve himself of those urges. I was about to dig

deeper, but then he silenced me with a very passionate yet rough kiss. As much as I wanted to protest, I kissed him back. He touched my body as he always did, but then it was just different; a lot more lust than passion was involved, and it was a bit rough. I don't know, I don't think I'm one for anything rough, but I kind of liked the way he was staring at me and the way he was kissing me. He ripped his clothes apart without even waiting for me to do that. He instantly got down on his knees, and spread my legs apart while staring me right in the eyes. His eyes were full of hunger; red-hot passionate hunger. He was craving me in a way I had never imagined before.

David: (breathing heavily) "Zee, please do me one favour."

My body was yearning for him already. How could I say no to anything he was about to ask?

Ziphora: "Anything."

David: "Please, call me Davey. Just for tonight."

Right there and then, he dropped the bomb on me. He hated being called Davey and for good reason I might add, but now, I had to call him that. Is this some kind of weird fetish or should I just roll with it?

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“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Ziphora

I wanted to protest, but my body defeated me. I wanted to force him to talk it out, but words failed me as his lips kept doing a job I had never experienced before. He planted his entire mouth on my pussy and ate me in a way I couldn't even explain. His tongue and lips were in sync, while he occasionally dipped his tongue in the entrance of my vagina. I felt like I was on another realm; he was rough, but it was nice. As I was about to climax, he released his mouth from my crotch, leaving me frustrated.

Ziphora: (breathing heavily) “Why did you stop? I was nearly there.”

David: “For each time you don't call me Davey, I'll punish you. Got it?”

I nodded in suspense. He immediately got on top of me and slid his penis inside of me. I gasped for air, but as he kept pounding harder, I felt an exhilarating effect consume me. I never knew pain and pleasure could feel so nice. He placed both his hands around my neck.

David: "What's my name?"

Ziphora: (moaning) "Aah, Davey!"

David: "Tell me you love me."

Ziphora: "I love you, Davey."

David: "Do you give me permission to strangle you?"

I didn't even know what to say. I mean, Faith had told me about BDSM and all that, but I never thought normal people actually do such. Isn't that for porn stars only? I nodded.

David: "I want to hear you say it."

He was talking in between moans and heavy breathing while he was pounding me.

Ziphora (screaming) Aah! Yes, yes, I give you permission."

He strangled me and I felt myself becoming a little bit out of breath, but for some odd reason it was magical. I had never experienced such pleasure. I found myself becoming increasingly aroused as he strangled me further. I screamed out of pleasure and found myself shaking. I felt so wet down there as he climaxed and collapsed right on top of me. My throat felt a bit brittle, but nothing I couldn't handle. He went to the bathroom and took a towel to wipe us and kissed me goodnight. Just like that, we dozed off and never touched that topic ever again. I didn't even get to tell him about the child I was carrying.

The following morning, I found David out of bed already. What did I expect since well the honeymoon phase seemed over for us. My throat and neck felt a bit sore, but I didn't take much

note of that. As I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth, I saw hideous red marks on my neck. I tried staying in the shower for long enough, but I still couldn't get rid of them. I tried hiding them with make-up, since well it just looks a little suspicious wearing a scarf in the middle of Spring. So, I decided to blend in a little make-up on my face and neck. I hoped and prayed that I didn't sweat throughout the day. I walked down to the kitchen and found a sumptuously appealing breakfast awaiting me on the table along with a small note. "Enjoy the day, xoxo David." At least he is thoughtful, though. I still have to manage telling him about my pregnancy. The way he has been behaving lately, I had become increasingly anxious. What made me even more stressed was the fact that I hadn't spoken to my sisters, my mother and my best friends in ages. They all thought I had been neglecting them. I didn't even answer WhatsApp texts. I had to up my game. I devoured that breakfast, filled with soft croissants, strawberries and a beautiful omelette, of which I couldn't even take a bite of due to the eggs making me so nauseous. I enjoyed everything else, though. I took the car keys to his Lexus. I made a mental note that I had to go car shopping because wow, I couldn't drive David's car forever. He didn't mind at all, but a woman needs to have her own. I got into the car and drove off. Upon singing along Vusi Nova's songs, my phone rang. Since I had connected it to Bluetooth, I saw Julia's name appearing on the screen

immediately. I frowned while I was about to enter the hospital parking. I was still surprised while staring at her name flickering on the tape screen. She hung up and I was about to continue preparing myself to walk out of the car, until she called again. As annoyed as I was, I answered it.

Ziphora: “Dr. Mosue hello?”

Julia: (chuckling) “Hi, Zee. How are you?”

Ziphora: (frowning) “I’m fine, thanks, how are you, Mme (Ma)?”

Julia: “I’m fine, thank you. I see you have already changed your surname? Wa shesha, girly (You are fast girly).”

I had always hated her condescending tone. All those in-between chuckles and calling me “girly”.

Ziphora: “What can I do for you?”

Julia: “Hmm, straight to the point, I see. I wanted to call and find out why you’re not here.”

Ziphora: (puzzled) “I don’t understand what you mean.”

Julia: “I mean why aren’t you here at the house helping us prepare for the funeral?”

Is this woman for real?

Ziphora: “According to my understanding, no one told me to be there. Was I supposed to be there?”

Julia: (chuckling) “Hehe! Girly, you just got married to my son – the most prominent businessman and the future leader of our church. I don’t know why you’re dragging your feet because David’s new position will be announced in the church this coming Sunday. It is your duty to be here as his wife and you need to show your support since he has just lost his son. I

mean, surely you do understand that since you are childless, don't you?"

The nerve. That woman was pure evil.

Ziphora: "Oh, I see."

Julia: "I don't want to have to call you again reminding you about your duties, Ziphora. You're about to become the first lady – despite my reluctance. Don't disappoint me. You might want to reconsider your little job. Church wives don't work."

She hung up before I could even tell her a piece of my mind. The nerve! The fucking nerve! I was hyperventilating so badly that I was sweating a little. I had to calm down before I started to sweat the make-up away. How dare she?! How dare she expect me to be at the funeral and help around when I literally found out the day after Luvo died that Junior was actually David's son? How dare she call my job little? How dare she even instruct me on what to do? Since when was David going to take over from his father? I mean I had expected it to happen but not that soon. He didn't tell me

anything. I was fuming, but I had to calm down. The more I thought about Julia, was the more I kept getting these subtle yet uneasy cramps on my abdomen. I decided to do a few breathing exercises and calm down. Sooner or later, my family and friends were going to find out about Junior being David's son. I had to burst that bubble before someone beat me to it. It never ends well when an ill-informed person breaks news that has absolutely nothing to do with them. I headed straight into the building and right to my office. I locked myself in just to breathe a little. I passed a few of my fellow colleagues who were delighted and yet shocked to see me. I hadn't told anyone not even management that I was coming in that day. I took a deep breath, got changed into one of the hospital gowns and lay on my own bed. I had to see that little miracle inside of me. I just had to before experiencing it with everyone else around me. I did what I did best; I applied some of that cold gel on my tummy, switched on the sonogram machine and explored my own insides. What a beautiful experience it was to actually finally do that on my own; to myself even. I saw the sack around my tiny embryo. I couldn't hear a heartbeat yet as it was too soon to see it. The machine confirmed it; I was indeed pregnant – four weeks to be exact. I hadn't anticipated that when I got married to David, but it was done. I had to deal with it before it got ugly. I printed a picture and saved the video of the sonogram. I smiled as I became teary. So much

had happened – yet, I felt like there was hope. I mean, I had to tell my David; sooner rather than later. I got out of my bed and texted Desiree and Faith in our WhatsApp group.

Ziphora: “What’s up, ladies? Care for some lunch? On me.”

Faith: “Oh, look who it is.”

Desiree: “The lost lamb is back.”

Faith: “We thought you were dead.”

Ziphora: “It’s just been hectic. Lunch on me?”

Desiree: “I’d never say no to food.”

Faith: “This still doesn’t mean you are forgiven.”

Ziphora: “Lol, meet you downstairs.”

I walked out and decided I'd let management know that I'd be back at work officially. I saw Desiree walk out of the lift first and she was so excited to see me. She immediately hugged me.

Desiree: "How have you been stranger? Marriage must be good to you. You've put on some weight. Look at your face."

I guess I was becoming visible already.

Ziphora: (chucking) "Life has been rather okay. How have you been?"

Desiree: "Ag, same old."

Faith walked out of the lift and folded her hands as she stared right at me. Drama queen.

Ziphora: "Hey, Faith."

Faith: (folding hands) “Ja.”

Desiree: “Oh, drop the act already. You know just how much you have missed her.”

Faith: (smiling) “Okay, okay. But you still owe me – big time.”

She gave me a tight hug and we all laughed.

Ziphora: “Mugg and Bean?”

Desiree: “You sure do know how to redeem yourself.”

We got into David’s car and drove to the mall. Luckily, the mall is just two minutes away from the hospital.

Faith: “Yoh (Oh), friend. So, David gave you this car?”

Ziphora: “Something like that. I will still have to go car shopping.”

Desiree: “Why would you do that when you have so many cars to choose from?”

Ziphora: “That’s because it is his cars – not mine.”

Faith: “What’s yours is his and vice versa. Simple.”

Ai, these two. We finally got to Mug and Bean and I let them in on what happened. I didn’t tell them about David’s sexual abuse and Jacob’s as well, but I had to tell them about Luvo and Junior. Of course they were shocked and I knew that they would tell me to rethink my marriage to David.

Desiree: “I mean, friend, surely if he could keep such a secret from you then what else is he hiding?”

She had a point, really, but she didn’t know David like I did.

Ziphora: "I hear you, really."

Faith: "I sense a bit."

Ziphora: "But in all honesty, it really is not that simple. It is complicated. I just had to tell you guys before you heard from the media or something."

Desiree: "So, you must be a big shot, hey? I mean the media is still talking about your wedding and apparently there is a rumour that you'll be crowned the next Queen Mother."

I wasn't surprised. I bet that had Julia written all over. She was up to something - I could feel it. It is like she was dead set on ruining me in every way possible, but my God is bigger than that. I just had to grow a tough skin. I really wanted to tell my friends about my new journey of motherhood, but I couldn't tell them before telling my husband. It wouldn't had been fair. I had to ask my mother for advice first before moving onto anything. My friends were supportive nonetheless, even though they just didn't favour David that much anymore. I

don't even know why friends are always that quick to judge and forget. How many times had they been cheated on yet they still stayed? It was not even like David cheated on me. If they knew what I knew about him, they would never see him in the same light ever again. I couldn't humiliate my husband like that. I had to respect his feelings and keep his secrets as his wife. I still had a long journey ahead with becoming a queen mother or first lady, whatever it is that they are called. I was not even sure if I was up for it, because honestly, that church really seemed to be hiding a whole lot of secrets. Little did I know that it was about to get rough. I had no idea what evil was, until I was formally introduced into the church as the New First Lady.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

I finished doing everything at work and I even managed to let my managers know that I was officially back at work. I knocked off at 6pm and still had no word from David. It was odd, but then I decided to not stress about it. I don't know if I even wanted to go to his mother's house alone; without him. I don't trust her at all. I thought I'd rather go to my house and change first before going to see my mother, but before I knew it they had decided to surprise me. Yes, they as in my two sisters and my mother. I saw their cars right outside my house and they were waiting for me. Oh, boy. What an ambush. I wasted no time and approached them. As soon as they saw me, they walked out of their cars.

Susan: “Hmm, ke gore tshwanetse nna, Susan Mokoena, ke late ngwana o ke mmelegeng ko a dulang gobane wang avoider (So, I have to follow my own child, the one I birthed to her own house since she is avoiding me)?”

Ziphora: “Dumela, mme (Hello, Ma).”

Charisma: "So, you decided to ignore us all?"

Keo: "Ignore? Ghost, rather."

Ziphora: (sigh) "Would you guys like to come in?"

Susan: "I'd thought you'd never ask. Be a dear and get the plastic bags from my boot, will you?"

I just went ahead and did as asked without even complaining. I opened the door for them and they walked in. It had actually been the very first time that Charisma and Keo had come to my house.

Charisma: "Yoh, Keo! Moruti (Pastor) has taste, hey?"

Keo: "Taste? He has money."

Susan: “Le lena la phapha man (You two are too forward). Come help us with the plates.”

Thank goodness Mama had bought us some woolies ready made food and dessert. I was really not in the mood to cook. That baby was already making me lazy. We dished up and Keo and Charisma couldn't stop raving about the house and everything in it. What I love about my sisters is that they could never be jealous. We always supported one another, and despite joking around, we always had each other's backs no matter what. Mama raised us like that. We hardly fought. Whenever we used to fight she'd ask us what we'd do without her since we literally had each other to lean on. So, we had always been close and tell each other pretty much everything. I know, they both had their own secrets that they couldn't share with me and of which I was yet to learn that in marriage, some things should not be told. We had our meal in the lounge instead of the dinner table.

Keo: “So, spit it out.”

Ziphora: “Spit what out?”

Charisma: "Tell us the reason you have been avoiding us like a bad rash."

Susan: (laughing) "Ai."

Ziphora: (sigh) "Can't we eat first?"

Mama had deliberately brought a bottle of wine and she actually wanted me to confirm to them right there and then.

Susan: "Wine anyone?"

That woman was sly.

Keo: "Yes, please."

Charisma: "I could never say no, you know."

Susan: "Zee?"

Ziphora: (nervously) “No, thank you.”

Both Keo and Charisma looked at me with shock, while Mama was busy laughing.

Keo: “Am I missing something?”

How on earth was I about to break the news to my sisters, when Charisma had been struggling for years?

Ziphora: “No.”

Charisma: (Frowning) “No way! Are you pregnant?!”

What a way to ruin my surprise for my dear husband. I guess the cat was out of the bag. I really couldn't lie to them. Mama was just smiling while sipping her wine, while Keo and Charisma looked at me in much anticipation. I didn't know what to say,

honestly, so I just nodded. Charisma was the first one to jump and hug me, while Keo did that afterwards.

Charisma: “Oh, this is so exciting! I mean, how do you feel? Any nausea? Swollen boobs? I have heard that sex while pregnant is really the best.”

She knew so much about babies and pregnancy, one would swear she had her own child. My heart was aching for her.

Ziphora: “Not really, just a little bit of nausea especially towards eggs. I can’t stand eggs.”

Keo: “You’ll get better. Does he know?”

Ziphora: (shaking head) “Not yet.”

Susan: “ O mo botsa neng (when are you going to tell him)?”

Ziphora: “I was planning on doing so tonight.”

Susan: "He's usually home at this time

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isn't he? Is everything alright?"

How could I ruin such a perfect moment with the sad news I had been keeping?

Ziphora: "Everything is fine, Mama."

Susan: "Oho, just checking."

Charisma: "I'm honestly super excited for you. I can't wait to be an auntie again."

Ziphora: "I didn't want to tell you guys, because, you know."

Charisma: "Come on, Zee. You know very well how we support one another. Your happiness and good news could never make

me feel jealous. I am a bit envious, I won't lie, but I know God will bless me eventually. I never stop praying."

Susan: "Speaking of praying, I had a very funny dream."

We all knew that Mama's dreams always came true.

Keo: "Do tell, Mama."

Susan: "I dreamt you Zee and Charisma Being surrounded by big snakes. One for each of you. And Koko (Granny) has been complaining about backache. I told her she was getting old, but you all know what backache means."

Apparently when someone dreams of you being surrounded by a snake it means you're pregnant, and an elder person suffering from backache means that someone in the family is pregnant. That backache won't disappear until the pregnant person confesses.

Keo: “Well, maybe Koko’s backache will disappear now that Zee has said her piece.”

Susan: (shaking head) “It won’t. I won’t say anything further. Le tla iponela (You’ll see for yourself).”

I guess she knew what she was talking about. My sisters were so excited and we got to talk a little bit about what marriage life was like. While we were having a good time, my phone rang. I jumped to answer it thinking it was David, but then to my surprise, it was Julia. I decided to ignore it. She kept calling until I switched my phone off in annoyance.

Susan: “Who are you avoiding so badly?”

Ziphora: “My mother-in-law.”

Susan: (frowning) “O batla eng (What does she want)?”

Keo: “And since when does she even call you?”

Ziphora: "I was just as shocked when she called me earlier. She wants me to come and help with the funeral. It's a story for another day."

Susan: "Just be careful. I don't trust her."

Ziphora: "It's okay, Mama. She doesn't know I'm expecting."

Susan: "She knows."

She just left it at that and I couldn't force her to elaborate, and at that moment, David walked in. He had brought us Fishaways for takeaways. The way I loved fish, I just couldn't handle the smell of it. As soon as I saw it from afar, I became immediately nauseated.

David: "Dumelang (Good evening)."

Ziphora: "Excuse me."

I rushed to the bathroom before it was too late and vomited. Fuck, I hate vomiting. I mean, I had just had such a great meal and now all of it had gone down the toilet. I must have stayed in there for quite some time because I heard David knocking on the bathroom door.

David: (knocking) “Zee, o sharp (are you okay)?”

I flushed and walked out. I couldn't hear my sisters and mother talking anymore.

Ziphora: “Where is everyone?”

David: “They just left. Are you okay? Why are you vomiting?”

Ziphora: (sigh) “We need to talk.”

He frowned as he looked at me. I didn't know which way would have been best to say it to him, so I reached for my bag and

handed him the sonogram picture I took from earlier that morning. I was so anxious, I felt like my heart was beating right out of my chest. I carefully stared at him and expected the worst. But as always, David surprised me.

David: "Whose is this?"

Usually men ask, "what's this", so he knew what it was at least.

Ziphora: (nervously) "It's mine."

David: (wide-eyed) "Are you – are we pregnant?"

I nodded with glistening tears. David looked at me with tears falling down his face immediately.

David: "How long have you known?"

Ziphora: "Not so long. I wanted to tell you, but you had just told me you didn't want anymore children."

David broke down in tears, leaving me confused. He knelt down in front of me, and held both my hands.

David: (crying) “Moratuwa (My love), please forgive me for being such a horrible husband. I made you go through one of our happiest moments alone. I made you feel insecure, afraid and worried while you could have just told me. I failed you so many times, Zee. I promised to love you and make you feel secure and safe, yet barely months into our marriage, you have felt the total opposite. Please, give me another chance to prove to you just how much you mean to me. I have been such a mess; I have pushed you away. Nothing would make me happier than to be a father to our child. I love you, Ziphora Mosue. Nothing would make me happier than to go through this journey with you together. God makes no mistakes; he surely has blessed us with this gift for He saw us fit to be his or her parents. I can’t wait to do this life thing with you.”

I just cried while nodding as I looked at him. Words failed me. He evoked all those emotions he had in me while we were back in Jamaica. I knew then that I was staring at the David I fell for.

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“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Isaiah 43:18 - “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.”

Ziphora

My night with David was really great. So great that he made pure love to me, just as he did the very first night we made love. He saw the marks on my neck and was really disappointed in himself that he actually did that to me, but I had to reassure him that it's okay. I guess some couples do become rough during sex every now and then. After our passionate act of love making, I finally had the chance to tell him about what Julia said. He wasn't too happy about her calling me just to insult and order me around and he reassured me that he would make her back off. I don't know how when all he ever says is that she is a very dangerous woman. I guess only time will tell, but it felt so good to have him in my corner. For the very first time in a very long time, David got up before me as usual but he made

me breakfast and stayed to eat with me. I was surprised when I got out of the shower and prepared myself for work. I expected the usual short note on the kitchen table, but to my surprise, I found him right there in the kitchen. He was already dressed but not in his usual formal attire, though. He was wearing a jean and Tshirt. I knew then that he was not going to work.

David: (smiling) "Good morning, my wife."

Ziphora: (smiling) "Good morning, my husband."

David: "Breakfast is served. Let's eat before you become late for work. I'll drop you off."

Ziphora: "I've been driving your Lexus for the past few days."

David: (frowning) "Hmm, I don't know how I feel about you driving yourself around, but my guess is you're craving your freedom again."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "I thought you'd protest."

David: "I want to, but it wouldn't be fair to you. We'll go car shopping later in the week when you're off, how's that?"

Ziphora: "I'd like that very much."

We prayed for our meal and dug in.

Ziphora: "Aren't you going to work today?"

David: "No, I'm actually going home to sort a few things out."

I knew by then he meant Julia.

Ziphora: "I see."

David: "Afterwards, I'd like to speak to Phila about a new business prospect."

Ziphora: (frowning) “What kind of prospect? I mean you are happy with your company, aren’t you?”

David: “Yes, I am, but it wasn’t built on the right foundation, Zee. I don’t want to live a life like that. I want nothing that ties me to my mother anymore. I want you and I to start afresh with our children.”

Why is he speaking in plural form? I hope he doesn’t think I am going to carry twins like Jeannette. Speaking of her, we haven’t heard from Jacob in a few days.

Ziphora: “I was just thinking about Jeannette and Jacob.”

David: “Don’t tell me about Jeannette. She’s revealing her true colours and it won’t end well.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

David: “I didn’t want to worry you, but I spoke to Jacob briefly yesterday. He went AWOL right after Malome Jack appeared at

the house. He hasn't returned back home and he didn't sleep home since."

I am guessing shit is already starting to hit the fan.

Ziphora: "This is a mess. What is going to happen now? Are you going to bury Junior under your surname?"

I could see the tears glistening in his eyes yet again. The Junior topic is still a fresh wound. My husband really needs some therapy.

David: "I guess so. I am going to sort out those logistics with my father and Malome John. I just want to be sure if I am ready for this new pastoral role. I don't know if I should even take it."

Ziphora: "But you love the work you do in the church."

David: "Yes, but that was before I actually knew what kind of church it actually was."

I didn't even want to ask him what he meant by that. It all just seems like that church is a breeding ground of sin. I have a very uneasy feeling of what is about to unravel. I just pray to God that I find the strength to endure whatever is coming.

David: "Come, you'll be late if you don't leave now and we both know how much you hate being late."

He was right about that. Being late just messes up one's entire day. The marks around my neck hadn't faded yet so I had to go back to make-up cover ups. He kissed me goodbye and I left. I just hope that everything works well in his favour. I was even afraid to switch on my phone since I knew that Julia was blowing up my phone. I decided to switch it on right after I was done parking the car at work. The moment I switched it on I was bombarded with missed calls, Voicemail messages and plenty of WhatsApp messages from Julia. The one that stood out for me was the last one; "I don't think your mother is a sane woman. If she was, she would have never birthed a rude bitch like you. I refuse to let any of my grandchildren be raised by an ill-mannered whore." I was raging; I was even shaking with every sentence I read from that message. I didn't know

what to do, so I immediately forwarded the message to my mother as well as my sisters. I am not one to always tell them my problems, but this one hit home. How dare she? While my sisters were spewing insults at Julia, my mother called me immediately.

Ziphora: (teary) "Mama."

Susan: "O ko kae (Where are you)?"

Ziphora: "Ke gona ke tsena mosebetsing (I have just arrived at work)."

Susan: "Pull yourself together and stop crying."

She could hear me right from over the phone that I was in tears already. I was so mad, that I started having those cramps again.

Susan: "Listen to me, Ziphora. That woman is just sent by the devil, but as you know, evil never wins. You have to pull

yourself together. You can't break down every time someone says some petty mean words to you."

Ziphora: "But Mme (Ma), she spoke about you - "

Susan: (interrupting) "I am a grown woman. I have a thick skin. Along the way, you'll have to adopt one too. Now you'll listen to me; you'll wipe away those tears and fix yourself. You will have a great day and ignore her. Later on today, re ya thapelong kaofela (we're going to the prayer together). You are going to put on your brave face and face her like a Godfearing woman. She will not ruin your shine. You will tell her face to face that you don't appreciate her bullshit. I know you're scared, so I'll be there right with you along with Koko. Make sure you relax for the sake of the baby. And please, don't drink or eat anything from her."

I was still in tears. My heart bled to be honest, but Mama was right. Julia was on a real mission to be the baddest bitch in town, but for some reason, I couldn't help but think of Ziyanda in that situation.

Ziphora: "I hear you, Mama."

Susan: "I'll see you later. O be shap (Be okay)."

I said my goodbyes and soon after our call, I forwarded Ziyanda the messages and briefed her on the situation. She called me immediately.

Ziyanda: "How are you feeling, babe? O shap (are you okay)?"

Ziphora: "No, but I'll be okay."

Ziyanda: "I heard about everything that has been happening and apparently David is going to be taking the seat this coming Sunday. This woman is a real bitch. I am so sorry I can't be there for you right now, as Phila's campaign is coming up soon. But I'll be there at the funeral be sure of that. I'll bring a guest that will shake her world up a bit. Don't you worry, for God is in your corner. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says; "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Be very careful of her, Zee. I have a feeling she knows about your

pregnancy. She reminds me of my ex husband's evil mother, Zodwa. God forbid she tries to do to you what was done to me."

I was so afraid to even ask what she meant. What if I had actually underestimated Julia?

Ziyanda: "I have to go. Keep me posted. I'm there for you whenever you need me."

Ziphora: "Thank you, Ziya. I really appreciate that."

We hung up and right after our call I felt so much lighter. Mama helped me too and I felt I was ready to start the day, though I was late for approximately half an hour, but it is better than nothing. I went about my morning and by lunch time I had already forgotten about Julia. I put all my faith in God for I know He will protect me no matter what. For only His will can be done.

David

I feel like complete shit for the way I had been treating my wife for the past few days. She didn't deserve that and I had no right to punish her for my past. She is a good woman and I know that, but my conscience is always trying to force me to run away from her. At times I feel she is too good for me; that I don't deserve someone as pure as she is. I thought all those sessions with Malome John helped, but clearly they didn't. I was more furious at my own mother for her bullshit. I have to figure out a way to get her off my back completely. She is just not normal and no matter what I try to break away from her, she always manages to lure me into her web of lies again. I need to get Phila to help me break free. I don't mind starting over as a mere worker just to get on with my life again. As soon as Ziphora left for work, I got into my car and drove off. I arrived at home and found a few mourners and church wives and pastors there. This woman just never stops. She was so excited to see me and tried to hug and kiss me, but I backed away.

Julia: (frowning) "I see you're still mad at me, Davey. How many times do you want me to apologize?"

I saw my father approach is in wonder.

Mac: "Son, what's happening?"

David: (furious) "Ntate (Father), I don't like this woman you married. In fact, I despise her. I curse the day she gave birth to me. I curse the day she herself was born!"

She must have been touched by my insults because she slapped me hard across the face, but I wasn't bothered. That was a mere slap compared to the endless pain she had caused me.

Mac: "What's happening, David? I am so confused. Junior was your son? Ngwanaka (My son), please tell me what is going on."

David: "Ask her, Papa (Dad). She is not the woman you think she is. And wena (you)! (pointing at Julia), you don't know me well enough if you think that you can try and harm my wife and my unborn child!"

She looked at me with utter amusement.

Julia: “So o imile (she’s pregnant)?”

David: “The way o loyang ka teng (The way you are such a witch) you knew way before I knew. I swear on my own life, should anything happen to her or my child, I won’t let you go this time. I swear, the entire world will know what kind of sick bitch you are and I will not let you live this time.”

My poor father was so confused.

Julia: (angered) “Wa ntebala (you seem to forget who I am).”

David: “I know very well who you are, Hashib. Try me, I dare you. Papa, let her tell you everything she did to me and what Malome Jack did to Jacob. Why do you think he has gone AWOL now? Even Jeannette knows everything but she still keeps quiet. My only prayer for you, Ntate (father) is that you see her for the person she actually is. You did nothing wrong. You were a good father to Jacob and I and you never failed.”

My father cried after me confused, but I just left. I couldn’t stay any longer, otherwise I was really going to break her neck. I couldn’t even bear the sight of her. She made me so sick and for the fact that my child will bear a part of her DNA makes me sickened and very much afraid. All I knew at that point was that if I didn’t put my plans in motion, I was never going to break free from her claws.

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- “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! “

David

After leaving my dysfunctional family standing right there, a part of me couldn't have felt more hurt on my father's behalf. I thought it was high time to finally end it all and tell him everything, but then, I first had to find Jacob first and make sure he was okay. I went to my office, since I had asked to meet Phila and Malome Jack there. I don't trust my mother one bit and something tells me she might have me followed. As soon as I walked into my building, I found Phila already waiting for me.

David: (smiling) “Mr. Zwane.”

Phila: (chuckling) “So formal, Mr. Mosue.”

David: "You have to get used to it all now that you're about to become Mayor."

Phila: "I suppose you're right. I must say, wearing suits all day has become a bit of a boring habit."

David: (laughing) "Let's go into my office."

We walked in and I poured us a drink as we sat down.

Phila: "To what do I owe the pleasure of this meeting, David? You didn't sound too pleased over the phone."

David: (sigh) "I want out of this company. I'd like a clean start. So, I would like to join forces with your company. Even if it means starting from the bottom as a Junior architect."

Phila: (frowning) "But you have more than enough money to start another company. Why mine?"

David: "Because my mother will do anything and everything to stop me from becoming my own person. I need someone like you in my corner, Phila. With you as the mayor, you might be able to stop her. I'd like to have a peaceful night's sleep every single day. My heart and conscience is not at ease."

Phila: "Hmm, I see. If you want me to help you, then you'll have to tell me everything you want me to help you with. You're more than welcome to join my team, but not as a Junior. I could never do that to a man of your stature. I'll be too busy being Mayor, so I'd like to offer you CEO position."

I felt my heart jump for joy immediately. I am not happy that I'd be leaving so many young girls without an opportunity once I leave my company, but it was not build on any honour and I don't want to be associated with human traffickers disguised as priests.

David: "It would be an honour, Phila. Let's make an official date so we can discuss everything. If you are the man I believe you are, then I truly think that you have become the answer to all my prayers."

Phila: “Anything to see a man like you become his own. I'll be going to Italy for a few weeks, but when I come back, rest assured that you and I will start with your new journey. By the way, I'm glad you're taking over the church. My wife is so excited you'd swear she's married to you.”

David: (chuckling) “I hope I don't disappoint anyone.”

He got up and shook hands with me. He took a gulp of his glass as he emptied it. We said our goodbyes and he left. I felt so relieved and just then, Malome John walked in. He didn't look very pleased.

David: “Malome, what is wrong? Please don't tell me something has happened to Jacob.”

Malome John: (shaking head) “Nothing has happened to him – yet. Although, I am afraid he has already started going rogue.”

David: “Where is he?”

Malome John: "I spent most of my night searching for his soul. I had to beg the ancestors to show me the way. It turns out he had been at Nova's Brothel all night. I don't even want to go into the things he was doing there with the male escorts."

This was exactly my fear. My brother has gone mad and doesn't know how to stop himself.

David: (sigh) "So, what now?"

Malome John: "He's the least of your worries. You have bigger fish to fry."

David: (puzzled) "What do you mean?"

Malome John: "Trouble is looming, son. Protect your wife from your mother. I have been seeing a lot of disturbing visions about you and your wife."

David: "What kind?"

Malome John: (shaking head) "I'll tell you once I have a clearer vision and approval from Badimo (ancestors). Just tread carefully around your mother. It is high time you sorted out all your things and confided in Phila. I told you, he is the answer to your problems. We need to start thinking of an exit plan before something happens to you or your wife."

David: "I hear you, Malome, but what about Jacob?"

Malome John: "His wife is not as strong as yours. She has turned vile and envious. She will leave him. He will find his way, but so much is about to happen and I have been pleading with the ancestors to make it all stop. They said they can only delay, but what is about to happen is fate."

I felt a cold chill down my spine. Why can I never get any peace in my life? Why must things always go south for me?

Malome John: "Go home and wait for your wife. She is in a bad state emotionally because of my sister. You need to show her that you are behind her no matter what. The prayer is tonight and I'll be bringing Jacob back home. Just hang in there for a

little while longer. But, no matter what, make sure you don't leave your wife out of your sight. And don't eat anything from your mother.”

Has my mother actually gone that far?

Phila Zwane

When David called me I didn't expect to hear what he had just told me. That was music to my ears considering how easy he had just made my job. So, I decided to inform my wife by giving her a call.

Ziyanda: “My husband.”

Phila: (excited) “My wife.”

Ziyanda: “Kunjani (How are you)?”

Phila: “I'm so delighted right now.”

Ziyanda: "Hmm, am I going to have to fight someone?"

Phila: (laughing) "Never. I just spoke to David."

Ziyanda: (curious) "And?"

Phila: "Sthandwa sami (My love), I'm so happy. He's ready. He is finally ready to turn his mother in."

Ziyanda: "Oh, my love! Those are the best news ever! Now we can finally avenge our daughter and Sbu and finally get rid of that evil woman."

Phila: "That's my only goal right now, Sthandwa sami (My love). I'm just saddened that I am leaving you and the kids behind for two weeks."

Ziyanda: “You do what you have to do. Besides, you're doing it for Sbu. Please, come back to me. We don't want what happened to him happen to you.”

Phila: “Don't worry, love. This time, I am overly prepared. I'll be safe. I promise.”

Ziyanda: “Okay, I love you. Be safe.”

Phila: “I love you too, MaZwane (Mrs. Zwane).”

We hung up and I felt so relieved. I headed to the airport immediately. I was about to finally nail that bitch for everything she had done. David was the only one that those girls could trust. I was nearly there and I had to get them out of that horrible situation. Only God knows why He lets women like her still live.

Malome John

I was deeply upset last night; considering the fact that I had to pray and beg my ancestors for their mercy. What I saw just wasn't pretty. Tragedy is about to befall the Mosue family and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. A life will be taken, while another one will be lost. They had also shown me that something is going to happen to David, but according to the spirit, it is to protect him from his mother's evil doings. That is going to break Ziphora, Koko (grandmother) Adelaide ensured me that she was up for the task hence she was the chosen one. I have no idea how that was going to play out, but I could only beg for mercy. Of course, they said they would try and delay it all from happening, but everything that gets delayed has major consequences. I know that very well. Julia is going to get her day, but it won't be any time soon. I had bigger fish to fry, starting with getting Jacob back to his senses. I sometimes ask myself why parents just do what they do to their children. Had our father raised us better, we wouldn't even be in this mess. Our family is just messed up and now my nephews are suffering. I can only pray that that curse does not befall their children. At least our father was denied access to our ancestors. I can safely say that he won't be a part of their lives in any way. I headed straight to that brothel and rang the bell. I had to look straight into the camera and wave as I knew that Nova was looking. I had no problem with brothels and prostitutes. Some of them do it out of choice, while some feel rather trapped. I

couldn't do anything to all of them, but I just had to try. She knew me because I would occasionally be led by the spirit to come and assist young women and men in that place. I wouldn't rest until I saved them from the lives they were entrapped in. Unfortunately, she felt as if I was taking business away from her, by taking some of her best clients, but then, money talks. I offered her money in exchange for their freedom and she gladly accepted. We have been good friends ever since. I know, right? A whole seer being friends with a brothel queen. People would be surprised just how non-judgmental God is. He is a very patient man and believe me He will never throw in the towel with anyone, for we all deserve a chance for repentance.

Nova: (smiling) “John. How good to see you again. Have you come to save someone today? Please don't say that. Business has been slow.”

Malome John: (chuckling) “Nothing like that – for now, Nova. I'm still praying for you.”

Nova: “Keep praying, my friend. I will change – one day.”

Malome John: "I think you know the real reason why I'm here."

Nova: (nodding) "Please, don't be mad at me. I didn't keep him here against his will. I wanted to call you, but he begged me not to. He threatened to leave and go elsewhere, and as selfish as it sounds, he is much safer here."

Malome John: "It's alright. Please, show me his room."

Nova led me to the room where Jacob had spent the night. As much as I love my gift, it comes with a lot of baggage, including seeing the unseen. I can see a lot of people's ancestors roaming around them; while some people have bad spirits walking with them each day. I am constantly exposed to that each and every day. All those escorts in that place were carrying demons and unclean spirits

as they carried the souls of the people they sleep with daily. Many people underestimate soul ties; even having sex with a condom won't save you from a soul tie. I finally made it to Jacob's room.

Malome John: "Thank you, Nova."

Nova: "No problem."

I took a deep breath and opened the door. The sight was rather horrifying. Jacob was surrounded by five young men – all of them completely naked. They all looked so drunk and most probably high from drugs, although I did not pick up any drug use from Jacob's side. What a relief. I prepared myself mentally before arriving there because I knew that I'd see things nobody should even see. I had a sudden visual of everything that happened the night before flash right before my eyes. As usual, they all come without warning. I mostly dream of my visions, but at times they just flash before me. I saw how David came to this very room with all those men and they started drinking while some were exchanging drugs. All of them exchanged sexual favours with one another and ended up having an orgy. I don't understand why Julia would even allow Jack to do this to her own son. The son she birthed from her own womb. Sadly, she was not much bothered about Jacob as she was about David. Her connection to David had always been unhealthy. My heart ached as I stared at Jacob. I felt as if I had failed him. I could have done better; I should have done better. All those sessions I had given him and David had seemed like they were

all in vain. I broke down and cried right there, when I heard her voice speak to me.

Adelaide: "Don't cry, John. We entrusted you with this gift."

John: "Mme (Mom), go boima (it's so hard)."

Adelaide: "John, when I told you first about your gift, I warned you it would not be easy, but you were sent to save people. You are good man, and you have turned out just fine. I trust you and I know you will do even better."

John: (sigh) "I hear you."

Adelaide: "Pull yourself together, my son. Your efforts will be rewarded. I know, you haven't had an easy life because of this gift, but rest assured good things await you. I am sure you are aware of your visions about her. Your chosen one."

John:(sigh) "Yes, Mme (Mom). I hope you're not lying to me this time."

Adelaide: (chuckling) "I have been many things, my son, but lying is not one of them."

John: "Okay, Mme. I hear you."

Adelaide: "Your mother sends her regards. You'll hear from her soon."

John: "Just one question, though. About McDaniel - "

Adelaide: (interrupted) "You know very well that we can't stop what is about to come. The ancestors have spoken and as much as it pains me too, my son is better off with me. He won't survive what is coming."

John: (nodding) "Okay."

With that said, she disappeared. I hear more from her than my own mother. My mother was never much of a talker, so

whenever she appears I know it is not a good warning. I woke Jacob up and as expected, he had a bad hangover.

John: "Tsoga (wake up)."

Jacob: "Yoh (oh), Malome (Uncle). O dirang fa (what are you doing here)?"

John: "Get dressed. I'll meet you outside."

He knew better than to protest, so he just nodded as much as he didn't even feel like facing the day. Tough work awaited me; I had to try and fix Jacob's soul piece by piece all over again.

Ziphora

My day was fairly busy. I finally made an appointment with one of our Gynaes. I needed to get my own that would monitor my progress. I hadn't seen Jacob on duty ever since that tragic night. I had really hoped he was okay. As mean as Jeannette was to me, I sent her a text asking her if everything was okay

with them, but as expected she blue ticked and then blocked me on WhatsApp. Oh, well, I guess bygones should be bygones. I was rather busy and didn't have much time to spend with Faith and Desiree, but they promised to be at the funeral. For moral support, I guess. I got into the car and drove home. To my surprise, I found David had already cooked for us. He must have gotten home a lot earlier than I had expected.

David: (smiling) "Good evening, my wife."

He gave me such a passionate kiss that tantalized my body instantly.

Ziphora: "Someone is in a very good mood."

David: "I'm always in a good mood whenever you're around."

Ziphora: "It smells so delicious. What did you make?"

David: "Beef lasagne with salad and blueberry cheesecake for dessert."

Ziphora: "Thank goodness you didn't make chicken."

David: "I'm a good listener. I know now chicken and eggs make you nauseous. Go get changed so we can eat."

Ziphora: "After the day I have had, I can't wait to dig in. I'll change afterwards. Let's pray and eat."

So, we prayed and dug in. He asked me about my day and I told him about Julia. He was furious but begged me to relax when I told him about the subtle cramps I had been getting. We finished eating and I headed upstairs. I took a shower and he joined me. We ended up having a steamy short session before leaving for the prayer night. Mama had texted me letting me know that she was already on her way there. David and I got into the car and drove off. We found her already waiting for us outside of the house.

David: "Mme (mom), it is rather dangerous to be waiting outside of the house all alone at this time."

Susan: “My God is bigger than any crime. Don't worry about me.”

David shook his head in disbelief, but that was my mom. She looked like she had a few glasses of wine at home, so she was more than charged and ready for action. The moment we walked in, Julia spotted me and came charging at me. I felt so nervous and scared, but my mom and David were both ready to fight back.

Julia: (irritated) “Where have you been, wena (you)?! You don't take your new role in this family seriously, do you?!”

Susan: (angered) “Ema pele (wait a minute), wena o di kiss-kiss (you with kiss-kiss legs). O nagana gore o mang (who do you think you are)?! Do you think I gave my daughter to your son to be abused by you?! Ke tla go hlafetsa bosigo bo wena, mogwete ke wena (I swear, I'll ruin your night in an instant, you asshole)!”

Julia: (shocked) “Bjanong o rasetša eng (So, why are you making noise)?”

Susan: “Akere o tšile mo o kare o starrang (You came here as if you were the starrang). You shout – I shout back! You're not the only one who knows the pain of giving birth. Ke tla go nyela wa nyela (I'll shit on you till you shit on yourself)! No one messes with my children, Julia! Not even devils who hide behind the word of God!”

By then the entire house had become quiet. I spotted a few church wives including Boity and Akanyang and even Atlehang. Julia was very shocked and she was hoping for some back up from David.

Julia: “You're just standing there allowing this woman to insult me in my own house?!”

David: “This woman is more of a mother than you'll ever be, Julia. I dare you, try me and the entire church will finally know what kind of a woman you truly are.”

She looked at David, then at me, and then at my mother, who seemed so unbothered by her stinging look. Ntate Moruti Mac looked like he had been drinking a bit. He looked so down and he just stared at us. For the very first time I saw that man look so broken and he didn't even have the energy to shut his wife up. Something didn't seem right with him at all. Malome Jack walked down the stairs with his cane and immediately David tensed up. A few seconds later, Malome John walked in with David who looked like a mess. He looked like he hadn't bathed since that night and he smelled like the entire brewery. That very moment Julia saw him and actually realized that everyone was staring at us; she did damage control as always.

Julia: (panicky) “Eh, my people. Please, make your way to the lounge. All of you. We'll be right with you.”

They all reluctantly walked away, but one could tell that they were curious as to what was happening.

Malome Jack: “Call Jeannette down, we're ending this – tonight.”

He said that to Jacob who just nodded. He gave Malome Jack one stern look and he looked down. Jacob walked right up the stairs. We headed to the kitchen, but I could already tell Julia was panicking. I was worried because my mother was present and she was about to witness one of the Mosue family's ugly sides. She was about to hear family secrets that wouldn't sit well with her. A few minutes later, Jacob walked down alone.

Malome John: "Where is your wife?"

Jacob: "She'll be down in a moment."

He squeezed himself right next to Malome John. He kept staring at Malome Jack with eyes fuelled with hatred. Ntate Moruti, oh, the poor man just looked at Julia and hardly blinked. I could tell he was in pain. He was trying so hard not to cry – even though he didn't know what was happening. Jeannette sure took her damn time because she arrived ten minutes later. She didn't even greet anyone of us. She sat down right next to Ntate Moruti and Malome John started talking.

Malome John: "Now that we're all here, I think it would be best to finally start."

Julia: (panicky) “Can't we just excuse her?”

She pointed at my mother, who just gave her a death stare. Malome John was always so calm and collected, but that evening he was so pissed. He was revolted, actually.

Malome John: “Julia, now is not the time for your bullshit! O ska tlo ntena (Don't annoy me)!”

I never knew the man could even swear. She looked down and kept quiet.

Malome John: “You've done this for so many years and you seemingly got away with it. Everyone was under your spell, so Susan has every right to be here. She has the right to know exactly what kind of family her daughter has joined.”

I could feel David tense up immediately right next to me as he squeezed my hand. My heart beat faster as I knew that my mother would not be happy at all, but most importantly, my

husband's secret was about to be exposed. He was going to be vulnerable in front of everyone. Now, poor Jacob has to face his rapist all over again.

Malome John: “Mac, I am afraid what you are about to hear is not going to be good. It is high time you finally knew what has been happening right under your nose. Whatever you're about to hear, my brother, just know that you have been an exceptional father and nothing is your fault. Not one bit.”

“Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.”

Ziphora

I couldn't even comprehend what was about to go down. Everyone was so tense, meanwhile Jeannette just seemed so focused on me. I couldn't care less at that point. I was mostly worried about the outcome of the situation.

Malome John: “The truth needs to come out tonight. Before I start with Jacob and my brother Jack, I'd like to start off with your wife and what she did to David.”

David became increasingly nervous. My mother was anxiously anticipating what Malome John was about to say. Meanwhile, Julia was sweating her ass off and Malome Jack was nervous.

Malome Jack: “John, my brother, don't do this.”

Malome John: (annoyed) “If you interrupt me one more time I'm going to let this boy murder you. Something he should have done a long time ago.”

Malome Jack looked down in sorrow. He seemed remorseful. It was a bit too late if you ask me.

Malome John: “Mac, your wife and my brother stole your sons' entire childhood from them. You see, Julia was sexually abused by our father. Whereas Jack must have inherited that disgusting gene from him because he ended up doing the same thing. Julia started molesting David at the age of 4. She did it for years, and even fell pregnant by him at the age of 16. Remember that time she told you she had to go work in Ghana because God told her to?”

Ntate Moruti was not even responding, he grew increasingly weary and agitated.

Malome John: “Well, she had gone to Orange Farm to have an abortion. She took your son's virginity from him and killed his first child.”

Julia: (crying) “John, I beg of you, don't do this – please.”

Malome John totally disregarded her and continued.

Malome John: “Meanwhile she was doing that to her own son, my own brother was doing that to Jacob. Yes, your precious son was robbed of his manhood by his own uncle. To make matters worse, Julia knew about it and yet she did nothing. Do you know what she did the very first time she saw Jack's filthy penis in your son's mouth?”

Ntate Moruti clenched his fists, while he forced the tears back. I could see the veins popping from his entire face.

Malome John: “Nothing. She did absolutely nothing. She saw him and closed the door. Just imagine having my nephews tell me all those things from over the phone. Remember all those times I took them to visit me overseas? I was helping them through it all. Remember that day you caught David beating Julia up so badly when he was 18? That was because she had asked him to give her one last good fuck- for old times'

sake. That time the poor boy had just regained his life back. This thing with Luvu was not his fault at all. That bitch drugged him. She had planned it all with Luvu's mother and drugged him. They convinced the poor child that David would love her and marry her if she had sex with him. He woke up drowsy with Luvu on top of him, while she recorded the entire thing. She and her mother were watching the entire scene. Tell me, Mac, is that the woman you married? Is that the woman you fell in love with? A molester? An abuser? A liar and a cheater. Speaking of cheating, I don't think I have to refresh your memory. We both know the rumours about her and one specific driver are true. She has been fucking him for years hence you two don't even sleep in the same bedroom anymore.”

Julia broke down, while my mother remained shocked. Jack was looking down with no words, while Ntate Moruti looked like he was about to explode. David and Jack both were crying silently, while Jeannette didn't even have the slightest notion of consoling her husband.

Malome John: “I am telling you this finally not to make you feel bad at all, but to make you aware that you have been sleeping with the devil herself. The boys need to break free from

her. They need their own lives and Jacob being a father now, and Ziphora expecting, it is high time we get this family in order. David is about to be the new head of the church and we can't have it be run on such filth. I am so sorry, brother, all I ever wanted was to tell you, but they begged me not to. They couldn't face you after all that happened to them. They were afraid you would think of yourself as a failure. You did all you could to protect them, but sadly, you married Satan herself.”

Julia was crying crocodile tears, while Ntate Moruti slowly got up. I could tell how angry he was. He went towards the liquor cabinet, took out a bottle of whiskey and poured himself a hefty glass full. He downed it and let out a deep sigh. I could hear him sniff as he was silently crying. No one was prepared for what he did next. The next moment, Ntate Moruti took out a kitchen knife from the drawer and stabbed Malome Jack right in the chest. While we were all gasping in shock and screaming, he took it out and stabbed Julia right in the arm. He aimed for her chest, but the bitch ducked by covering herself with her arm. The knife cut so deep through her that it went through her entire arm. Everyone was so shocked, while Mama stood up in shock. I expected her to try and contain the situation, but no, she just stared at those two in total disgust. Ntate Moruti

couldn't even look at his sons. The shame he must have felt within himself. Oh

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poor man. People who were waiting for the prayer evening to start came rushing in.

Boity: (shocked) "Oh, my god, what happened?!"

Atlehang: "Someone call the cops."

Boity: "Are you an idiot? Call the ambulance!"

Ntate Moruti took the whiskey bottle with him and walked right past everyone. He wasn't bothered by all the blood that he had on his hands, nor was he even worried that he would be charged with murder or even attempted murder. While people were screaming asking us what had happened, Malome John ordered them to go outside to wait for the ambulance, although he wasn't really bothered. We all looked at Malome Jack, who seemed to be gasping for air. I had seen a lot of

people die, so it wasn't a shocker, but seeing it in such a manner with all that blood made me queasy.

Malome Jack: (gasping for air) "J... Jacob, I'm so sorry. I... don't know why I did what I did. Please, find it in your heart to forgive me."

Jacob just stared at him dying. We all stood there watching him slowly fade away, while bleeding out. Julia was crying hysterically.

Julia: (screaming) "Please! Help him! Mo thuseng (help him)!"

We all didn't take note of her, but Jeannette started crying and I honestly thought that Jacob would console her, but he also did the unexpected.

Jacob: (angrily) "Wena (You), Jeannette. I took you as a woman whom I loved. I trusted you with my deepest secrets and I hoped that you would walk this path with me. I chose you over

everyone always but you hurt me on a night when I needed you most.”

Jeannette: (crying) “I'm sorry, Jacob. Please, let's talk it through.”

Jacob: (shaking head) “No, after all, you did say you're too cute to be married to a gay man, right?”

He too just took his car keys and took off without saying a word further. Everything was such a mess. I found myself staring at Jack's body and seeing all that blood, I just vomited right there and then.

Susan: “David, take her to your room. I'll bring some warm water.”

Malome John: “Jeannette, go check on the kids.”

Jeannette: (crying) “Please, Malome! Help me! Fix my marriage, please!”

Malome John: "I'm afraid we have bigger problems than your marriage right now. This is not about you. Go check on the kids."

David took me to his room and tried to calm me down. I found myself shaking. It must have been the shock. Mama swiftly brought water and I drank it promptly. I was so worried about David, but my body failed me. He seemed so worried about me as well.

David: "Are you okay? Is there anything else you need?"

Ziphora: (shaking head) "No, I'm more worried about you."

David: (teary) "You're more important."

My mother did the unexpected. I honestly thought she would tell me to leave my marriage, but no, she surprised me.

Susan: (teary) “David, ngwanaka (my child). I had no idea you went through all that hell. I mean, we all knew that Julia was a witch, but this? This is just too much to deal with. You overcame it all and look at you, you have turned out more than fine. You are one of the most respected men in the country. Words can't even express how I feel right now, but whenever you need anything, I am here for you.”

She gave him a tight, long hug and I could see him quickly wipe the tears away. My mother, Susan Mokoena, the most thoughtful yet fierce woman I had ever known.

Susan: “Be strong. You are a man and a good man at that. As for Julia, I'll be sure to teach her a lesson. She won't get away with this.”

David was just so happy to finally have a mother figure that understood him. Someone that would comfort him and let him know that he was not the problem. He knew that, but the mind is just something else. I wish I had said that we were one step closer to getting rid of that rodent Julia, but life can be something else.

45

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Proverbs 26:27 - “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.”

Ntate Moruti

Life is something else. Just when you feel like you have found the love of your life, someone you actually have so much in common with, they show you just how much of a mistake it was to marry you. My mother had warned me so many times about choosing Julia, and nonetheless, I still continued. She gave me her blessing only because she loved me and wanted me to be happy – not because she was happy. I tried my level best, or so I thought. I remained faithful to her, no matter what. I gave her everything she asked for and I played my role as a father, or so I thought. I knew that she was not a good woman, although I had been praying for her for years. I truly believed that everyone could change – including her.

I didn't expect to hear how my own wife raped our son and allowed her brother to rape my other son. I was broken beyond the point of return. How would I even go back to being the person I was? The father I was? I was nothing but a failure. I failed to protect my own sons, how would I even protect my grandchildren? The moment I heard everything John said something in me snapped. I just couldn't think straight. All I wanted was to see Julia and Jack die right there on my kitchen table. How dare she? How dare she rob my boys of the life they had deserved? How do I even go back to them and face them?

I had been treated like total shit by Julia all those years. I managed everything coming from her, but the one thing I just couldn't do was face my boys. I could never bring back the lives they had lost. I just took my bottle and went to a nearby pond to drink and think. The more I drank was the more I just became sober. That entire conversation replayed in my entire mind, but what was worse was the fact that I tried recalling any incident. Any single incident that could think of that would make me think that I must have seen something. I couldn't believe just how good Julia was at lying. I missed all the signs. Not one but two of my sons were molested throughout

their entire childhood, but there was nothing I could do about it. So many years later and it still affected them. I had gone to the bottle store to get a second bottle of whiskey, but it just didn't take the pain away. It made it all worse. Julia had made a fool out of me for years. I was never a bad man – ever. I never hit her, abused her or even shouted at her.

I listened to her tell me what a loser I was and even tell me about how I am not good in bed even, but I took it like a man. I never missed a birthday, an anniversary. I made sure she looked good and felt good for all her functions despite what everyone said about her. I was always by her side, but she just never appreciated me. It is all good, I can take that, but not when it comes to my kids. To imagine the pain they must have gone through having to pretend to be alright around me when all they were going through is pain in every way possible. My job on this earth is done. I know, Julia will lie to me, but she owed me answers.

I must have been drinking non-stop for hours. I couldn't even drive myself home. I had already killed a man, so I didn't want to endanger any innocent lives

so I decided to call an Uber. Upon arrival at my house, it was just after 3am. The day before Luvo's funeral. The poor girl went through so much all because of Julia. Do vows or the Bible mean anything to her at all? I thought she was most probably not at home since I stabbed her, but to my surprise, she was home. I was surprised to see that the police weren't even at my house looking for me. I slowly walked in and found her sound asleep in her bedroom. I stared at her for a while and rage crept up on me once again. I switched on the light and she woke up to find me staring at her. I could tell she was afraid. The mighty Julia Mosue – afraid? This woman didn't deserve my family's surname.

Ntate Moruti: “Julia. O right mara (Are you okay even)?”

Julia: (shaky) “Mac. O tswa kae (Where do you come from)? We were all worried sick about you.”

Ntate Moruti: “Were you now?”

Julia: “What do you mean?”

Ntate Moruti: “Julia, wa makatsa, waitse (you're full of surprises, you know). Just tell me why. Why did you do it?”

Julia: (teary) “Mac, please. Let's talk about this when you're sober. I mean, I am in pain and tired.”

Ntate Moruti: (laughing) “I, I, I. It has always been you, Julia! Did you ever even love me?”

Julia: “Of course I did.”

Ntate Moruti: “Do you know how I feel right now? I feel so empty – so alone. I feel so hollow, and the hole just keeps getting bigger whenever I think of my sons. You have ruined me, Julia, in the worst possible way. Words can never explain how much you have damaged me.”

Julia: “Mac, please.”

Ntate Moruti: “Please. Please?! Do you even know how many years I have been saying that word to you. “Julia, please, tell

me what to do. Please, tell me how to fix this.” Kgante ke nyetse sefebe (turns out I married a whore)! God is full of surprises, I trusted you with my church and you turned it into a breeding ground of molesters. How many were they, Julia? How many men have you fucked and how any more boys have you raped?”

She cried but I just wasn't bothered.

Ntate Moruti: “All I can say is that you may think you have won, but the battle is far from over. I want you to suffer a great deal, Julia. My wish is for you to never get a night's peaceful sleep and I want you to die a slow, painful death. Death would be an easy way out for you right now. May you get what is coming to you. I for one, will never forgive you and I do hope that Jack is rotting in hell as we speak.”

Julia: (crying) “What.. what are you doing, Mac?”

I felt like I had lost my mind. I went into my bedroom to get my gun and then I went right back to hers. She was staring at me

with bewildered eyes. I loaded the gun right in front of her and she was scared beyond.

Ntate Moruti: "I wish nothing but hell on earth for you, Julia."

I cocked the gun and pointed right to the side of my head. I didn't think twice as I pulled the trigger. The last thing I remember was seeing her evil face cry as I dropped down to the floor.

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“As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. “

Jacob

In life, I was always taught to preserve. I was supposed to be a winner much like Jacob in the Bible. I never disobeyed my parents – ever, yet I was on the receiving end of abuse. I strived to do better, especially when I met Jeannette, but she showed me that she really was not interested in me. I even went to therapy so that I could be a better man for her. We decided to start a family because that was just how much I loved her. I know, I am not perfect. I was dealing with my demons and believe me, I had fought them so hard. I had fought feelings for other men on a daily basis – despite having a foundation for young boys. I could never take advantage of anyone like that, but whenever she was angry, she would throw the word gay in my face. Who does that? I have since learnt that the words of an angry man are the truth. After all the drama that occurred, I must say, I am happy my father killed Jack. He didn't deserve to live any longer, although I was very worried about my father. His phone was off and no one knew

where he was. His car tracker reported that his car was spotted near the dam not too far from our house, but he was nowhere to be found. I got into bed with a heavy heart right after feeding the twins. I could tell that Jeannette had been waiting for me, but I just wasn't interested.

Jeannette: "Jay, can we talk?"

Jacob: "Talk."

Jeannette: "Why are you being so cold towards me? I'm the mother of your children. I surely don't deserve such treatment, more especially not from you. I mean, I have been there for you all these years, and put up with everything you have put me through."

Jacob: (interrupting) "Ema gona moo (Hold it right there). What have I no done for you, Jeannette? Have I not shown you just how much I loved you? Have I not given you all the love in the world? Have I not taken care of you? I paid for your studies as well as your sisters' studies, but did you hear me remind you about it all? You told your mother who told your

entire family about my past and all of them said you were married to a gay man, but did you hear me persecute you about that?”

She remained quiet and started crying, but I was just so hurt.

Jacob: “From the moment that Ziphora joined this family you were okay with it, until your stupid mother told you how you deserved to be first lady and not some Motswana girl who jut arrived here two seconds ago.”

She immediately became wide-eyed.

Jacob: “Oh, yes. I saw the entire conversation on your Family WhatsApp group. I must say, you and your family don't think very highly of me or any member of this family – despite my father welcoming you with open arms. I took you out of the gutter, Jeannette, but not once did you hear me rub it in your face. When I met you I told you all my troubles and not once did I force you to love me. You said you loved me willingly, but here you are gossiping about me with your whole family. Ziphora has been nothing but nice to you and you still

curse her unborn child. Knowing my brother's history and how he has been dying to have a child of his own, do you honestly think you are a woman of God?"

Jeannette: (crying) "Please, Jay, I was just angry. I didn't mean to do all those things."

Jacob: (shaking head) "An angry man's words are a sober man's thoughts, Jeannette. You know very well how I feel about all this. I am so tired. I am trying so hard to be the man I need to be for my children."

Jeannette: (shocked) "Your children? What about me, Jay?"

Jacob: "I don't think I can do this any longer."

Jeannette: (shouting) "I make one silly mistake of talking about you and you decide that you have had enough of me?!"

Jacob: "This is exactly what I am talking about. You have just not grown ever since I married you. I have given you so many

chances, but you still haven't grown. I'd rather be alone than be unhappy. We can share custody of the girls. I will give you everything you demand, but I just can't be with you anymore.”

Jeannette: (angrily) “You must be sick if you think I'd ever let my children be raised by a gay father!”

There she goes again. While she was ranting all over the bedroom, I heard a loud sound. The babies even started crying. That sounded like a gunshot. I immediately rushed to my mother's bedroom and while rushing there I heard her scream. I found the bedroom door wide open and I was met with a horrific sight that made me numb for a few minutes. I wanted to speak, but words failed me. I usually respond very quickly but that night, I just became paralyzed. My father was lying in a pool of blood with a gun right next to him on the floor. He had shot himself just like that. At that point I didn't even believe that he had shot himself.

Jacob: (shaky) “What happened?”

Julia: (crying) “He... He came in here and shot himself.”

Jacob: "What the fuck happened, Julia?! You can't tell me Papa (dad) shot himself?! You must have shot him! You did it! Admit it! Admit it, you bitch!"

I charged at her and lay my hands on her neck. I pressed so hard; I just wanted to get the air out of her. I wanted to leave her lifeless. I wanted to suck the life out of her the same way she had taken life from me, from David and now, from my father.

Jeannette: (screaming) "Jacob! Jacob, no! Leave her!"

Jeannette must have been screaming for a good old two minutes, before I actually came back to my senses and let go of my mother. She gasped for air and coughed. I wasn't bothered by her. Why does God always take the good ones away? I rushed towards my father and checked his pulse. It was there, but very, very faint.

Jacob: "Call the ambulance."

She nodded and ran. I don't know why I married her, you know. She could never think for herself. While I tried to stop the bleeding, we waited for the ambulance. My heart felt like I was literally ripping away from my chest with every moment that was passing by. My mother was crying, busy asking God to help her. In my mind I asked myself if she even knew who He actually was. The way she had been tempting fate for so long, I can't help but feel that her suffering was near.

Jacob: "Papa, hang in there, please. For us. For your sons."

Malome John

I couldn't sleep as usual. I had been praying ever since I made it back to the hotel. I hate sleeping in the hotel beds. So many people do such vile things in these rooms. I might just take David up on that offer of sleeping at his house. Perhaps I need to come back home and actually buy myself a house here. The boys need me. I lit a candle at exactly 02:50 and started praying.

Malome John: “Badimo ba ka le Modimo wa ka (My ancestors and my God), please guide me. I can feel your will already about to be done. I can feel McDaniel's spirit about to leave this earth. All I ask is that you please guide him to the right path; may you be there to accept his soul

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but before that, please allow his children to say goodbye to him. They are not going to take his death very well. That is all I ask of you, bagolo (great ones).”

While I was awaiting their response, I heard his mother, Koko (grandmother) Adelaide answer me.

Adelaide: “We have heard your response, my son. Trust me, we shall let him hang on a little while longer, but rest assured, we will come back to fetch him.”

I nodded and got up immediately. I took an Uber straight to David's house. Knowing him, he might as well behave like Jacob if he hears about this. I had already felt him shoot himself and at least Jacob was there with him.

David

I found myself being so sleepless, and before I knew it, it was already almost 3am. My wife and I always pray at midnight and 3am. I was very worried about my father as I had been calling him non-stop and he just wasn't answering his phone.

David: "Wake up, love. Let's pray."

She woke up and knelt down with me as I lit the candle.

David: "Modimo wa ka le Badimo ba ka (My God and my ancestors), I thank you for everything you have given and done for us. I thank you for a brand new day of life. I ask that you protect my father, please. I know, I haven't been the most loyal servant but I do ask that you please guide him throughout this situation. Be with him and help him cope. I ask this not because I deserve it, but because I know you are all merciful. Amen."

I usually felt much lighter after praying each time, but that morning, I just couldn't feel at ease.

Ziphora: "Are you okay?"

David: (shaking head) "I can't help but shake this feeling that something is horribly wrong with my father."

Ziphora: "Leave the candle on just so that your ancestors can see us."

I nodded and was about to go to bed, when my phone rang. I instantly answered it because I thought it was my father. I didn't even look at my phone screen.

David: "Hello?"

Malome John: "David, it's me. I'm outside."

My uncle never comes to me without warning. He didn't call nor anything. I knew then that something was not right.

David: "Let me come and open for you."

Malome John: "No, you and your wife get dressed. I'll meet you downstairs. We'll take the Uber I came with."

I then knew something was seriously off. I got dressed immediately along with Zee. I asked her to stay and sleep so she could rest, but she wouldn't hear of it. We got into the car and Malome was very serious.

David: "Malome, what's happening? Re ya kae (Where are we going)?"

Malome John: "I'll tell you once we get there."

I knew I had to respect him, but I was just too anxious. When the driver made his way to the hospital, I knew immediately that something was just not wrong.

David: (anxious) “Malome (Uncle), why are we here?!”

He walked out, forcing my wife and I to walk out and follow him.

David: “I'm not taking a step further until you tell me why we are here!”

I felt myself consumed with painful tears before I even knew what he was going to say.

Malome John: “It's your father. He shot himself. Come, you don't have much time left. He's holding on so that you can say goodbye.”

I could feel as if I was being consumed by heavy waters. This must be a dream. I immediately rushed into the hospital, while Malome and Zee were following me. I went straight into his ward and found Jacob right next to him. I didn't even want to look at my mother who was crying in the waiting area. I saw

him heavily sedated, as if he was barely hanging on. It was as if the machines were breathing for him while his head was severely swollen and he had a bandage all round his head. That didn't look like the father I had known for the past 35 years.

David: (crying) "Jacob, what happened?"

Jacob: (sobbing) "I don't know. I didn't even know he was at home. I only heard a gunshot while I was in my bedroom. Julia says he shot himself, but I just can't believe it. There is no way."

Malome John: "I'm afraid ke nnete (it's true), boys. He shot himself."

I was so shocked, I couldn't believe it.

Jacob: "Why didn't you stop it, Malome (uncle)?!"

Malome John: "Even if I had tried to, he would have died anyway. It was his time, boys. I saw it a few days ago in a vision. I'm sorry."

David: "Malome! We are the reason he killed himself! Why did Malome Jack come back?! Had he not have come back, my father would still be alive!"

Malome John: "Please, say your goodbyes. He won't rest assured knowing you two are sad like this."

David: "I can't say goodbye, Malome! I can't. At least he got to meet your daughters, Jacob. What about me? He will never get to see my baby become born. Papa! Ntate weh (Oh, father)! Why o re etsa so (Why are you doing this to us)?! Were we not reason enough for you to keep fighting?!"

Jacob: "David, don't do this. Let him go."

David: (crying) "I can't! Ntate hle (Father, please)! I'm begging you! I knew we shouldn't have told you. I just knew it."

I felt as if I was losing my mind, while Ziphora was crying right next to me. Before I knew it, the machines started beeping. My worst nightmare had become true. I didn't want to leave his sight. I held onto his hand, even when the nurses and doctor came in rushing.

Doctor: "Sir, please! Get him out of here!"

I was crying; it felt like my entire mind was spinning and racing continuously. Jacob managed to get me out of there, but I just couldn't stop blaming myself for his death. Had we not come clean, he wouldn't have killed himself. I saw Julia sitting there, crying. Oh, she is good at her crocodile tears.

David: (shouting) "I curse the day God ever thought of creating a devil like you!"

The doctor came a few minutes later and told us that my father was no more. I felt so numb and completely forgot about everyone around me. I sobbed as I dropped right there on one of the chairs. I didn't even realize the effect all this had on my wife. Ziphora fainted right before me and luckily Malome John caught her before she fell onto the ground.

Jacob: "Dammit! Can we get some help here!"

David: "Zee! My love, please. Don't leave me too!"

47

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Two days later...

Ziphora

It had been a rough few days. We were about to bury Junior and Luvo, but we ended up having to plan a funeral for four people. David had decided to bury Junior alongside his father. Church was postponed that weekend, even though he was supposed to take his new role on as the new head pastor. The funerals were all over the news with speculation and heresay; only to find that Jeannette's family took money from journalists and spilled the beans. She had told her family everything about Jacob's family, and now the entire world knows about him and David being abused – although none of us had confirmed it. It was ugly. I couldn't even leave the house without being followed or having media around the house. Luvo was buried rather quickly, and the family decided that they wouldn't bury Malome John for obvious reasons. Of course, it didn't sit well

with Julia. What made things worse was that me being the only woman left in the house, I had to call the shots. Jeannette was gone; Jacob had told her to go home and leave him in peace. He didn't want to hear any of it. Julia was not even behaving like someone who had just lost the love of her life. She had gone to bury John alone without us, alongside his children. She caused a lot of havoc for us because we were planning on burying Ntate Moruti with so much dignity the following day, so she decided to bring Malome John's children along with her and a few of her family members. Of course, it didn't sit well with Ntate Moruti's side of the family.

Julia: “Wena (You), Ziphora, call the rest of the family. I'd like to show them something.”

She still had a condescending attitude towards me, but I put all my trust in God. I couldn't expect my mother to fight all my battles for me and luckily Ziyanda said she would come help me and she would bring a very interesting guest along with her. I just looked at her and didn't respond. I found David with Jacob just outside the kitchen, preparing the pots for meat.

Ziphora: “Love, your mother asked me to call you guys. She said she wants to show you all something.”

Malome John, David along with Jacob followed me to the lounge only to find Julia sitting with two girls who looked like Malome John, a few of her own family members as well. David and Jacob got instantly agitated.

David: “And then wena (you)?”

Aunty 1: “Hmm, o boletse (you did say), ga a na mekgwa (he has no manners).”

David: “Hey wena (you), o bolela le nna jwale ka motseng wa mang (you're talking to me like that in whose house)?”

Aunty 2: “Yoh (wow)! Julia, kgala bana ba gao (reprimand your children).”

Julia: “David, Jacob, dulang fase (sit down).”

She had a letter in her hands, but they were both so angry.

Jacob: “You decided to call us while we were busy preparing everything for our father's funeral for what?! We don't have all day.”

She held the letter up.

Julia: “In my hands, I have a Luvo's suicide note.”

Yoh, she should not have said that because David nearly jumped on her. Everyone on her side were so angry and wanted to fight. It was Julia's family against Ntate Moruti's family.

Malome John: “Everyone, shut up! Ga le na mekgwa (you have no manners)! We are about to bury the man of this house and you, Julia, you of all people decide to pull such a stunt?! Luvo was not part of this family and we both know what really happened to her unless you want me to summon the spirits right now because I'll do it! Ga o na dihlong (you have no

shame)! All of you! You call yourselves elders yet you entertain this kak from your own daughter?! Bonang fa (look here), McDaniel was a respectable man and I will not have you tarnish his memory like this.”

Julia: “John, you are my brother, you're supposed to be on my side.”

Malome John: “Only a stupid woman would say that a day before her husband's funeral. If I didn't know better, I'd say you killed him. Now, look here. None of you are allowed to sleep here if you keep causing havoc. I will not hesitate to kick you out and ban you from the funeral. As for you, Julia, you will not disturb any of these processes. Ziphora is in charge and she planned everything. That goes for all of you. If you need anything, you ask her – not Julia. Wena (you), as the widow, you are not allowed to touch anything. If you still want to be a wife, go sit in your room on that mattress and behave yourself along with the rest of your gang. I won't tell you again.”

They immediately got up mumbling a few insults under their breath. I was not bothered at all.

Aunt 1: “Can you at least make us some tea, Makoti (daughter in law)?”

David: “My wife is not your slave. If you want tea do it yourself or send someone to do it for you.”

With that said, I was such a proud wife to my husband, but I had enemies already. That aunt gave me a death stare, of which I ignored and continued with my duties. The way Julia was such a disturbing woman, we went coffin selecting without her and even chose the outfit for Ntate Moruti to wear while she was busy with John's funeral. She didn't do anything for her husband and even refused sleeping in that bedroom for a while. I suspected that perhaps he was haunting her or something, but well, what did I know. While I was busy and David had been checking on me every now and then, Ziyanda walked in along with someone who looked like her grandmother.

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Hey, girl. You look like a real makoti (daughter in law), hey.”

Zihpora: (laughing) “The way I'm so tired. My feet are aching.”

Ziyanda: “You'll rest just now, I'll take over. This is my grandmother, Gogo Khanyi. A lot of people call her Gogo K.”

Gogo Khanyi: (smiling) “Even Ma is fine, don't listen to her. I'm no one's Gogo.”

I remember her telling me about her. She is the one who shocked the entire family by marrying her Ben 10. I must say, she looked so beautiful and nothing about her screamed Gogo. Her body was on fire, I now could see where Ziyanda got her beautiful genes from.

Ziphora: “Pleased to meet you, Ma. Let me make you some tea.”

I must have said something hilarious because both of them laughed so hard.

Gogo Khanyi: “Uyahlanya wena (You're crazy). Have you ever heard Ziyanda tell you that I like tea? Relax, why do you think I have brought such a big bag? You sit down here with your friend, I am going to check on everything outside. Stay put and don't lift a finger, we're here to help.”

I couldn't thank her enough for being so thoughtful. David begged me not to overwork myself, but I couldn't exactly sit and call the shots while people were working. I was going to be considered a lazy makoti. My friends were working, but at least they were going to be at the funeral. It was a big affair since we were burying both David's son and father.

Ziyanda: “So, how is everything going with the baby?”

Ziphora: “Oh, it is going fine, but apparently I am stressed, so I have to take it easy. As a result, David took it upon himself to get my hours at work reduced, imagine that.”

Ziyanda: (laughing) “He's still reasonable, but my Phila would have gotten them to fire me. He doesn't want me working that one.”

We both laughed and just then the big aunty waked in; the one who wanted me to make them tea.

Aunty 1: “Ja, neh. Go monate go nyalwa ke banna ba di tshelete (It's nice being married to men with money). Motho o no pharama fela a sheba bo rakgadi ba dira tee (a person just sits on her ass and watches her aunts make tea).”

I got instantly annoyed and as I was about to answer, Gogo Khanyi did the retaliating for us.

Gogo Khanyi: “Askies (Excuse me)?! Na re o reng wena, vetgat (what did you just say, fat ass)?!”

Aunt 1: “Who are you even?!”

Gogo Khanyi: “I'm your worst nightmare if you dare say another filthy word out of your fat fuck mouth to that girl!”

Aunt 1: (angrily) “Nna ga o ntsebe, girly (You clearly don't know me)! Ke ngwanana wa Lesotho (I'm a Lesotho girl)! Ke tla go bontsha mehlolo (I'll show you flames)!”

I didn't see the next move coming. Ziyanda had told me plenty of times that her grandmother was rather crazy, but I didn't expect that. Gogo Khanyi reached for one of the knives and stepped closer to the now scared Aunt.

Gogo Khanyi: “Khuluma futhi (Repeat what you said). Mina Ng'umZulu (I'm Zulu) and I don't mind cutting out that fat pussy of yours that is making you disrespect the Queen mother of this house. Azishe, Fatty (Let it roll). Ngimile (I'm waiting).”

The aunt just remained quiet as she could see Gogo Khanyi pointing the knife right towards her crotch.

Aunty 1: “Aowa (No), I'll just make tea for myself and my people.”

Gogo Khanyi: (shaking head) “On that note, tell them to order tea or drink water instead. I don't want to see any of you in this kitchen, unless you're called by the Queen Mother, Siyazwana (are we clear)?”

Aunt 1: “Sharp.”

She just left and then gogo Khanyi laughed, leaving me in disbelief. She carried on opening her bottle of wine and poured Ziyanda a glass as if nothing had just happened. I don't know, but I think this one will keep Julia and her crew on their toes. I might be able to get a peaceful night's sleep after all without worrying about who might poison me. My mother would join me a little later on, and my grandmother said she couldn't make it to come help me. She claimed she was too devastated about all the news regarding Julia and the tabloids, but I personally felt she was embarrassed that she just didn't see it coming. There was nothing bad she could even say about Julia, but now, it was as clear as daylight that she was wrong. Mama said she was so depressed and didn't answer anyone's phone calls, but then, only time would tell, I guess.

“Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

Ziphora

I won't lie, I had the best time of my life being the Makoti (daughter-in-law). It was about past 8 in the evening and everything went smoothly. Gogo Khanyi and Ziyanda were there to protect me and ensured that I did not touch a single thing. They both ensured they served everyone who came food and tea, until Boitu, Amo and Akanyang arrived and they took over to assist. Amo was rather quiet, I am sure she was warned to keep her opinions to herself, but after seeing Gogo Khanyi, nobody wanted to say a word to her. Gogo Khanyi purposefully did not serve Julia and her crew any food. She wanted them to apologize and humble themselves, until then, they were to remain in her bedroom. David kept coming to check on me every two minutes, shame. I felt bad for him because he had his own feelings to deal with. Everyone who was outside, those being Ntate Moruti's side of the family, they never had a problem with me whatsoever. While we were chatting away, David's aunt walked in, the one who named me on my wedding day. Her name was Nkgono (Granny) Nthabeleng by the way,

but they all called her Nkgono since she was the only elder woman alive.

Nkgono: “Relebohile, ngwanaka (my baby). Look how beautiful you are carrying already. Come, let me take a good look at you.”

Seeing her always excited me as she was one of the friendliest people I had ever known. She smiled as she looked at me the usual way; but then she frowned as she held my face. Her frown was rather unusual, as if she was seeing something unpleasant in my eyes. Then she hugged me unexpectedly.

Nkgono: “No matter what God throws your way, my child, heed my words; you are stronger than any curve ball.”

She then kissed me and went to sit down in the lounge, leaving me rather confused.

Ziphora: “Did you see that?”

Ziyanda: “Yes, old people are weird like that. They have some sort of third eye and see things we can't see. Don't worry about it too much.”

I tried to shake it off although it remained at the back of my mind. My mother finally came, despite coming from her day shift.

Susan: (smiling) “Dumelang (Good evening). Ziyanda, nice to see you again. You must be Gogo Khanyi. My goodness, you don't look a day older than 30.”

They both laughed and got on like a house on fire. She had also brought her own bottle of wine. Just as I thought that the house was crowded, it got way too busy with so many people from the church who had come to lend a hand. I was so exhausted by then, but I tried to keep my eyes open. Honestly, I was rather afraid of being alone in David's bedroom because I knew Julia and her crew would start something or maybe finish me off. I was yawning every two minutes and Mama noticed.

Susan: "Ziphora, go rest. Your feet are swollen already and you can't do that to yourself."

Ziphora: "But Mama, I have to be here to assist people."

Susan: "We're more than enough. Go with Ziyanda, I'll ask a few of the other young girls to join you a bit later. We've got you covered."

Ziphora: "Thank you, Mama."

I quickly went to David to tell him I was going to bed.

David: "Let me come with you."

Ziphora: "Don't be silly, baby, I'll go with Ziyanda. I'll see you later."

He kissed me and I walked up with Ziyanda who took the rest of the bottle of wine with her. How I could do with a bottle of

wine. I walked past Julia's bedroom and saw her looking at me with pure disgust. She must have been really stressed sleeping in the very same bedroom her husband shot himself in; and what was worse was that Malome John had cleansed the bedroom days ago and now the casket was in that very same room. So, she had to stare at it all night. With an evil heart like hers, I doubt she felt any sorrow. We finally got to David's bedroom and I was rather relieved. I mean, it was an en-suite bedroom, so there was absolutely no need for me to go to the bathroom outside of the bedroom. While Ziyanda and I were getting settled, that big aunt who was part of Julia's crew opened the door. I could tell she had something in her hands, but was bummed to see me with Ziyanda. She was hoping I'd be alone.

Aunt 1: "Oh, sorry, I was looking for the bathroom."

How? When Julia's bedroom also had an en-suite bathroom? Those women were at war with me and I did not even want anything from them. I just wanted the funeral to be over so that life could go back to normal. Immediately after she closed the door, Ziyanda went ahead and locked it.

Ziyanda: "Those bitches are on a mission, I tell you. Be glad I am here, otherwise we would be saying something else tomorrow."

Ziphora: "I really appreciate you being here, Ziyanda."

Ziyanda: "Don't mention it, babe. Come, let's get some shut-eye."

We dozed off and slept.

Julia

Everything is a big mess. I curse the day that witch was brought into my family. I really wish she could just die. Mac took his own life, but honestly, it saved me a lot of time because in the end I would have killed him myself. I mean eventually Buda and I wanted to make our relationship an effortless one. Why should I be the one to suffer when I am in love? I am just relieved that he is out of my life for good and I will just reap the benefits of inheriting everything. Ziphora is walking around

acting like she owns my house. Imagine that – a whole makoti organizing her father-in-law's funeral. Where have you seen such madness? To make things worse John is not even on my side, but what did I expect? We never got along. How could he just refuse like that to bury his own flesh and blood and go all out for Mac? He wasn't even his blood. I got so pissed seeing her walk right past me with that fat cow, so I sent one of my cows to do some dirty work for me. I was surprised when she came back so quickly.

Julia: “And then wena (you)?”

Aunt 1: “Hayi go padile (I failed). She was not alone.”

Julia: (angrily) “You failed to do one single task – just one, Mmane (aunty)! All you had to do was just pour it in her tea.”

Aunt 1: (shaking head) “Nna ga ka di tlwaela dilo tse (i'm not used to such things), Julia. Next time do it yourself.”

Julia: (clicking tongue) “For sure I will.”

David

I found myself wandering deep in thought in front of the fire alongside my brother and uncle. We had a few glasses of cognac, just to refresh our minds a bit.

Malome John: “Boys, I think we should go sleep for a while. Re tla tsoga goseng (we'll get up early in the morning).”

Jacob: “I second that. I need some rest as well.”

David: “Will Jeannette be coming to the funeral?”

Jacob: (hastily) “I don't know, I don't even want to know.”

I guess he had already made up his mind about his wife and there was nothing I could do about it. Malome John, Jacob and I went to sleep in Papa's bedroom. We had instructed everyone that no one else would be allowed to sleep in

there. We just wanted to have that peace of mind and get to connect with our father's spirit one last time. As We got in there, Jacob and I shared the bed while Malome decided to lie down on the couch. It was already midnight and I struggled to fall asleep but eventually dozed off. I had such an amazing dream of my father. Funny enough, in the dream, he had come dressed in the very same outfit we put him in – his favourite suit. He came to wake me in the dream and I was lying right next to Jacob in bed, while Malome was right on the couch.

Mac: (smiling) “My son.”

David: “Papa. Ke wena (is it you)?”

Mac: (smiling) “Yes, it is me.”

David: (teary) “Why did you do it, Papa? We still need you.”

Mac: (shaking head) “I'm still here with you, David, I'm with you all the way. I just lost it when I heard all those dirty things they did to you and Jacob. I could never forgive myself for missing all the signs. I blamed myself and if I had to live again, it was either going to be me or your mother. I didn't want to spend

the rest of my life in prison, so I saved you all the misery and embarrassment. I still love you, son and just know how proud I am of you. Not once did I ever doubt you. Know that no matter what

you will shine. You will take the bull by the horns and I will be right by your side.”

David: “I don't think I can ever carry on without you, Papa. You were the only sane person in this family apart from Malome John.”

Mac: “John is your father now. Trust him, he will never let you down the same way he never let you down all those years.”

David: “I will miss you dearly.”

Mac: “Whenever you miss me, think of my favourite song and sit outside on your balcony, just like we used to do in this house. Talk to me. Pour your heart out and I will be right there, listening to you. Keep praying and encourage your brother to pray. More woes await you both, but I will be right

there with you. You have a good woman beside you. Take good care of her.”

David: “I will.”

Mac: “I have one last request from you.”

David: “Anything.”

Mac: “About a week ago, I changed my will. It is as if I knew that I was going to die. It is in the study, but I kept it in the secret compartment. Only you can get it out. Your mother has no idea that I changed it, so please, ensure that that is the will that will be read. Please, do me the honour of reading it the day after my funeral. Don't wait any longer. I want you and Jacob to live your lives and try and restore all those years that were taken from you. I love you, son.”

David: “With that said, he left.”

I woke up right around the same time Jacob woke up too.

Jacob: "Bad dream?"

David: (shaking head) "No, I just had a dream about Papa."

Jacob: "Me too."

Oddly, I could smell his favourite cologne. It was rather bizarre. Malome John woke up to pray and he was surprised to see us awake.

Malome John: "And then Iona (you two)?"

David: " We jut had a dream about Ntate."

Malome John: "Oh, it wasn't a dream. He was just here."

Jacob: (surprised) "Can you still see him?"

Malome John: “Yep, he is always right here. He'll be gone very soon. He just has a few loose ends to tie up.”

David: “What kind of loose ends?”

Malome John: “You'll find out soon enough.”

As soon as he said that, we heard Mama scream from her bedroom, with all the other women in that room as well. Both Jacob and I looked at Malome John amused.

Malome John: “Ke nako ya ka ya go rapela (It is my time to pray), you can go see what is going on. I bet you'll find it hilarious.”

Jacob and I looked at one another and walked out curiously. Mama was still screaming by then.

Jacob: “Keng bjanong (What is it now)?”

Julia looked so frightened, and so were the people in that very room. Gogo Khanyi came rushing up the stairs as well.

Gogo Khanyi: “Yoh, yini manje (what is it now)?”

Julia: (frightened) “M.. Mac! He's... He's right there. He is standing right there.”

None of us could see anything, but she was so sure that she could see him too.

Jacob: “So?”

Gogo Khanyi: “Manje uthuswa indoda yakho (you're scared of your husband)?”

Julia: “I can't sleep in here. Please, get me another room to sleep in.”

Gogo Khanyi: "Sisi weh (Sis, please), uzolala lana (you'll sleep right here). Angithi be ushade naye lo baba (you were married to this man, weren't you)? Manje uthuswa yini (So why are you afraid)? He just came to kiss you goodnight for old times sake. Unless you have something to hide. Or umbulele (did you kill him)?"

Everyone stared at her in wonder.

Julia: (defensive) "No, of course not."

Gogo Khanyi: "Good, then you will have no problem seeing his face til we put him in the ground. Say hi to him for me. Lala kahle ke sisi (sleep well then, sis)."

My brother and I couldn't help but burst out in laughter as we headed back to Papa's bedroom. My father was a lot of things and he used to joke a lot and find humour in the most weirdest situations. I guess he just wanted to toy with my mother and man, I enjoyed that. It is not everyday you see my mother scared. We went back to the bedroom and tried to go back to sleep.

Ziphora

I had a rather good night's sleep and a pleasant dream about Ntate Moruti. Oddly, I could feel his presence and smell his cologne. He just told me that he was proud to see David had chosen well and he gave me his blessing to be the new Queen Mother. I had no idea how I felt about that position. I didn't even know if I was equipped for it, but he told me that I was. Nonetheless, it was a beautiful dream. I got up and got ready. Ziyanda was already up and so was Mama and Gogo Khanyi. They had locked me in. They can be so dramatic, but I appreciated it. We had decided to wear white for the funeral, it was David's orders. He doesn't like black for funerals. It is a rather depressing colour. And also, white was Ntate Moruti's favourite colour. I hadn't known him for very long, but I felt as if we bonded quite well. I do wish that I got a chance to get to know him better, considering the fact that I grew up without a father. It would have been pleasant. It was about 5am and the house sounded really busy. I only heard footsteps and voices when Ziyanda unlocked the door as she walked in.

Ziyanda: "Good morning, queen mother."

Ziphora: (chuckling) “Hey.”

Ziyanda: “Sorry I had to lock you in, Gogo's orders. We can't afford another funeral.”

She was right about that. She was so nice, nice enough to bring me breakfast and some tea. Just before I ate it, I heard Gogo Khanyi roaring in the kitchen.

Gogo Khanyi: (shouting) “Yoh (oh)! Ngiyanyelwa lana (I'm being fooled)!”

We could hear her storm right up the stairs as she opened Julia's bedroom door without even knocking.

Gogo Khanyi: (angrily) “Nina ni nga ngijwaeli kabi (Don't you all fuck with me)! Not today!”

Julia: “Keng bjanong wena (what is it now)?!”

Gogo Khanyi: “You guys think you are all so clever, don't you? They told me what you did.”

Aunt 2: “We didn't do anything.”

Gogo Khanyi wasted no time and pulled out a knife from her pockets. Aunt 1 knowing how crazy Gogo Khanyi could get, she confessed immediately.

Aunt 1: “Ga se nna ke yena o (It's not me it is her)! Julia o mo romile a re a utswe di kuku tseo (Julia sent her to steal all those cookies)!”

Aunt 2: (annoyed) “Snitch!”

Gogo Khanyi: “La swabisa (You are an embarrassment)! It is bad enough you married this tramp off to that good man, now you want to tarnish his last day in this house like that?! Where are those cookies?!”

Aunt 2: (scared) “They... we.. we threw them away.”

Gogo Khanyi: “Alright. Akere le di clever lena (you are all so clever, aren't you)? So, here is what is going to happen. You are going to stay behind and start baking from scratch – just the way I like them.”

The three of them were shocked.

Gogo Khanyi: “Of nie so (or else), I don't mind killing anyone today.”

Aunt 1: “Okay, nna ke etla (I'm coming).”

Gogo Khanyi: “Church starts in three hours, bo gogo (grannies), you'd better get cracking. We have more than enough ovens.”

Gogo Khanyi was surely fixing the country. I smiled as I happened to lay my eyes on Julia who looked like shit. She probably didn't get any sleep as she was seeing Ntate Moruti all night. Who knows what he was saying to her?

Julia: “O shebileng wena (What are you looking at)? Don't get too comfortable, Ziphora, that seat can get too hot and you might just not make it out alive.”

I don't know whether that was a threat or a promise, but I hated the sound of that.

Ziyanda: “Julia, Isaiah 41:10 says; “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Julia: (clicking tongue) “Se se salang (Still) - “

Ziyanda: (interrupting) “Voetsek, moloji (Piss off, witch)!”

And just like that, drama had threatened to ruin my very first sermon in the church as the official church lady. You know what they say, evil is everywhere, but God prevails. I took heart in Isaiah 43:2 - “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” I was born ready and on that day, I delivered a sermon that showed me who the real people were in that church. On that day, I made history in the Agape Church of Christ.

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. “

Ziphora

We left Koko and Mama overseeing everything at the house, while the rest of us had to go to church. Ziyanda didn't want to miss my very first sermon alongside my husband. Jacob was very happy to be beside his brother – without Jeannette. I don't know, but he seemed a lot lighter and happier. I had hoped that they could fix it, but then, once a man is fed up what can one do? We did spot Jeannette outside with the twins and her family, but instead of Jacob running towards her, he went to greet his babies and took them, handed them to Boitu and Akanyang and then came back with us. The way Jeannette was so full of herself, she didn't want to sit anywhere else other than her usual spot on the stage. She followed Jacob along with us to the back of the church where we were getting ready. She didn't even greet David and I and she went straight for the kill, but Jacob was so calm he scared me even.

Jeannette: (fuming) “Jacob, o nketsa so (you decided to do me like this)?”

Jacob: “Like what?”

Jeannette: “So, you're going to deny me the chance to bury my father in law?”

Jacob: “I didn't deny you anything – you denied yourself that opportunity. There are many seats to choose from if you want to sit and be a part of the ceremony. Next time, do not barge in here like you own the place – this is the house of the lord after all. And please, do greet my brother and his wife, the Queen Mother of this house. If you still can't learn any manners, Jeannette, you're not welcome.”

Jeannette: “Then I'll gladly take my children and walk away.”

Jacob: “Do as you please. Now, leave. We have a special sermon to prepare for.”

She was so shocked to see Jacob so uninterested, but she just didn't give up.

Jeannette: “Jacob! I'll go out there right now and tell the whole entire world that the pastor's son is gay and that is why he killed himself!”

I got so annoyed as she was shouting, but Jacob remained calm although I could see his hands tremble with rage. He walked so close up to Jeannette's face and I could see the fear in her eyes.

Jacob: “Go and tell the whole world that, oh wait – you already did that. Now you know why my family never gave you your own name like they did Ziphora. You are not a woman, you're a little girl – a petty, little girl. You have no class and therefore, you shall never belong to this church ever again. Do as you please, Jeannette, and get out of my face before I do something I will regret for the rest of my life.”

He stared her right in the face and she left. I just didn't get why she had to do that. Why did she feel the need to break the poor man? Jacob ignored her and got ready in his

robe. Malome John came to bless us and pray with us just before the sermon. I felt so anxious because this was going to be filmed. I hated attention, but I had to do it. I had to at least do it for David and for Ntate Moruti. I mean after all, I fell in love with David right on stage. As we walked out I could feel Ntate Moruti's presence. My goodness, Boitu and the wives did such an amazing job with the décor. The church looked stunning and the portrait of Ntate Moruti looked so magnificent on stage. The portrait of little Junior as well right next to him. The pall bearers started bringing in the coffins and people started to cry. It is a normal reaction after all. I could see Jacob and David tried to keep it together, but then the show had to go on. There was something about David. Jacob never wanted to preach, yes, he was involved in the church and loved worship, but he was not one to preach. He was very good at motivational speaking, though, but preaching was not his thing. David just loved preaching so much, he was overcome with the spirit each time he was on stage. It was as if God just took over him and he would just speak from the heart. I had never seen him open a note book and read from it. I, on the other hand was a rather forgetful woman. So, I jotted a lot of things down on my tablet or my notebook. I guess also being a medical doctor came with it, so I had to write down a few notes on that day's sermon. The choir led us with

one of Ntate Moruti's favourite songs – Somandla. I loved that song as it evoked so many emotions in a person.

David: “Glory be to God for we all made it to this day, Amen.”

Congregation: “Amen.”

David: “I say glory be to God, even though the circumstances are just not ideal to be gracious. I know, a lot of you are sitting here to confirm a lot of rumours. I know a lot of you are sitting there asking yourself if this church needs preachers like my brother and I. But how many of you have done the same thing? How many of you have just laid back and let abusers get away with abusing your loved ones – your sons, daughters, nephews and nieces? How many of you kept it in the family for the sake of what people would say? My brother and I are not victims as we stand here before you – we are survivors. I say this because yes, my father committed suicide because he just couldn't bear the pain of his sons being abused for so many years and he never noticed the signs. Then you will get one person asking themselves; “a whole pastor committing suicide? How does he think he will get to heaven?” Well, I say to you, John 8:7 - ““Let him who is without sin among you be

the first to throw a stone at her.” It is far too easy to talk and just speak whatever you wish about another person, but you fail to look at your own heart. I say to you today; those who wish to stay in this church can do so, but if you are here to prove a point then you may leave. For I am not willing to preach to people who are not willing to change. Today is a rather special day, for my wife will be delivering her first service today. My wife, you may come forward.”

Yep, that is my husband. He just had to feel the need to introduce me like that. I was very nervous and I had barely eaten due to that. I stood in front of the microphone and I saw so many people before me. I felt instantly nervous, even though I spotted my friends and my sisters in the wives' seats. I just felt a bit lighter, once I stared at Ntate Moruti's portrait on stage. I remained quiet for a few minutes and then I smiled as I felt as if he was smiling at me – just me. It sound crazy, I know. I took a deep breath and started.

Ziphora: “Good morning

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Bazalwane (congregation). Today, is a rather sad day for many of us as we are burying not one but two people who were close

to our hearts. My mother taught me to always speak my mind and therefore it is what I am going to do today. Junior, as most people know was David's son. He was conceived in a very unorthodox way, but that is not my place to get into that right now. All you need to know is that yes, he was close to his heart although he was not very fond of him. A child is a blessing of course no matter what. God would not have given my husband that benefit of planting that seed if he didn't see him fit to be his father. Psalm 127:3 says; "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. " Anyone who does not see a child as a blessing from the Lord himself has a problem – despite who birthed that child or how that child came about. Then we get to Ntate Moruti Mac, most of you have known him for much longer than I have, but for the few moments I got to spend with that man, I can confidently say he was a wonderful man in many ways. Proverbs 22:6 says; "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. " I for one can confirm that Ntate Moruti did indeed raise his children to be the best they could be. I got married to David, didn't I? Otherwise I don't think I would have looked at him twice."

I could hear them break a laugh or two. There was hope.

Ziphora: “Many people assume that Church people have to lead perfect lives, but the Lord never said so. We are also humans just like you. Just because you belong to this church it does not mean that you have to dress a certain way or have your hair up a certain way.”

I could hear a few women chanting and cheering. I guess Julia had oppressed them for far too long.

Ziphora: “I for one know that Ntate Moruti would have never run the church the way it was run before. We are all human; being around one another requires compassion and kindness. For if we are not kind to one another, then what is the whole point of getting to know each other? What will we achieve if we are not kind towards each other? Ephesians 4:32 says; “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. “ The Bible also says in Luke 6:35; “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. “ For we all know what the tabloits wrote about my family, but not everything is true. I believe in hearing things from the horse's mouth, but if we were to ask each and every member of the Mosue family to stand before

you and declare what happened to them and what they did to one another, how many of you would stand here before the entire congregation and do the same – persecute themselves? I believe in forgiveness, no matter what the person did to me. I believe in giving them to the Lord and He shall see what is fit for them. For if you live your entire life trying to punish someone who isn't bothered with you, then you are wasting so many years of life. Life is lend to us – it is not eternal as it is in the flesh, but the spirit is eternal. I say to you, from today onwards, say what it is you want to say; if you have been dying to forgive someone – then do it. If you have been dying to declare your love to someone – unmarried of course – then do it. If you have been dying to confront someone about something that doesn't sit well with you til today, then by all means do it. Do it so that we don't all make a choice like Ntate Moruti made. He couldn't cope with what happened so he decided to spare everyone the shame and pain and he ended it all. Depression comes in all forms, bazalwane, but one thing we are not is we are not haters. We are not those people who declare hate unto people. 1 Peter 3:9 says; “Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. “ Let us all rejoice in this day, for the Lord has made all this happen. We need not cry, for Ntate Moruti was not a man who would expect us to cry, but to rather rejoice in all the

memories he has made. Let you all leave with a piece of him in your hearts today. Focus on nothing else – but these two souls before you that will be sent home. God makes no mistakes, bazalwane. People are evil at times and they do the wrong things, we should not blame it on the church. My husband and I as well as my brother-in-law and my Uncle John, want to strive to make this church a better place. We want all those who feel in danger, come and have a place of shelter, all those who feel that they can't cope with life, should be able to come and speak their heart out without even feeling judged or ashamed. All those who want to join can do so without meeting any specific criteria, without having any specific clothing. At the end of the day, bazalwane, our graves will be the same size. Whether you will be buried in Gucci, Prada or Versace, maggots will eat our bodies as they were only vessels to carry our souls. Your soul is what matters so I say to you now, if you are in a toxic situation – be it family or otherwise, eliminate all negativity so that you can have a peaceful soul. Who wants to die with unfinished business? Let us all enjoy life fully and love one another. After all, when Ntate Mac built this church and named it Agape Church of Christ, he built it all in the name of Love. Love conquers all and therefore love shall overrule everything we are all feeling today. Love shall fight our battles with evil and love shall always win. Am I right?”

I could hear them clapping and I felt so overwhelmed. I hardly even remember half the things I said, but I guess that is what people mean by being overwhelmed by the spirit. I was so happy and I felt as if Ntate Mac was really happy to see me on that stage. The jitters had disappeared and I felt whole within me. I spotted Julia right at the door and she wasn't too pleased seeing everyone clapping their hands for me. I couldn't care less. I was in the house of the lord and He was speaking to me.

50

- “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.”

Ziphora

I felt the holy spirit work through me throughout the entire service. It felt as if for some odd reason I felt home. Julia was behaving really weird – evil rather as she stood right at the door throughout the entire service. She stared at me all the way until I was done. At that point, I didn't really care about her. I had a mission to carry out. We finally let the pall bearers and the Senior pastors lead the caskets out as we made our way to the graveyard. Julia stared at me all the way, but I ignored her as I walked hand in hand with my husband. Jacob was walking right behind us. He was not entirely happy, but he looked really relieved to have Jeannette away from him to be honest. The entire service at the graveyard was so beautiful, it actually felt as if we were burying royalty. I finally saw David unveil his macho mask as he cried. I think it was the very first moment he allowed himself to mourn both his father and son properly. The Mosue family had their own burial space which they bought years ago, that way the entire family would be

buried next to one another. In that case, Ntate Moruti Mac and David Junior were going to be buried in one grave. David didn't have the strength to carry on, so I led the entire service. I love the word of God, but I am one of those people who hate lengthy services, so I made it short and sweet. No one wants to stand in the unbearable heat and listen to the pastor repeat Bible verses. It was beautiful, though, but of course, Julia was dissatisfied. I thought perhaps Gogo Khanyi taught her quite an awful lesson hence she was so annoyed throughout the entire service, but that was her deal – not mine. We made our way back to the house with David's hand firmly in mine. He didn't say a word, but I could tell he was just grateful I was there. Our car made it first right after the mortuary van, and we walked right into the house. Gogo Khanyi and Mama along with my sisters went all out. They ensured that us the family members had our own section to eat and enjoy our meal in peace, meanwhile everyone else had a place in the marquee in the backyard. The takeaways were already set for them. Ziyanda was running around ensuring everyone got enough food and a place to sit. I am truly blessed. As we entered, Julia pushed David and I aside and walked through first. She was about to take one plate, but Gogo Khanyi stopped her along with her entire entourage.

Gogo Khanyi: “Askies sisi (Sorry, sis), where do you think you're headed?”

Julia: (annoyed) “It's bad enough you are harrassing me in my own house, but now you want to give me orders right after I have just buried my husband?”

Gogo Khanyi: “You know, I had my moments with my husband, but I didn't fake anything whatsoever when he died. As for you, you're a real troublemaker, so you and your little family will be eating in your bedroom.”

Julia: (angrily) “You can't tell me what to do in my own house!”

Gogo Khanyi: “I don't mind cutting off some skin from your face. You really look like you're saggy nowadays. Consider it the fact that I am still angry at you guys. Now move!”

They didn't hesitate any longer as they walked right behind Julia towards her bedroom. It was just one of those days. We were too emotional to even care about her. I was so grateful to

have Ziyanda, Gogo Khanyi, My mother and sisters. My friends did come to the funeral and came to eat with us. Mama refused to let them help out since they had just come from nightshift. Call me crazy, but ever since I met David my life has been quite a rollercoaster

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but then every relationship has its ups and downs. I was so tired; I mean I tried looking the part but I won't lie – those high heels were killing me. I was about to go remove them when Malome John walked in from greeting people outside.

Malome John: “Apologies for disturbing you, family, but we have an urgent matter to attend to. Ziphora, may you please accompany me to the study.”

I was surprised. I mean what urgent matters now? Can't we just have a funeral filled with peace? I had no idea what to expect, so I excused myself from my friends and family and I walked alongside him.

Ziphora: “Is something the matter, Malome (uncle)?”

He looked at me and smiled, but it wasn't the usual smile I was used to. It was as if his face and eyes were filled with so much pity. I didn't get it.

Malome John: (smiling) “Nothing at all, my child. I just become so soft-hearted everytime I look at you. I know that you were the right person the ancestors chose for David. You're a strong woman, so I know you'll be able to handle anything coming your way.”

There it was again; that whole you're strong speech. I didn't get it but then I decided not to pry. As soon as we walked into the study, I saw Julia sitting right next to some man I didn't recognize. He was dressed in a very nice suit and had glasses on. She looked at me with pure hatred as soon as I walked in. David stood up and offered his seat for me the moment I walked in. The table was not very big, so only about four people could fit. Jacob was sitting where David was seated, which meant I was now next to him. Malome John also didn't mind standing, so it was just Julia, the suited man, Jacob and I seated on the chairs surrounding the table. Malome John stood right next to Jacob while David stood right behind me and had his hands rested on my shoulders. In my mind, I thought

perhaps it was a will reading, but I didn't want to conclude. It felt a bit too early, but then why wait?

Man: "Good, you're all here. I shall get right to it."

Just as he was about to formally introduce himself, in walked someone we really didn't expect, along with her own little entourage.

Jeannette: (smiling) "Oh, I'm so sorry I'm late, family. I hope you haven't started yet."

The nerve. Jacob was very much annoyed, but he responded calmly.

Jacob: (calm) "Jeannette, o batla eng mo (what are you doing here)?"

Jeannette: (frowning) "Hao (Goodness) Jacob. Wat bedoel jy (what do you mean)? I'm here for my father-in-law's will reading."

Oh, I see. I had always wondered if Jeannette was coloured or straight black, but now her true colours were coming out. She was even speaking Afrikaans. Looking at the few family members that just barged in without any invitation, I saw the resemblance. I looked at Julia for some reason and there she was, smiling from ear to ear. That woman was slowly turning into a miserable fuck. She was the one who had called Jeannette, to cause some sort of disruption. This family will just never function for as long as Julia remained alive – Lord forgive me.

51

“The one forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.”

Ziphora

While I was deliberately staring at my mother in law, Jeannette was starting to cause an unnecessary scene.

David: (calmly) “Jeannette, no one invited you here. You even barged in here along with your entire family without warning. Please, leave.”

A woman who had a striking resemblance to Jeannette started shouting. Oddly, I never really thought of Jeannette as a coloured, although I saw a few of her features, like her long, silky hair. She was a bit dark, but this woman was light although the resemblance was really amazing. I assumed it was her mother.

Jeannette's mom: (shouting) “Yey (Hey)! Julle gaan nie daai kak vir my kind se nie (You're not going to spew such shit towards my child)! She has just as much a right to be here just like all of you! You, Jacob! I welcomed you into my home! I gave you my child and you decide to fuck men and now you treat her like trash?! Oh, no, you don't, meneer (mister)! She has been married to you for years and she will fight for what's hers!”

Okay, that escalated rather quickly. So, Jeannette's entire family clearly knew everything regarding Jacob's past. To make matters worse all of them were shouting and were against Jacob and us. She was really looking at me and then at my belly with pure disgust. I wasn't even showing yet and already my unborn baby was a

victim of hate and disrepute. People just have no shame whatsoever. I honestly thought that Jacob would be really angry, but he stood up calmly. He was a tall man and one could tell just how anxious Jeannette became.

Jacob: (sigh) “Jeannette, you have some nerve doing what the fuck you just did right now. You and your low life family just can't seem to stay away from money, can you? Yes, I have slept with men, call me whatever the fuck you want, Celestin, but

now is not the time. Now, I am giving you about ten seconds to think clearly before your next move. There is the door. If you feel that there is something I owe you, then I'll gladly speak to you right after this. Now, the choice is yours.”

Jeannette kept quiet because she could see Jacob was fuming inwardly, and he was most probably capable of murder. I would also have been angered had I been Jacob. Jeannette kept quiet and her mother decided to escalate the situation, causing Jacob to blow his much tamed fuse.

Celestine: (shouting) “Fok dit (Fuck that)! Julle skuld my kind (You owe my child)! Sien jy (Do you see), Jeannette?! Sien jy wat gebeur as jy 'n met 'n kaffer trou (Do you see what happens when you marry a kaffer)?!”

That time half of them were blacker than the rest of us but I guess she had that ugly mentality. She smelled like an entire brewery and it wasn't even 2pm yet. Jacob lost it – completely. We were watching when she Jacob didn't even think twice. His fist went from gently folded into his hand, to a shaken and angered fist and landed right on Celestine's cheek. I tried to even stand up, but David forced me back down and didn't even

move an inch. I looked at Julia as her smile slowly faded. Why would a woman be so cruel?! The lawyer guy sitting right next to Julia was petrified to say the least. He was screaming like a little girl, while the rest of us just looked at Jacob punching the daylights out of her. Malome John was the only one who could bring calm a situation like that.

Malome John: (calmly) “Jacob, stop. Let her go.”

Jacob still carried on punching Celestine, while Jeannette stared at him in shock.

Malome John: “Now!”

Jacob stopped and as drunk as Celestine was, she couldn't even get up, as the rest of her entourage had to help her up. Her entire face was bloodied and she looked like she had a few teeth missing. Perhaps she didn't have any when she walked in, I just couldn't recall. It was rather too much to focus on.

Celestine: “Ag, I'll get you arrested!”

Gogo Khanyi and my mother stormed in along with my sisters. If there is one person who could rescue a situation – it was most definitely Gogo Khanyi.

Gogo Khanyi: (angered) “What is happening here?!”

Jacob: (breathing heavily) “Ask them!”

Gogo Khanyi: (shaking head) “Jeannette, you never learn, you know. Are you that broke, my baby? Malome John, since she is eager to get a piece of the pie she never baked, let her stay. The rest of you – phumani (Get out)!”

Jeannette looked at Malome John who didn't seem to be against the idea, much to her relief, but the rest of her family wanted to start another brawl.

Aunty: “Ek gaan nerens nie (I'm going nowhere)!”

Gogo Khany didn't even think twice, she took out a small pistol and I didn't even ask where she got it from. She had hidden it in her bra, so she took it out and pointed it at the forward aunty.

Gogo Khanyi: “Manje ke nizoya ku “nerens” yenu (You will go to your “nerens”). Believe me, I can also behave like I'm from Eldos (Eldorado Park)!”

She was about to start shouting at Gogo Khanyi, but Gogo quickly shut her up by loading the gun right in front of her and cocking it.

Gogo Khanyi: “Praat weer (Say it again). I dare you.”

They kept quiet and walked out with their tails between their legs and I could hear her shouting at them as they wanted to sit in the lounge.

Gogo Khanyi: “Ngithe (I said) Go wait outside! If you behave like a dog, I'll treat you like one!”

Malome John closed the door and there was peace and silence for a while. We all knew it was shortlived. Jeannette acted like she was ashamed, but then I knew deep down she was only ashamed because I finally saw what kind of family she had come from. She was always draped in designer dresses and shoes, acting like the Queen mother, but deep down she was hiding a very ugly side of hers. A side she didn't want anyone to see. Unfortunately, I was there and we all know that it wasn't going to go well.

Lawyer: (sweaty) “Now that that is out of the way, I shall introduce myself to those of you who don't know me. My name is Elias Phashwane, I am or was Mr. Mosue's lawyer.”

Julia was smiling and she didn't really mind at all. Somehow I knew that the worst was yet to come for her. Almost like a bomb was about to be dropped right on her lap.

Malome John: “I'm sorry you had to witness that Elias, please proceed.”

Elias: (sigh) "We all know that Mr. Mosue wanted his will to be read right after his funeral. I shall begin right now."

Julia: (interjecting) "My apologies for interjecting, Mr. Phashwane, but I believe that my husband was a rather sloppy man. I have the correct will right here in my hands."

Elias: "I'm afraid you don't, Mrs. Mosue. Mr. Mosue changed the will a week before his passing."

I saw Juia turn into the monster we all knew.

Julia: (shocked) "That's impossible!"

Elias: "I'm afraid it is. I shall get to it."

Thank goodness he didn't give her a chance to go any further. I was exhausted even though I had no idea what I was doing there. I assumed that I was there for moral support as David's wife or something. Jeannette was standing right next to Jacob

who didn't even want to give her his seat. When a man is fed up, hey.

Elias: "This is the last will and testament of Mr. McDaniel Mosue and it is read as follows: To my darling first born son David, you were conceived when I never thought I'd ever be a father. You know very well your name means beloved and yes, you are and will always be my beloved David. I chose that name for you because I knew that friendship would come naturally to you, I knew that you would be known for your tenacity and your playful nature. I knew that you were a man of many dreams and that you would have a bright future. I hope now you know that names in our family have a deep meaning as they shape the way the child's life will plan out. Out of all the things I've ever achieved on this earth, you and Jacob still remain my most prized possessions. I want you to know that you did everything right and yes, I have always been proud of you. I leave you with R2 million of my estate. I also leave you with our Holiday home in Cape Town. I want you to start your own legacy, my son. You have my full blessing on what we discussed weeks ago. You are free to start your own. I also leave you in full control of the church, alongside your wife, Ziphora. Ziphora, my dear, ever since you entered my son's life he has been nothing but a beaming light. You possess this

incredibly calming spirit that just brings out the best in my son. I know for sure you two will achieve the best of the best. I know, you are not a woman of many words, but I leave you with R2 million as well. Please, do with it as you please – invest it for the coming children. All I ever ask of you is to ensure that my son becomes the best he could ever be. You possess something that cannot be bought – ever. I thank you for choosing my son.”

I saw David shed uncontrollable tears. Those beautiful words from Ntate Moruti made me feel like I was finally part of the family. To hell with Julia, my father-in-law loved me.

Elias: “Jacob, my beloved son, I know, you have always doubted yourself. Don't worry, I won't ever force you to become one of the pastors.”

I heard Jacob chuckle as he was wiping away the tears from his eyes.

Elias: “You know your name means “to supplant, circumvent, assail and to overreach.” I am sorry if I ever made you feel like

you had to prove yourself to anyone, but you have done more than that to me, my son. I knew as you were growing up that you would be someone who would make friends easily, someone who would value old ones deeply, an honest and ambitious man. Indeed you became all that and more. I leave you with R2 million from my estate as well. I know, you would always say that you didn't need my money, but what kind of a man would I be if I left my own son with nothing? I also leave you with our holiday home in the North West. You were the one who was always filled with worry and self-doubt, but I am telling you now that you were never a failure, my son. When you became a father, I was so happy and therefore, I give your daughters R1 million each which will be tied in a trust fund. They shall only be able to touch that money when they both turn 21. This is my last act of love for you and I hope it is enough.”

We thought that was the end, but the bombs were yet to come.

Elias: “To my dear brother-in-law John, you have always been and will always be the brother I was meant to have. You were a lovely confidante despite your evil sister. I know, you'll probably shout at me in spirit for this, but I leave you also with R2 million. Don't you dare give it to the church, this is my

present to you. I thank you for your loyalty and most importantly for your selfless love towards my children.

To Jeannette, words can't explain how disappointed I am in you. I loved you because you took my son out of that deep hole he was in. I cared for you as my first ever daughter. I was ashamed to be associated with you when I heard how you were speaking about our family and more especially my son. I honestly thought you were a woman of God, but you disappointed me time and time again. For that, I leave you with nothing. I hope and pray that you will still have your dignity in tact once you are done listening to my last wishes.”

I saw Jeannette bawl into tears. It is so amazing how money just drives people crazy.

Elias: “Last but not least, to my darling wife. We all know by now that nothing is darling about you. I married you above all and I ignored everything everyone had been saying about you. After everything I have done for you, you still disappointed me nonetheless. I was never man enough for you, therefore let me not waste your time. All my shares in all our businesses, are to be distributed to charity with immediate effect.”

Julia became instantly bewildered.

Julia: (shocked) “That is ridiculous! There is no way that will be real! It is a forgery!”

We were all not surprised by her outburst, I mean she had expected him to leave her with everything. Ntate Moruti must have been extremely rich for her to be acting like that. Elias really looked annoyed by everything, so he carried on despite her behaviour.

Elias: “I leave you with our house. That's it. All the cars that I bought are to be sold and the money is to be given to charity. May you be haunted by my spirit in this house. I do hope and pray that despite everything you manage to find God in your heart. You are to be no part of the church, apart from being one of the congregants. That is all from me.”

Julia was spitting fire. I was amazed myself I mean I became a millionaire at my father-in-law's death. I don't even know how to feel about that.

Julia: (angrily) “You, Ziphora! This is all your fault! You shall pay for this! You will reap what you sow and for as long as I live, you shall not bear any children into this family!”

She spit onto the table and her curse just left so much pain in my heart. How dare she? Once again, I was to be blamed for all the bullshit that she did. How the fuck would I even survive this family? While Jeannette was weeping, the rest of us were still reeling in the news we had just heard. At that moment, I didn't take Julia's words to heart, but little did I know that the power of the tongue is rather dangerous.

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

Two weeks later...

Ziphora

Life has been a breeze, to be honest. David has been working so much, but he tried to be there for me whenever he could. Apparently he had some big project coming up and he said that he would only tell me about it when it was time. Two weeks later, I was still waiting. I didn't mind, though, it was great being busy with work, but my new status as the new Queen mother of the church was rather demanding. Every now and then I have had to host church meetings, church services and I have had to pray for troubled people. A few others still ask me for counselling and I must say, I have been overwhelmed. I don't know, I still feel like I shouldn't be doing so much. I mean, we have plenty of church wives and senior pastors who would be more than willing to assist, but what

puzzles me is that the older wives who were also Julia's friends can be so tiring.

One specific woman stands out of the entire group, her name is Selina Mahlangu. Mam'Selina is part of the older women's group, while Atlehang, Amo and Boitu are all part of the younger women's group. I still have no idea why they were split in the first place, but something tells me Julia was the reason for all of that. I had to spend all my free time analyzing everything in the church, I mean they even have a code of conduct. What kind of church even has such?

All the ladies who join the church wives need to be from a specific background. Never in my life have I seen such fuckery. I had to revisit the entire Church code of conduct because I honestly refused to be a part of such madness. I asked them to give me some time to regroup in order for us to come up with new rules for the church. It was my day off, but unfortunately since my other duty at the church called, I had to follow suit. David seemed to think that I had everything right under control, so he never bothered to involve himself much unless I asked. I had already started gaining weight and my only problem was my feet. They were so swollen and it was a bit tough trying to find the right shoes. At just thirteen weeks

pregnant, I was already wearing pumps on a good day and crocs or sleepers pretty much everyday at work. My mother called me everyday and not once did she miss calling me. The entire drama with the family didn't sit very well with her. She was under the impression that people were going to gun for me now that I was a millionaire, but I told her to put her faith in God as she always did.

I got into David's car as soon as I took some left over breakfast with me in my lunchbox. Pregnancy cravings got the better of me. I kept forgetting that I needed to buy a car for myself. I had been telling David, but for some reason he keeps telling me to wait. I drove off and headed to the church. Of course, all the women were there already – except for Amo. She just made it a point to be a rude bitch as always by arriving late. That irked me but I hadn't addressed her as yet. I didn't want to overstep my mark. As I entered our office, I found Mam'Selina already giving the church wives instructions. The nerve.

Selina: “Boitumelo, you will be in charge of the Sunday school from now on. Amohelang has been slacking and we can't have that. Atlehang, you will be in charge of the choir from now on.”

I couldn't stand her. She was like the miniature version of Julia. She had a bad-ass body, she wore heels all day and had no wrinkle in sight.

Ziphora: "Excuse me, Mam'Selina, but what are you doing?"

Selina: (surprised) "Oh, Zee, I didn't see you there. I was just giving these girls their work schedules."

Ziphora: "Authorized by whom?"

Selina: (frowning) "Pardon me?"

Ziphora: "According to my understanding I don't recall giving you any leeway to give them any new job titles."

Selina: "Oh, forgive me, Zee, but I thought that since well you were late, I would start. I mean it is just a reshuffle, nothing

major. I didn't think you'd have a problem with it, do you, my girl?"

There it was again. Her sinister smile with her condescending attitude. She always called us "girly" or bo "my girl" most probably because she wanted to make it a point that she was older than the rest of us, but more especially me. I didn't get her attitude and in fact, I would boil any time and any day ever since I was pregnant. I called that meeting – not her. I was never late for anything and what I didn't understand was why they were already there, looking like they had already had tea without me. She would always do something and then smile, and ask if you had a problem with it. Just because she was older didn't mean that she could do as she pleased. I decided right there and then to speak up

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otherwise she would continue doing that.

Ziphora: "Actually, Mme (ma), I do have a problem with it."

Selina: (shocked) "Excuse me?"

Ziphora: “You are very wrong to chair a meeting without my knowledge or consent. As far as I'm concerned this meeting was supposed to start at 10am, of which I am ten minutes earlier. I already see you giving orders and instructions and it seems to me as if this entire meeting had started long ago.”

I saw Boitu smile in relief as she saw me while the rest of the ladies seemed rather afraid to speak up. What kind of church is this going to be if people become afraid to voice their own opinions and thoughts? I could see that Selina didn't take it very well, but honestly, the opinion of a bossy 60 year old couldn't bother me at that moment.

Selina: “Forgive me, Zee, but I honestly thought that you wouldn't mind. Julia never used to mind.”

There it is again.

Ziphora: “Yes, Julia – not me. I mind, as a matter of fact, I'd like to know how it came about that all of you came here earlier than me.”

They all looked down – except for Boitu who spoke up.

Boitu: “Mam'Selina sent us all a message in the group letting us know that the meeting was going to start at 9am instead of 10am.”

Selina shot daggers at her, but I wasn't bothered. I smiled at Boitu because I knew that at least one person had my back.

Ziphora: “Which group because I didn't get that message in our group.”

Boitu: “The other group.”

Okay, so clearly Selina was up to no good. They had another group besides our original group? The nerve. I felt myself becoming quite angry.

Ziphora: (annoyed) “Mam'Selina, with all due respect, I have kept quiet for as long as I have managed out of respect – nothing else, but it seems as if you took my quietness for

weakness. I will not tolerate secret meetings in this church. If Julia tolerated that nonsense, I won't. I am the chosen Queen Mother here, not by the people, but by my father-in-law, who was the owner of this church. I do not want say things that I'll regret later on, but let me say this; this is the very last time I hear of any other group besides the one I'm in. If you so much as try to overrule my decisions again, I will remove you from Church Wives committee with immediate effect. This committee was probably created under wrong pretences, but I am here to ensure that we abide by the rules of God – not humans. You don't own this church, Mam'Selina. I'd appreciate it if you stopped giving MY women orders and if you stopped talking about Julia every two minutes. If you really feel that unhappy about my presence or my role here – then you are free to leave.”

I could see her tense up. She kept quiet immediately and sat down. Who does she think she is? I was enraged, but I kept my cool. No one wants to be bullied because they were younger. I had had enough of those old ladies and I couldn't understand why they just didn't leave the church already. As I was about to start, Amo walked in of course in a brand new Giorgio Aramni shiffon draped dress. Clearly they all live to impress people with brand new expensive outfits on every appearance.

Amo: (smiling) "Sorry I'm late. Did I miss anything, Mam'Selina?"

She was also another bitch. She was clearly testing me. She completely disregarded my presence.

Ziphora: "Amo, I get it. You are one of the hottest girls here, you rock up with new outfits all the time and Mam'Selina most probably tried to form an alliance with some of you who just hate me for whatever reason, but I am telling you now, that your late coming for no reason stops now."

Amo: (annoyed) "Aowa (No), Zee. You can't talk to me like that. I mean Julia never complained about me being late."

Ziphora: (sigh) "In case anyone of you hasn't noticed, I am the new Queen Mother here. I am the head of this church and the head of the wives, if you really have a problem with it then we might as well cancel church wives because in all honesty, some of you don't even do anything around here. All you know is ordering others around while they do all the work you sip on

champagne and flaunt your new clothes and bags. Amo, this is now my role in this church and if you honestly can't handle it – it is best you leave. This also goes to the rest of you. If you really despise me so much for being the leader here, then leave. Now is your chance. Take it, by all means - take it.”

I saw them sitting down, while Amo was expecting them to try and follow her as she was the only one standing. No one stood up – not even Mam'Selina. She didn't even utter a word at all.

Ziphora: “Good. It is high time we all work as a team and each one of us pull their weight. Firstly, all of you have better exit and delete that group which I am not part of. None of you will be allowed to gossip about other members for as long as I am here. In case you forgot what Proverbs 16:28 says about gossip; “A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.”

They all looked down in shame, but they should have been ashamed, vele. I am not about to let them bully me when I haven't even done anything yet. As far as I could recall the only sin I committed was being Ziphora Mosue, the wife of David Mosue. They were soon to know that I was not there to play

around. The church is not a playground or breeding ground to make people feel worthless about themselves. A lot of black people claim they know God by attending church without fail, but their hearts are so filled with hatred and misery that they themselves chase people out of church. So many people have stopped praying because of what the church did to them. Churches fail people and as I could see the Agape Church of Christ had already failed too many people. All of that was about to change.

- "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

Ziphora

I had finally caught their attention and I was not about to start slacking just yet. I headed straight for the kill. I was about to show them what I am made of. I couldn't believe just how narrow minded and lazy most of those women were. If I didn't start then when? Our Church wives committee had a lot of wives, but the main wives were all wives of the senior and junior pastors. Only a few chosen ones. I don't even know why some were chosen to begin with, but anyway. We consisted mainly of Myself, Boitu, Amo, Atlehang, Selina, Gracious, Mercy and Felicia. Selina, Gracious, Mercy and Felicia were the older wives, while Boitu, Amo, Atlehang and I were the younger wives. It wasn't much of a drag, but having a lot of women in one room who couldn't even agree on one thing was a bit of a problem. I think everyone in this life has the same problem where many women are involved. While we have a team of CW (church wives), they themselves are married to prominent

pastors. Boitu is married to Tumelo, Amo is married to Tumisho, Atlehang is married to Boikanyo, while the other three older wives have old husbands. They are not that involved in the church and Selina was a widow. No wonder she had so much to say about basically everything and everyone.

Ziphora: “Now that I am in charge, I have decided to make some changes. Of course, I'd like to run them by you in case you'd like to add or remove something.”

Selina: (murmuring) “Gwa tshwana (it doesn't matter), you have the final say.”

I heard her quite well, I just wanted to show her that I was not one to play with.

Ziphora: “Askies (Excuse me), Mama? Did you say something?”

Selina: (Shaking head) “No.”

I tried to be funny just like her. God doesn't like such, but every now and then people need to be treated the way they treat you.

Ziphora: "Yes the final say will still be mine, but I don't want to oppress anyone."

I could tell she was even more annoyed by then, but then so what?

Ziphora: "Well then, let me start off with the code of conduct. I don't like it and I am very sure that a lot of you if not all hate it."

A few were nodding their heads, shame, the oppression that Julia had instilled in that church was just ridiculous.

Ziphora: "I'll start with a few main points, you might all want to get your phones out or diaries to jot these down. Boitu, do you mind taking the minutes of this meeting?"

Boitu was excited. I love her. I was planning on making her my right hand. Selina was rather shocked.

Selina: “Minutes?! Since when do we take minutes for every meeting?”

Ziphora: (sigh) “Since I am now in charge, Mama. Do you have a problem – with everything?”

Selina: (softly) “No.”

I knew she was appalled because she was the treasurer of the church. Lord knows just how much money those ones get away with every now and then. I bet she never even kept record of anything.

Ziphora: “Good. Let's start with the rules regarding meetings, functions and gatherings. Number one, it is not compulsory for us to have a meeting every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. I assume that some of you do work or want to work, so it is not

appropriate that we have so much time taken away from our families just to have meetings and discussions.”

I saw Boitu smile in relief along with Atlehang, but of course Amo just hated that part.

Ziphora: “We'll have a meeting every Friday – only if necessary. That's the meeting where we will all have our points jotted down and they shall be put on the agenda. They shall be discussed provided that you raise important and necessary concerns. I do not like lengthy meetings, so I hope that is okay with you guys.”

Boitu: (nodding) “Oh, yes, absolutely.”

Atlehang: “I couldn't agree with you more.”

Amo: (annoyed) “I don't understand why your new rule should apply for us all? I mean people like Boitu don't even have kids, so why would you say that they need family time?”

That was a very low blow and I could tell that Amo hit a nerve. She really hurt Boitu and it was totally unnecessary. David did tell me that she and Tumisho had been trying to have a child for years but they still hadn't had any luck.

Ziphora: (annoyed) "Amohelang, you will not speak to a fellow wife like that and as far as we are all concerned, you never have time for your own child. Not having children is none of your business or anyone else's for that matter. No insults will be tolerated."

Amo: "But I - "

Ziphora: (interrupting) "I won't elaborate on this any further. We all have things to do so allow me to continue with this meeting in peace."

She kept quiet and looked down.

Ziphora: "Furthermore, we won't need to have three church services weekly, but only on Sundays. We will however have a

prayer session every Wednesday, while we'll have an empowerment session for women and young girls every Tuesday and for men and young boys every Thursday. Jacob said he would love to do it for the boys along with the Senior pastors.”

Selina: (annoyed) “Aowa (No)! Jacob as in the Jacob? The one who was announced as gay in the tabloids?”

Ziphora: “Mme weh, you just said it yourself that the tabloids labelled him that. He is still a member of this church and if you truly feel that he is a danger to any of the boys, then I'd like to see you cast the first stone. Matthew 7:1 says; “Judge not, that you be not judged. “ How would your lovely friend Julia feel if she heard you call her son that?”

She looked down and kept quiet once again. I became really irritated by her interrupting me every now and then.

Ziphora: “Furthermore, Mme Gracious and Mme Felicia, you two can be in charge of the weekly prayer for the women. I do not need to be there all the time. Is that okay with you?”

They both smiled in excitement. It seemed as if Selina was the only old one with a problem.

Ziphora: "Mme Mercy, you can be the new treasurer of the church."

Mercy: (smiling) "Gladly, MaMosue."

Selina: (angered) "I have been the treasurer of this church long before you were born!"

Ziphora: "If you have a problem, you're welcome to leave the church

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Mme."

She was breathing fire, but I wasn't bothered.

Ziphora: “Boitu, you can remain with the choir, while Atlehang can be in charge of the Sunday school. Amo and Mme Selina, you two will be in charge of the feeding scheme.

They were both so annoyed, they just didn't even know what to do.

Selina: (angered) “Me? A soup kitchen lady?! That could never be me.”

Ziphora: “I assume this is your exit? You are leaving the church, aren't you?”

Selina: “I didn't say that, but - “

Ziphora: (interrupting) “You do realize that you blatantly refused to be a part of the church, I mean you are basically saying people should starve because you are too good to cook and dish out for them, am I wrong? I mean if you gladly want to quit your position and turn your back on those helpless people – even though you took an oath, please let me know. I

can print out the form for you to sign. Right here and right now. I didn't want to go there, but you remind me a lot of Delilah, surely you remember the story about her, don't you?"

Selina: "But how can you- "

Ziphora: "You can voice your grievances right after this meeting. I'm going to need the books before I leave, please."

I saw her become instantly stressed – just where I wanted her to be.

Ziphora: "Furthermore, you shall not be obliged to wear heels on every occasion. You are not obliged to wear any labelled brands of any kind. I've seen too many people commit suicide simply because they couldn't afford a particular lifestyle anymore. If you truly live according to the word of God then you shall know that materials don't go with you to the afterlife. Boitu, since well you are studying psychology and you are within your final year, I was hoping you'd agree to having therapy sessions here at the church for anyone troubled. The church will pay you of course."

Boitu: (delighted) "I'd be more than happy, Ziphora. Thank you so much."

Ziphora: (nodding) "Atlehang you can also be in charge of the youth as well, and you are more than welcome to partner up with someone. Anything else?"

Amo raised her hand.

Ziphora: "Yes?"

Amo: "Will I be obliged to cook and wash the dishes?"

Wow.

Ziphora: "You and Mam'Selina will be cooking, unless you really can't. We will also be there to assist you on certain days. We have more than enough funds to pay three more people to assist you with the cooking. Is there anything else?"

By then I was already drained. Selina and Amo seemed very incompetent and I really got tired of them. Luckily they all shook their heads.

Ziphora: “Good. Meeting adjourned, ladies.”

Selina was up and about to dodge me, but I quickly stopped her right in her tracks.

Ziphora: “The books, Mme.”

Selina: (panicky) “I’ll bring them to your house – tomorrow.”

Ziphora: (shaking head) “Tomorrow is not good enough, Mama, I’ll follow you to your house to fetch them myself.”

Selina: (annoyed) “Bathong (Goodness), Ziphora! Why o nketsa legodu (why are you treating like a thief)?”

Guilty, are we?

Ziphora: “Did you hear me say anything about you stealing, Mme? Unless you would like to confess something. This is the house of the lord after all.”

She shook her head.

Selina: “I'm going to the mall. I'll personally bring the files to your house.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “You don't mind driving all the way from Mamelodi to Ninapark?”

I think she was contemplating changing her mind, but I didn't let her.

Ziphora: “You're so kind. Please, bring them no later than 2pm.”

I smiled and walked away. I was just tired of people who felt the need to walk all over people. It was my time to shine. I was so happy that I managed to abolish ridiculous rules, including children of unmarried people not being baptized by the church, women who have had children out of wedlock having to confess in front of the entire church in order to be forgiven. Some people let power get to them and they just can't think. I was about to head on home, when I got a surprising call from David.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Hey, you."

David: "MaMosue. How are you?"

Ziphora: "I'm well, how are you?"

David: "I'm better now that I am speaking to you. Tell me, where are you now?"

As if he didn't know.

Ziphora: "I'm still at the church, but I'm on the way home."

David: "Scrap that. Can you follow the address I have just sent you now?"

I hadn't checked my phone.

Ziphora: "Okay, as long as it is not too far of a drive."

David: (chuckling) "Becoming lazy, aren't we?"

Ziphora: "Don't you dare call me that."

David: (laughing) "Apologies, my wife. Forgive me. I'll see you soon."

Ziphora: "Okay. Bye."

I didn't even bother to pay attention to the address, I just got into the car and punched it into the GPS system and I headed off. "Garden Court Hafield." I hope David wasn't planning on spending the entire day having sex with me at some hotel. I was just too tired. I took the drive and I arrived there in about twenty minutes. This man is sly, he knows just how fast I drive yet he was already there waiting for me. I parked the car and walked out. He smiled as he approached me and kissed me.

Ziphora: "Where are we going, Dave? I'm so tired already."

David: "Believe me, after you see what I have instore for you, you won't be tired."

My man and surprises. It just never gets old.

David: "Before we leave, I have to blindfold you. I know you don't like such, but do it for me, please?"

I just nodded as he put the blindfold over my eyes. I just went with the flow because it was simply useless to argue with a man

on a hunt to surprise me. We didn't drive very long, about ten minutes or so. I heard him park and he opened my car door as he led me out.

David: "Are you ready?"

Ziyanda: "Yes, I am. Can you remove this thing already?"

David chuckled as he slowly removed the blindfold. I opened my eyes and saw the most beautiful car before me – a white Mercedes Benz GLE coupe. My goodness, this man can really surprise a woman. It had a yellow bow on top – talk about attention to detail. I thought it was the end, but that car looked extremely unique with an entire yellow interior.

Ziphora: (teary) "David bathong (my goodness). Did you really have to?"

David: "Yes, I had to, moratuwa (my love). For you I'd do anything. Do you like it?"

Ziphora: "Are you kidding me? I love it!"

David: "I wanted to have it customized in yellow, but knowing you, you'd probably never drive it as it would cause too much attention."

I couldn't help but laugh.

Ziphora: "Skang krema (you know me too well), David!"

David: "Come, let's take a few good pictures and take it for a spin."

For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

A few days later...

David

I have been waiting for this moment for so long. Things seem like they are finally falling into place. My darling Ziphora and I are so happy and I can finally join Phila's company in peace. I feel horrible about leaving The Agape Foundation just like that, but it is what it is. Maybe in the near future when I have finally gotten rid of my mother for good I will start a new one. I haven't seen Julia in so long ever since the funeral; even though she has been trying to call me. She has been bombarding my phone as well as my wife's phone to the point where we both blocked her. Apparently she sold the house, claiming that my father's spirit was haunting her. It feels like she will never hear the end of him until she actually admits to it. I am just glad that

I will be able to start a new life away from Julia. I am going to meet Phila now to finalize our big plan. This time I have faith. I found him already waiting for me in his office.

Phila: (smiling) "Come in, David. I have been expecting you."

David: "Hey, hope I am not intruding."

Phila: "Never. Sit let me pour you a drink."

He poured me a drink and yes, he does not drink cheap whiskeys or cognac, much like me.

David: "So, are all in order for tonight?"

Phila: "Yes, I just need you to tell your wife right after the election what we're planning. I believe she will understand."

David: "I hope so, I mean she has just settled into her new role as the Queen Mother, so how will I tell her that we have to skip the country for a few months?"

Phila: "You'll find a way, believe me. You know your wife just as I know mine. You should know her weakness by now."

David: (chuckling) "I do, but my wife is not a flashy woman, believe me. I just wish that this could all be over soon."

Phila: "Believe me, I know how you feel. But at least you'll be out of South Africa with your wife and not away from her like I was away from my Yaya. Once we get this plan off the ground, believe me, all will go back to normal. After that you can then decide if you want to keep running PZ Constructions or do something else."

He had a good point. All I had to do was just let Ziphora know about what our plans were. She sure is going to be pissed at me, but it is for our own good. At least Jacob will also be safe since he has agreed. A week ago, Jeannette found Jacob's new house and was upset that he had finally filed for divorce. She

dumped the twins on his door step and was nowhere to be seen or heard of ever since. She probably did that deliberately so that Jacob couldn't finalize the divorce, but nonetheless, Jacob is alive and well. Therapy is treating him so well and he is finally getting his life back on track. Due to everything that has happened, he has also decided to hand over his foundation to someone else. It is also not as if he needs the money, he just wants to start a new life afresh. He has managed to find a nanny for his children, and he has gone back to work. I just can't wait for a brand new fresh start and who knows? Ziphora might just like our new home in a fresh new country.

Ziphora

I was at work and I managed to catch up with my friends. They said they wouldn't be able to make it to Phila's campaign tonight. I respect their decisions, but I kind of feel like they don't like Ziyanda that much or something, I don't know. Either way, she has become a good friend of mine – both her and Phila. I just hope he finally becomes elected as the mayor of Gauteng. It is going to be a huge thing for him since he wants to run for President in the long run. He has this passion for a better South Africa of which I am glad he has. My David still thinks that we can change the country as well by bringing the

gospel and the word of God to those in need of it. I still have high hopes for the church, but only time will tell. I headed home and freshened up. Goodness, I can't believe I have gained so much weight in such a short space of time. I went straight from a size 34 to a 36 and I am barely halfway my pregnancy. This is so depressing, to be honest. I have tried so many things to wear, but I just ended up sitting on the bed, naked and wallowed in my tears. I didn't even hear David walk in.

David: (worried) “Hao (goodness), baby, o llela eng (why are you crying)? Go bohloko mo kae (where do you feel pain)?”

Ziphora: (crying) “I'm so fat, Dee, nothing fits me any more.”

I saw him smile and let out a chuckle. I felt so offended, that I cried even louder.

David: “Aowa (No), Zee. It is part of carrying a child. Believe me, you're not fat at all – you are so beautiful. Your breasts are even more gorgeous and I love your bums even more now.”

Ziphora: "You're just saying that to console me."

David: "Any man who doesn't find the beauty in pregnancy, is a damn fool. How can I find you horrid when you're about to gift me with the most priceless gift on earth? Come on, love, tell me what I can do to make you feel better. Botsa papa (tell daddy)."

Ziphora: "Ice cream. Double fudge with Bliss Yoghurt."

David: (smiling) "Okay

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I'll be right back."

He kissed my forehead and left. I sat there contemplating what to wear, until I resorted to wearing my robe only. While I sat on the bed deep in thought, I must have dozed off.

Koko Adelaide: "Relebohile, ngwanaka (my child). I am so proud of you. I know things have not been easy, but your job is not done yet."

Ziphora: “What do you mean, Mme (mom)?”

Koko Adelaide: “You have a destiny to fulfil, my child. Don't be despaired, but learn to lean on God even when you are about to go on this journey on your own. Learn that no situation is temporary, and Malome John will make sure you are sorted.”

Ziphora: “What do you mean, Mme (ma)? Ma? Ma?”

I heard my phone ring and I then realized I had a dream of Adelaide, David's grandmother once again. My phone was ringing and I realized that Ziyanda was video calling me.

Ziphora: “Hey, Ziyanda.”

Ziyanda: (frowning) “Babe, keng o kare (why does it seem like) you were sleeping?”

Ziphora: “This baby is showing me flames. One minute I was crying and the next I just dozed off.”

Ziyanda: “Are you still coming?”

Ziphora: “Of course, but I just have no idea what to wear. I already feel like a fat whale.”

Ziyanda: (laughing) “My pregnancies showed me flames as well – both of them. Believe me when I say I know what you are going through, but you are carrying gracefully. You are beautiful.”

Ziphora: “I don't know how to feel about all this weight I have picked up. I'm already wearing size 36.”

Ziyanda: “Love, I am a size 38 and I have never been smaller. I have spent so many years of my life beating myself up for it, that I have just accepted that I am just not meant to be small. It is okay to be big and beautiful. You'll be okay, and you will learn to embrace the new you. You are carrying a life inside

of you, boo, something that is too precious to beat yourself up about. You are fierce, a superwoman – own it.”

She was right, I suppose. I just had to learn to be okay. I had to learn to embrace the new journey I was embarking on.

Ziphora: “Thank you, Ziyanda, it really means a lot to me.”

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Any time, I'll see you soon, bye.”

I hung up and heard David calling me from downstairs.

David: (shouting) “Honey, I'm home!”

He came rushing into the bedroom within seconds and had a paper bag with him. I frowned when I noticed it didn't have any food in it.

Ziphora: (frowning) “That does not look like ice cream.”

David: (chuckling) “O bogale, MaMosue (You are so fiesty, Mrs. Mosue). Your ice cream is downstairs. I brought you an outfit I thought would suit you really well for tonight.”

I opened the paper bag and found the most beautiful yellow dress I had ever seen. It was so soft and it really fit me well. It even managed to hug my breasts really well and hide my small baby bump quite nicely. My bums still looked as if they were protruding, though, but I hadn't looked that great in a very long time.

David: (smiling) “You look beautiful, Mme wa bana ba me (mother of my children).”

Ziphora: “Thank you.”

David: “Come, you can eat your ice cream in the car. We have a function to go to.”

I smiled as we walked out and headed to our car. David wasn't driving us, but his driver was doing the driving instead. He

wanted to spend some time with me since he had been rather busy for the past few days. He and Jacob had totally distanced themselves from all the businesses that his mother and father had owned together. The only thing they were both a part of was the church – nothing more. We arrived at the venue and it was so full. I had never been to an election before, so it was so exciting for me. We had our own private area set for us in the front row, while Ziyanda was on stage. She waved at us as soon as she saw us, while I saw a beautiful, tall, coloured woman next to her and a man in a wheelchair. That must be Rachel, her sister in law and Sbusiso, Phila's twin brother. I was really happy, even though David was just acting weird.

David: “Baby, how would you like to go away for a few months?”

Ziphora: (frowning) “Go away where to? Like a holiday or what?”

David: (sigh) “I mean go away for a few months and live in another country.”

Is David serious right now? Of all the moments he could have chosen he chooses this one?!

Ziphora: “Why?”

David: “Uh, just to get a breather from everything, you know.”

David was just acting doggy, I mean I just didn't get where that sudden suggestion came from, but I got the idea that he was hiding something from me – something big.

Ziphora: “Is there anything you would like to tell me, David?”

“A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

Ziphora

I stared at my husband for quite some time and I could see he was on edge. I knew then he was lying to me. What was so big that he just couldn't tell me?

David: (nervously) “No, honey. The election is about to start, we'll finish this later.”

He kissed the back of my hand and stared in front of him. I felt uneasy from there onwards. I felt as if perhaps something big was about to happen. For some strange reason I remembered

Koko Adelaide's words to me in the dream I had earlier on. Come to think of it, she never visits without reason. She always visits when she is about to warn me with something. I just didn't know, but I just felt so nervous from then, as if my heart was literally beating right out of my chest waiting for me to catch it in case something bad had happened. I tried to ignore it, but even David was a bit tense. I just don't get it. Phila and his opponent made it to the stage. They both said their pieces and everyone seemed to love Phila more than his opponent – despite her being female. They did the count of the votes and as expected, Phila was the winner. His wife Ziyanda was there to hug him and congratulate him and he said his speech. Out of everything that happened that evening, his speech troubled me the most.

Phila: “I thank you, my people. Believe me, this decision was not made by me, but it was rather influenced by my wife. She is the one who had told me that I had a bigger purpose in this life, a purpose and a destiny to fulfil by being there for the people; to protect all vulnerable human beings – more especially women and children. My duty will solely be to protect and to ensure that our province becomes a better one. My dream is to eventually be President of this country and I will ensure that I will do my best in that regard. A lot of evil is roaming in the

world and more especially in this country, and not everyone has the heart and courage to stop it. I assure you from now on that no one shall ever be a victim to human trafficking ever again. As we all know that human trafficking is something that hits close to home. Most of you know that one of my twin daughters was kidnapped nearly a year ago, and even til date, we are still struggling to get over the pain it has caused us. She still struggles with trust and can't even be left out of sight. People; evil people have felt the need to destroy what God has created and they want to turn our own children into sex slaves. Sadly, even women are now a part of this slave trade, but rest assured, I shall deal with them – even if I have to do so to my death.”

Everyone was cheering and clapping their hands for him. Oh, now it makes sense. Ziyanda never really told me what happened to one of her daughters, as she has two sets of twins; two identical girls and then two fraternal twins; a boy and a girl. Wow, they have surely endured a lot of hardships yet they still remain standing. The campaign was a huge success, and then we got into our cars and made our way to Phila and Ziyanda's house. That was actually the very first time I had gone to her house. Their house is situated in Centurion, on a golf course actually. It is a lot similar to our house, but wow, it is just

magical. There were a lot of red and white colours. I see she also likes attention to detail since her favourite colour is also red. I saw Gogo Khanyi along with a much younger man. That must be Tony, her husband. She is one interesting grandmother.

Gogo Khanyi: (smiling) “Ziphora, how lovely to see you again. Yesses (gosh), you are so beautiful. That baby is making you glow a thousand times more.”

David chuckled while I just smiled briefly. I find it so hard to pretend and be merry while there is something bothering me. David was just smiling and laughing with everyone, while I had a million scenarios flowing through my mind. “Perhaps he is cheating on me, maybe he wants us to leave because he is hiding something”, I just had no idea what to think anymore.

Gogo Khanyi: (smiling) “Come with me to the bathroom for a second.”

David just kissed my forehead while Gogo swept me away. Thank goodness, because I just felt as if I was about to

suffocate. Instead of the bathroom, she took me upstairs to one of the bedrooms, and led me to the balcony. I felt like I was finally catching some air.

Gogo Khayi: "Breathe. Let it all out."

I don't even know how she managed to see through me like that. I didn't even know why I was crying, but I just cried. I felt as if David had betrayed me already without even knowing what he was hiding from me.

Gogo Khanyi: "Now, tell me why you are crying."

Ziphora: (deep breath) "I don't even know, Gogo. I mean, David was all happy the one minute, and the next minute he asks me a funny question."

Gogo Khanyi: "What funny question?"

Ziphora: "He asked me what I thought about us going away for a few months. Like to another country."

Gogo Khanyi: (chuckling) “Is that all?”

I guess I sounded silly and rather stupid by the way she was laughing at me. I must have looked like a complete idiot. I just nodded while looking down.

Gogo Khanyi: “Ziphora, life is all about hurdles and tough decisions. So now you are crying because he wants the two of you to go to another country for a few months. Has it ever occurred to you that perhaps your mother-in-law is a real danger to you hence he is thinking about you two moving away for a while? At least he wants you next to him and he always puts you first in his decisions, don't always look at the glass half empty. That man loves you, just as much as Phila loves my Ziyanda. Believe me, you haven't seen anything compared to what Ziyanda has been through. One day she will tell you what really happened with her. You are truly blessed that you were chosen by his ancestors for him. Believe me, every storm has an ending – sometimes good and sometimes bad but whatever happens in our lives is supposed to change us. You make the choice on what kind of change you would like.”

She had a point, though. I felt so silly after she had that talk with me.

Gogo Khanyi: “Don't you worry, I'm not judging you. You're still young – very young and you are bound to make mistakes – lots of them. Trust me, I know. At least you still haven't thrown boiling water at your husband. Come, let's go eat. I don't want you starving my friend Susan's baby.”

We both laughed as we walked out of the bedroom and headed downstairs. David saw me and immediately came to me. He could see my eyes and noticed that I was crying.

David: (frownin) “O shap (Are you okay)?”

I just nodded because I didn't want to make a scene. Knowing him, he'd probably want us to head on home right away. He kissed me and pulled my chair for me as always. My husband is so chivalrous. He sat next to me and immediately dished out for me. By then

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Rachel, Sbu, Phila, Ziyanda, Gogo Khanyi and Tony were around the table.

Rachel: “Wow, Sbu, look at how attentive David is. He is dishing out for his wife. When are you going to do that for me?”

They all laughed along with David. I was still a bit dumbstruck as I stared at Rachel. My goodness, that woman is gorgeous.

Sbu: “Hayi man (No man), Rachel, the day I get out of this chair, I will dish out for you. You know, I hate seeing you complain.”

They both laughed so freely and I just couldn't help but admire them. I mean, they were so carefree as if the situation was not stressful. Sbu was not born crippled, but apparently something happened and he was forced onto a wheelchair. I decided right then and there to stop being so selfish and embrace life and love and family. We had a pleasant meal and Phila really was happy to see us and I was honoured to have been a part of their family life. After that meal, Phila offered that we spend the night there since it was a bit late and David had a bit to

drink. Despite him having a driver, he felt that it was a bit unfair to call the Driver back all the way from Pretoria to Centurion.

Phila: "Please, spend the night at my house. All I want is to see you guys safe and sound."

I didn't mind, but David felt like we were imposing.

David: "I'd love to, my friend, but right now, I need to be in my own bed."

Phila: "I know better than to force a grown man to agree with me."

They both laughed.

Phila: "Let me drive you home then."

David: "No, that is too much of an ask."

Phila: "Please, I insist."

We didn't say no, since he was rather persistent, so he decided to drive us home. Oddly, Ziyanda never offered to go with us. She always said that Phila didn't want her driving at odd hours of the night. I guess it comes with being a high profile couple. Phila drove us in one of his SUV's. David sat next to Phila in the front passenger seat, while I sat at the back. I just let them be while I was on my phone. I could feel my eyes slowly giving into sleep, but I could still hear them talking.

Phila: "I really appreciate you coming tonight, David. It really means a lot to me."

David: "It is no trouble at all, Phila, honestly."

Phila: "Have you told her the big news? About you taking over PZ constructions?"

David: (chuckling) “Well, you just let the cat out of the bag now, didn't you? Baby, did you hear what Phila said?”

I felt like responding, but my body failed me. I was slowly dosing off.

David: “Ah, o robetse (she's sleeping).”

Phila: “It happens, pregnancy is something else.”

David: “Tell me about it.”

I was finally falling into deep sleep when all I heard was a loud bang.

Julia Mosue

It has been a rough few weeks ever since my husband died. I never in my life thought that the fucker would do me like that after he died. After his shares were immediately taken away

from every company we ever owned, I was in a serious rut. All my savings were slowly deteriorating and I had no option but to join forces with the most powerful people in my circle. He has been visiting me, that stupid fuck. Does he honestly think that I am afraid of ghosts? I sold the house and bought another one, just to have peace. Ever since then, he hasn't visited me. I can finally be free with my Buda. Since I have been eliminated from my own church, I decided to make my relationship with Buda public – yes, we're officially an item. I just have to find a way to creep into the church and make a firm alliance right under Ziphora's nose. She thinks she can be a better queen mother than I have ever been? She is Ms. Perfect, isn't she? She has no idea the plans I have for her. Shame, she took my Davey away from me, but that won't last forever. I'll be damned if I ever let her get away with anything. I have something big planned – something that will shake her forever.

Buda: “Baby, it is done.”

Julia: “Are you sure?”

Buda: (nodding) “Yes, the driver confirmed it just now. He ensured that he crash right into the car. Luckily for you, Phila was driving and your son was in the front.”

Julia: “And Ziphora?”

Buda: “She was also in the car. I'll keep you posted on the developments once the paramedics arrive on the scene.”

Julia: (smiling) “Good. Ensure that you give him a big fat tip if my son comes out dead. Triple the amount if Ziphora is dead too – even better, if she comes out alive without a baby bump.”

Buda: “Sho sho.”

Ziphora

I felt as if I was in a dream; I was struggling to open my eyes, but I could hear people talking.

Doctor: "She's conscious."

Nurse: "Yes, but the bleeding hasn't subsided yet, doctor."

Doctor: "I'm afraid her pulse is slowly dropping. We might have to operate. Send her straight to theatre. We might have to save her first. I don't think this baby will make it."

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- “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. “

Phila

I can't believe this just happened. After everything we have been planning meticulously to the T, it just went down the drain just like that. I found myself being attended by paramedics, with lights flashing almost everywhere. My vision was a bit blurry, and my head felt a bit heavy. I was dazed but I was the least of my worries. I suddenly remembered that I had David and Ziphora in the car. I jumped up immediately, and even though paramedics tried restraining me, I wasn't bothered.

Paramedic: “Sir, please! Calm down. We need to get you take you to the hospital urgently and have you checked out.”

Phila: “What about my passengers? Where are they?”

Paramedic: "The woman was taken into the ER."

Phila: "And David? Where is he? What happened to him?"

Paramedic: (frowning) "I'm sorry sir, but we only found you along with a pregnant woman in the car. There were no other casualties."

Fuck, this can't be right.

Phila: "Are you sure?"

Paramedic: "Yes, now please, calm down. We have to take you to the hospital as soon as possible."

Phila: "That won't be necessary. I'll call my wife to come fetch me."

Paramedic: "It is standard procedure, sir. If we leave you here and something happens to you, we'll lose our jobs."

Phila: "Fine. Let me call her and she can follow us there."

Paramedic: "Okay, but please don't be long as you suffered a heavy concussion. You need to lie down."

I have survived way too many bullets to be worried about a concussion right now. I have just lost the key witness in my plan. Only God knows what actually happened to David, but I smell Julia all over this. I called my wife immediately.

Ziphora: "Oh, Phila, thank goodness! I just saw the news and your car is smashed! Are you okay?"

Phila: "Yes, someone hit me from nowhere. I suffered a concussion and Ziphora was taken to the hospital."

Ziyanda: (shocked) "Oh, my goodness. Is she going to be okay? And David?"

Phila: "I don't want to say too much over the phone. I am worried it might be tapped. Listen, the medics are taking me in for observation. Please meet me there with Tony. Ask Gogo to watch the kids."

Ziyanda: "Okay, I'm on my way."

Phila: "If you spot anything unusual, you know what to do."

Ziyanda: "Yes, you taught me well. I'll see you in a bit. I love you."

Phila: "I love you too."

I hung up and got into the ambulance along with the paramedics. They should be glad I even allowed them to take me with because I just hate hospitals. Drake could have taken care of me right at home. Now that I am the Mayor, the media will be all over this. Something just doesn't feel right. The person who did this was following my every move; most

probably waited for me to leave my house. If I didn't know better, I'd say that this was an inside job. The fucker who caused this shit show will reap what they have sowed indeed. We arrived at the hospital and as expected, the media was already there hounding everyone at the hospital. Just what I feared. I hate this. Now Ziphora's family will find out about her being hospitalized on tv. The media has no remorse whatsoever. There is no time to be kind when it comes to journalism. I was taken in and of course, I received immediate treatment. Within minutes, my wife arrived along with Tony. My poor wife was so frantic and red

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she must have been crying. She hugged me and I could feel her shaking.

Phila: "It's okay, Sthandwa sami (my love), I'm okay."

Ziyanda: (crying) "I knew this was going to be a bad idea. Look now, you nearly ended up in the same situation as Sbu. Phila, what are we going to do?"

Phila: "I can't back down now, Zee. I can't, more especially when Ziphora is in theatre and David is practically missing."

Ziyanda: (frowning) "Missing?"

Phila: "The medics say that they only found Ziphora and I on the scene. Tony, you know what to do. Check all surveillance in the area, starting from my house. I want to know who has been watching me from at least two weeks prior to tonight."

Tony: (nodding) "On it, boss."

Phila: "I have to go find out how Ziphora is doing."

Ziyanda: "What do we do when she asks about David?"

Phila: (sigh) "I think we'll cross that bridge when we get there. For now, let us just ask the nurses how she is doing."

We asked a nurse who works in theatre how she was doing. Of course, they didn't want to divulge such information, but I just had to bribe them.

Nurse: (sigh) "Mrs. Mosue is still in theatre, apparently she was bleeding really badly and they had to remove the foetus."

I felt such a horribly, sharp pain in the pit of my stomach. I could tell my wife just felt the same.

Ziyanda: (shocked) "I don't understand."

Nurse: "She was injured very badly, as she has two fractured ribs and as a result of the accident, she lost the baby. I'm sorry."

I just saw my wife cry, which caused me to cry too. I hate it when she cries. This just reminds me of the time we lost our children as well. Now this all feels like my fault.

Ziyanda: (crying) “Nkosenye, whoever did this knew that she was pregnant. I mean, it was intentional. I need you to promise me, promise me that you'll get whoever did this.”

Phila: “I promised you a long time ago that I would leave Mamba behind, but now, I have to do this. I promise you, Sthandwa sami (my love).”

While my wife and I were deep in thought, Tony gave me some feedback.

Tony: “Boss, we have a problem.”

Phila: “Talk to me.”

Tony: “The footage from the accident seems encrypted. Which means whoever did this, must be a pro. He doesn't want to be found, however, I saw something that could lead us to the culprit.”

He showed me his laptop. One thing about being a tech genius is that you get to go with your gadgets everywhere – even in emergency situations. He showed me a clip of one of my security guards at the house, talking to someone wearing all black and driving a black Ford Ranger. He was seen taking an envelope which seemed to be filled with money. I can't believe this. Have I become this sloppy? Something just doesn't seem right with this entire setup. Security could only manage to give the person some form of information, but my question is; who is that powerful enough to know all my whereabouts?

Phila: “Get the guys to bring him to my basement. While at it, make sure you get a clearer view of that guy and start looking at the footage from two weeks ago. I have a feeling someone is a fucking traitor.”

Tony: “On it boss.”

We let him get busy in the car in the parking lot while we headed to Ziphora's ward. Someone is going to die tonight. The Black Mamba is back.

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Ziyanda Zwane

I can't believe everything has turned into such a huge mess. How on earth do I look Ziphora in the eye knowing very well that her baby would have still been developing in her tummy if it weren't for us and our plans to bring down the mighty Hashib? It seems as if we might have underestimated these people. Now they have taken David. How do I tell another woman that her husband is nowhere to be found and it is all because of us? Phila and I were on our way to her ward. Of course the annoying hospital staff wanted to take pictures. Now is not the time, honestly. As I walked closer to

her ward, I felt an increasingly anxious feeling. I don't know if I will ever forgive myself. I opened the door with my husband right beside me and the sight was rather painfully familiar. I have also lay in the very same hospital bed, confused, frantic, broken, speechless. The list is endless. I know the stages of grief very well; more especially grief of someone who have never met before. You start crying as you feel as if your entire heart is being ripped to shreds when you hear the famous words "I'm sorry for your loss." You then start asking yourself a million questions that start with "what if" and "If only", you then blame yourself, sink into deeper depression before you actually allow yourself to heal, but the pain never goes away. I saw her sleeping and the worst part is that I did not even know if she had known or not. I decided to fight the tears back, but they refused to be fought back.

Ziyanda: "Ziphora. It's me, Ziyanda."

She woke up almost immediately.

Ziphora: (teary) "Ziyanda, you came. Where is my husband?"

I did not even know how to answer that.

Ziyanda: "They are still looking for him."

Ziphora: (crying) "Why is this happening to me, Zee?"

Her eyes looked swollen, she must have been crying.

Ziyanda: "I don't know, but all I know is that all will be well, babe."

Ziphora: "Is my baby okay?"

The most dreaded question of all. I'm a firm believer in the truth. I believe that it is better to speak the truth so that one can process it unlike delaying or hiding the truth. That never ends well. As they say, you have to rip off the bandage all at once instead of ripping off few parts bit by bit. In the case of a woman about to be bereaved after carrying her first child, it's not as easy as it sounds.

Ziyanda: (teary) “Ziphora, perhaps we should talk another - “

Ziphora: (interrupting) “Where is is my baby, Ziyanda?!”

Ziyanda: (teary) “I'm sorry...”

I saw that very same look I once had a few times; that bewildered look.

Ziphora: (frowning) “What are you telling me, Ziyanda?!”

Ziyanda: (crying) “The accident was too vigorous on your body. As a result, you lost the baby.”

Ziphora: (crying) “No! Please, tell me that is not true! Tell me that is not true, I beg of you, Ziyanda! No! Oh, now my husband has gone missing! Why is God so cruel to me?! Have I not been obedient?!”

She was screaming and shouting, until the doctor came in. Phila and I just stood there with tears streaming down our faces. I was just so distraught, I had nothing to say.

Doctor: "Please, leave. You are upsetting my patient."

Phila and I just nodded and as we turned we heard a familiar voice.

Susan: (frantic) "Where is she?! Where is my daughter?! Ziphora Mosue where is she?!"

She turned her face and saw us walking out of the ward immediately and came running towards us. She was still in her pajamas, and that just showed this woman got into her car the minute she heard the news that her daughter was in hospital. The media has no shame.

Susan: (worried) "Have you seen her, Phila? Ziyanda

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where is she? Is she okay? And the baby?"

Ziyanda: (softly) "She's - "

I couldn't even finish my sentence when we were all stung by Ziphora's loud wail from her room. Susan rushed to her room immediately. I turned around and stood there frozen, staring at the door of Ziphora's hospital room. Life just isn't fair at times.

Phila: "Come, Sthandwa sami (My love), let's go home."

I just nodded defeated as I slowly walked alongside Phila. Yes, we were blindsighted; yes, David might even be killed as far as we know, but then when we started this journey, we knew that a few people might die and never live to tell the tale. Sbu almost died and lost the ability to walk. It is not permanent, though, as he is undergoing evasive therapy. He will be able to walk again. We got to the parking lot and found Tony already outside the car, smoking.

Phila: (firmly) "Any news?"

It is amazing til this day that my husband can switch emotions in a split second. I myself do get amazed even to this day.

Tony: “Sure, Bozza (Boss), I finally managed to decipher the camera footage. It seems as if we're dealing with the top dogs of the trafficking chain. It is best I show you.”

Tony took out his laptop and played the video.

Tony: “As you can see, the camera from that angle shows the guys had been following you from the moment you left the house. In fact, running footage from two weeks ago, the guys had been scouting you the entire time. They knew your every move, along with ours and the Boss Lady's. You can see here, that moments after you left the house with David and Ziphora, the car took another route, but then it started speeding and it headed right into yours.”

We saw the suspect's car immediately crashing into Phila's car on his side, deliberately. Imagine that, criminals driving a Mercedes SUV and crashing it right into a Mercedes AMG. That

was my favourite car, man. They even had another car that was waiting for them right behind them. We could see two people getting out of the car holding two guns and upon realizing that Phila, David and Ziphora were unconscious, they took David instead of pulling the trigger. I'd say that they were holding David ransom, but my judgment is never wrong. There is more to this.

Phila: "Where is the guard that was seen taking money from the unknown man?"

Tony: "He is on his way to your house as we speak. These clips are the least of our worries."

Phila: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Tony: "Well, I managed to get a clearer picture of the man who was seen handing the envelope full of money to your security guard. It was Diego's son."

I suddenly felt chills down my spine. A few years ago Phila would have never told me about his shady life, but we have come a long way.

Phila: “Diego? Mexico's finest drug king pin? How the fuck does he fit into all this?”

Tony: “Well, there is only one way to find out. Beat it right out of Steven.”

Steven being our security guard, I was actually disappointed in him. I mean, yes, he didn't kill anyone, but he might as well have since he allowed those people to spy on us for weeks. How dare he? After everything Phila and I had done for him? For his family.

Phila: “Well, then, let's not waste any more time. Let's drop Zee off and get his show on the road.”

I didn't have a good feeling about what he had just said.

Ziyanda: “Wait, you're not going to ask Razor or someone else to do the job?”

Phila: “No, love. If you want the job done, you do it yourself.”

Ziyanda: "But Phila, you have just been appointed Mayor. Imagine if this gets out to the press."

Phila: "That's why we have Sbu and Tony in our corner. Nothing will happen. I swear. I won't kill him if that's what you're worried about."

Ziyanda: "Okay, just be careful."

Phila: "For you, always."

I know when we created a basement in the house, we did it for such occasions, but right now, I don't know how I feel about Phila doing the job himself. I mean he has so many guys who can do the job for him. He is a very important public figure now. If word gets out that he tortures people who screw him over, we're as good as nothing. We have worked so hard for all this to be taken away from us. I can only hope he goes back to his old warehouse. This can get very messy. I do however not blame him because it seems as if this is just the tip of the iceberg. I can't help but feel that whomever is behind Julia is bigger than what we thought.

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“Do not say, “I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.”

Phila

I can't remember the last time I was this upset. Only when Sbu got shot by the people who also seem involved in this vicious cycle of human trafficking. It took me a while to forgive myself for getting him involved in getting my daughter back, but he is nearly there with his healing. Now, I have lost a friend I had just made and to top it all off his wife has just lost their very first child together. So many what ifs are going through my mind, and how I wish I had been a little bit more careful. We have no idea where David is or if he is even okay. All I know is that it is my duty to ensure that he comes back home to his wife. There is no turning back, we are in way too deep. I immediately parked the car and just as I was about to head out to the basement, Gogo Khanyi stopped me.

Gogo Khanyi: “Uyaphi mfana wami (where are you going, my boy)?”

Phila: "To sort someone out."

Gogo Khanyi: "Whatever happens, don't kill him. You made a promise to your wife. You don't kill anymore. Besides, Sbu wants to see you before you go into the basement."

I reluctantly walked in with Ziyanda by my side and Tony right behind me. Rachel also seemed just as clueless as I was. Actually the rest of us were wondering why he wanted to see me. He was on his chair, looking at me with a mischievous grin on his face.

Phila: "Sbuda, mfo (bro), what's up? uGogo (Granny) says you asked for me."

Sbu smiled as he looked at me. Suddenly, he adjusted his hands onto the wheelchair and slowly got up. All of us were in so much shock, that we wanted to help him up. Rachel rushed to his side, but he stopped her.

Sbu: “No, baby, I got this.”

Indeed, he had it because he stood up without any effort, leaving us all flabbergasted.

Rachel: (teary) “Sbusiso Lethukuthula Zwane. Since when can you walk again?”

Sbu: “It has been a week now. I was waiting for a special day to surprise you all, but I guess these unfortunate events require me to stand up and fight, literally.”

He chuckled, but none of us laughed. Sbu has always had a bit of dry humor.

Ziyanda: (teary) “That is not funny, Sbusiso.”

Sbu: “Okay, askies (sorry), but I'm serious.”

Rachel: (crying) “Sbu, you nearly lost your ability to walk and now, you got it all back only for you to sacrifice yourself all over again?”

Sbu: “What would you have done if this was one of your friends, Rachel? David has no one – literally no one, but his wife, uncle and brother. We don't know what they are doing to him as we speak. For all we know he could be dead. You just have to trust me, baby, please. Allow me to help someone. It is why we let Phila go into politics in the first place, to make a difference.”

Rachel: (crying) “I just don't want you to lose you for good this time.”

Ziyanda: “I hate to say this, Ray, but come on. Since when have you lost faith in anything these men do for us? They always come back home to us – always. 1 Corinthians 2:5 says; “That your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Matthew 21:22 says; “And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” Luke 1:37 says; “For nothing will be impossible with God.” And 1 Corinthians 16:13 says; “Be on guard.” Learn from our situation with Sbu. We all

thought he might never walk again, but what happened to him is that the power of God worked through him.”

Rachel: “You're right, Zee, you're absolutely right, but please, promise me that you will not endanger yourself unnecessarily, Sbusiso.”

Whenever she calls him that, she means business.

Sbu: “I promise.”

Tony: “I hate ruining moments like these, but Razor says he has Steven in the basement. He's ready for you.”

Phila: “Cobra, welcome back, Bro. Are you ready?”

Sbu: “I was born ready. Masihambe (Let's go).”

We left Gogo Khanyi and our wives right there as we made our way to the basement. I walked right behind Sbu because I was in disbelief as to how quickly he had recovered. Yes, he took

about two years to walk again, but nothing beats the feeling of seeing him so happy. We walked in and immediately saw the fear spark in Steven's eyes as soon as he saw us. Razor was standing right before him minding his own business. Steven even had a few bruises, I guess Razor must have roughed him up a little bit. It serves him right.

Phila: "Are you handling this one, Cobra?"

Sbu: (chuckling) "I thought you'd never ask. I've been longing to get back into the game. Sho sho (Sure sure), Malome (Uncle) Steven. Wat se (what's cooking)?"

Steven: (frightened) "Please, bozza (boss), ga ke tsebe ke batla eng fa (I don't know why I'm here), but I think you have the wrong guy."

Sbu and I looked at one another and laughed.

Sbu: "Mamba, botsa die ding o chunneng (tell this thing what he did)."

Phila: “You know me, Cobra, I like movies, man. Let me rather show him. Tony, please play the video, my man.”

Tony: “On it.”

He opened his laptop, put it on another chair facing Steven and played the video from the CCTV footage. Immediately

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Steven became uncomfortable. It is amazing how much a person can say under duress, I always say.

Sbu: “Wa cava nou (Do you know now)?”

Steven: “Eish (oh), Bozza (boss), bona (look), all I did was accept the money. I had to. My mother needed a heart transplant and you know how expensive these procedures are.”

Phila: (chuckling) “Even under all this stress, you are still lying, Steven. I mean you could possibly die tonight and yet you're still lying.”

Steven: (shaky) “I swear, Bozza (boss), my mom would have died.”

Sbu: “Maybe we should bring your mother here so we could actually see if she's really sick for ourselves, you know.”

Steven: (scared) “No! I mean, no, she is in hospital.”

Sbu: “Razor, please bring the famous trolley.”

Razor: “With pleasure, boss.”

Sbu put on his surgical gloves as well as his apron, leaving Steven really frightened this time.

Sbu: “Do you know what I enjoy doing to people who fuck me over? Who fuck my family over? I love to torture them until death of course. I love choosing the form of punishment according to your act of betrayal. In this case, you took money because of your selfish and greedy tendencies, and worst part you lied to us just now, right after we gave you a chance to come clean. Isn't that right, Razor?”

Razor: “100% Boss.”

Sbu: “I hate greedy people, so I feel that greed starts within the heart, you know. I should cut your heart out right now with this scalpel.”

Sbu took a scalpel and started polishing it right in front of Steven. He was suddenly hyperventilating while seeing the rest of the tools on that trolley.

Steven: “Please, I am begging you.”

Sbu: “Or better yet, I should start with your tongue, since well you used it to lie to us.”

Steven: (crying) “Please, I am begging you, let me go.”

Sbu: (angered) “You came here with nothing, Steven. We helped you – despite your job as security we ensured that you go to University, along with all your six siblings. We even built your mother a house – the house of her dreams for her fiftieth birthday. You could have come to us but instead you chose to sell us out? Why?!”

Steven: “He just said that he wanted to watch you guys. He said that you two took something from him which cost him a shit load of money. That is all he said. He just said that I must ensure that no one sees him spying on you. That is all I was told, I swear.”

Sbu: “Okay.”

Sbu wasted no time and decided to rip Steven's shirt to shreds and cut his chest open. Steven was screaming out so loud, thank goodness the walls are sound proofed. He wasted no time and sang like a canary.

Steven: (screaming) “Yoh! Yoh nna mmawe (Oh, my goodness)! Look, he said that he was sent by people you fucked with and that he needed to know all your movements. I swear, that is all I know.”

Sbu: “Which people?”

Steven: “The mafia. All the big Mafias. He just said that his father was someone big in the drug cartel and that you two were going to regret ever fucking with their plans. Look, I swear, that is all I know. I promise you. I swear.”

Sbu: “How much did he give you?”

Steven: “R50 000.”

Sbu: (chuckling) "You know, I really liked you, Steven. I don't take well to people who fuck me over. I'll have to ensure that you never try this again – ever. Be glad I won't kill you, but unfortunately I'll have to leave you with a memory. One finger for every R10 000 you got in that envelope."

Sbu wasted no time and cut off five of his fingers from his left hand. Steven cried out in pain, but none of us were bothered. Because of him our entire family is in danger now. Because of him, the entire mafa knows where we live – where our wives and children live. My security has been compromised and it is all because of a mere security guard. When did I get this sloppy?!

Sbu: "Razor, make sure Drake sorts him out at the hospital."

Razor: "On it."

Razor took him away screaming like a baby, while we had to construct our next move. At least then we knew that Diego was most definitely part of the entire operation. What baffled me is that we had no idea who else was a mole. We had to start

cleaning up our entire team, questioning everyone that worked for us. It was high time we took out the big guns. I had to do something. I hope and pray David is alive wherever he is. As we were leaving the basement and proceeded into the house, Gogo Khanyi called me abruptly with her cellphone in her hand.

Gogo Khanyi: “Phila, uFlorah ufuna ukukhuluma nawe (Florah wants to talk to you).”

My heart was beating a bit faster than usual and I knew that she never had anything good to say after midnight. But, with her, one just never knew.

Phila: “Mam'Florah.”

MaMasango: “Phila, Mfana wami (my boy). Unjani (how are you)?”

Phila: “I'm well, Ma, how are you?”

MaMasango: (making noises) “Ngiyaphila (I'm well). I have some relieving news. Put me on speaker.”

I did as told.

MaMasango: “David is still alive.”

We all sighed in relief. Even Rachel and Zee were out of the bedrooms as a call from her means either danger is lurking, or she has a warning.

Sbu: “Can we get hold of him? Where is he?”

MaMasango: “It is not that easy, Mfana wami (my son). He is held captive, but not for long. The plan was to torture him as per his mother's instructions, but his captors have other ideas. I'll consult with the ancestors, but I will need his wife for this.”

Eish, I doubt she would even agree. She was in a bad space.

Phila: “Perhaps I will speak to Malome (Uncle) John and maybe he can help us.”

MaMasango: “That would be a start, but please, do not under any circumstances go anywhere near that woman Julia. She is dangerous and has formed an alliance with very dangerous and evil people. Getting closer to her will only aggravate her even more. I want to consult so that I can give you all my findings, but it looks like it is about to get worse before it gets better.”

Great; just what I needed to hear. Everyone always talks of the calm before the storm, but it seems as if we just keep encountering storm after storm. Nonetheless, I made a vow to my wife. To protect her no matter what and David did that too for his wife. It is my duty to bring him back to his wife, so that life can go on as it should. Either way, I know for a fact that people are going to die, I smell blood and that is not a good sign.

“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. “

Matthew 5:4 - “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. “

Ziphora

It had been a horrible two days for me. All I wanted was to go home. I couldn't even eat or sleep, I kept thinking of David, then thinking of my baby. I kept asking God why. Why give me such a beautiful gift only for him to take it away from me? Have I not been good enough? I saved myself for marriage, I obeyed my mother. Why should I be on the receiving end of pain? I felt that Ziyanda and Phila owed me an explanation. I mean, for some reason I felt that they knew more than what they told me. I asked the doctor to discharge me. I knew very well just how private hospitals operated. Even if you are just fine, they keep you for “observation” so that they could cash in on your medical aid. I went home and I hardly said a word to anyone.

My mother opted to move in with me and even though I didn't agree, I just let her be. She didn't give me much of a choice.

My husband was missing; I had just lost my first child. How on earth would I go on with life? My story was all over the news. I mean, I never knew that being the Church First lady would make me so famous. Indeed, the media has no respect for privacy. People who don't even know you even those who were talking trash about me a few months ago were all over my Twitter timeline and Facebook wall, sending condolences. Sure, I was not the first woman to lose a child, but it felt as if no one knew what I was going through. I just sat on my balcony just outside my bedroom every morning, all day, staring at the sun, hoping my David would just come back to me and tell me that all this was just a mere bad dream. Everyone from church had been calling me, even Boitu, but I just wasn't ready to speak to anyone. Even Selina was calling me, but I bet she just wanted to discuss church matters. I was just exhausted, emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. I couldn't even remember the last time I had prayed. I felt so hollow inside. Imagine the pain of having all the evidence of once carrying a child, yet you came back home empty handed. I was randomly walking around in the house the moment I came back home, just to see if perhaps my David might have been in one of the rooms,

when I came across a nursery he had secretly been creating for our baby. I just wanted to die. I was once again deep in thought when I heard my mother call my name.

Susan: "Ziphora, my baby, your friends are here to see you."

I turned around only to find Phila and Ziyanda standing behind me. It was about damn time, those two owed me answers to a million unanswered questions. I couldn't even smile, I felt anger creeping up from the pit of my stomach.

Ziyanda: (smiling) "Hey, how are you?"

Ziphora: "I'm fine."

Phila: "May we sit?"

Ziphora: "Be my guest."

I honestly had no idea why I was so hostile towards them, but it felt like it was necessary. Perhaps it is one of the stages of grief, but I don't know.

Ziyanda: "How are you feeling?"

"How do you think I'm feeling? I asked myself.

Ziphora: "Fine. I have a few questions for you two, and I would honestly appreciate it if you two answered me fairly and honestly."

Phila: (nodding) "Okay."

I was usually a person who wouldn't confront anyone, but I had just lost my marbles.

Ziphora: "I feel like you two are hiding something from me. Where is my David and why were we suddenly in an accident that looks so purposeful?"

Phila: “Ziphora, I'd really love to tell you everything right now, but we actually came here to ask you to come with us. We received information that David is alive, but we can't get through to him without you being present. We need you to connect to his soul.”

I felt like they were bullshitting me, to be honest.

Ziphora: “Are you two prepared to tell me the truth or not?”

Phila: “Please...”

Ziphora: “Please, leave.”

Ziyanda: “About two years ago, one of my twin daughters was kidnapped while we were at the mall. It was all over the news – despite us asking for privacy. We had to pull out all the stops and find her. It was a draining two days, but after every plan we pulled

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we found her along with a lot of other children in a container about to be shipped to Mexico. We got a lead that Diego, the king pin of the Mexican Drug Cartel was in on it and it was indeed personal, but we just never really got evidence. We then discovered that your mother-in-law was also one of the big guns behind the entire trafficking syndicate in our country. She used David's Agape Foundation for Young Girls to traffic all those girls; promising them jobs overseas but they never come back. David found out and he was determined to work with us to bring her down – along with her entire team of accomplices. We were working on a plan – he was going to ask you to move with him to Italy and stay there until the case was over. He had turned state witness against all of them because if he hadn't he was going to go to prison. Everything is under his name, Ziphora. I could tell you so much more, but I just wish I had the time to explain everything to you right now. That is how Sbu got shot and paralysed. I know, we were wrong for involving your husband in all this without letting you know, but we had no other choice. He had to do this to free you as well, otherwise his name and everything he had worked for all these years would have been associated with heinous crimes he never committed.”

I was listening attentively to Ziyanda and believe me, everything she said to me was frightening, but all in all I was enraged. She still had her husband beside her while mine was nowhere to be seen nor found.

Ziphora: "I hear everything you're saying to me, but that still doesn't change the fact that I lost my husband and my child. You can't replace what I have lost Ziphora, neither can you, Phila. You two at least got your daughter back, but what about me? You still have your husband beside you, but what about me?"

Phila: "I understand, I totally do, but please. Help us so that we can help you."

Ziphora: "Please leave."

Phila: "Ziphora--"

Ziphora: (interrupting) "Now!"

Ziyanda: "It's okay, Phila, let's go."

Phila looked at me with sore eyes but he got up and held his wife's hand. As they were about to leave, Ziyanda stopped and looked at me.

Ziyanda: "Before I leave, Ziphora, I am truly sorry for what you have gone through. Believe me I went through that a few times even. But one thing you should know is that the day you became chosen for David and as the First Lady is that you need to be strong. Life won't always be a bed of roses and if you crumble under every attack that the Devil sends your way then God won't have a way of communicating with you. Hebrews 11:1 says; "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." You have been through quite a lot, but you haven't seen the worst. You need to be able to see the worst before you actually believe that God truly does exist. Until then, you will keep questioning everything and be consumed with anger. I'll keep praying for you. And I do pray that you forgive my husband and I."

With that said, she walked out. Her words just stabbed me to the core. I am a person and I have feelings and at that point, all I wanted was my David to come back. I just wasn't functioning.

Ziyanda Zwane

I honestly hate seeing another woman in pain. Seeing Ziphora like that really did break my heart, but to be honest Julia would have found one way or another to do what she did sooner or later. Losing a child is really painful, and now I don't even know how I will look her in the face knowing she blames me for her husband going missing. Phila could see just how broken I was while I was pondering my head in the car on our way back home.

Phila: "Sthandwa sami (My love), all shall be well. Don't stress so much, please."

I just nodded and gave him a faint smile while he gently kissed my hand. I knew that a dark road lay ahead, even Thando sent me a message the previous night asking me to pray. This just reminds me of everything that happened to Kele, the children

and I when I had just found Phila. That was ten years ago, but it seems as if whenever we grasp something good, bad things need to happen first. I am just saddened that all this is affecting people around us instead of just our family. We got into the yard and headed into the house. Mam Florah and Malome John were already at the house. I even spotted Jacob amongst them; he was probably invited since he was the closest link to David. Rachel, Sbu and Gogo Khanyi were sitting on the couches right across Mam Florah and Malome John. My mood was already dampened, I was not ready for any horrible news.

Mam Masango: “Oh, thank goodness you two have finally arrived. Kudala simile (We've been waiting).”

Malome John: (smiling) “How are you two? How is Ziphora doing?”

Phila: “We're well, thank you, Malome.”

Ziyanda: “She isn't taking it too well.”

Malome John: (nodding) "Shall we get started? We can chat a bit later. Let's not waste any more time."

We took our shoes off and sat down on one of the couches, while Mam Florah, Malome John and Jacob were kneeling down on the carpet before us. Mam Florah lit a white candle and a red one, and took out a box of snuif. There was also a glass of water right there.

Malome John: "Jacob, remember what I said; it is important for you to breathe and stay calm. You need to be able to tell us what you see because for some reason Florah and I are blocked from accessing David's spirit. Will you do that?"

Jacob: (nodding) "Anything to get my brother back."

It was very nerve-wrecking. I mean, I had seen a lot of things in the past but this is on another level. What transpired was really shocking to say the least.

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“Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement.”

Jacob

I couldn't understand what was about to happen, but I trusted my uncle. I knew that I was safe in his hands. I would do anything to get my brother back home safely. I did as told, I started breathing slowly while listening to their instructions. Malome John was calm while Mam'Florah was burping and making sounds in between. It felt like a meditation session. Suddenly, I felt as if something was taking over my body, as if my entire body was feeling overwhelmed with immense heat.

Ma Masango: “How do you feel?”

Jacob: “I'm feeling very hot.”

Malome John: “Try to relax, you are feeling everything he is feeling. Your souls are connecting now. Please, remember, it is important for you to tell us what you see, so we can try and see it too.”

Jacob: (nodding) “Okay.”

Suddenly, I felt as if I was in a room I could not recognize. It was as if my body was there, but no one could see me.

Malome John: “What do you see?”

Jacob: (breathing heavily) “I'm in a room. It is almost as if it is a hospital room, but not quite.”

Mam'Florah: “What else do you see?”

Jacob: (breathing heavily) “I see people – men – about four maybe five of them around a man I can't see properly. He is tied up, on the table. As if they are about to operate on him or something.”

Malome John: "I know you feel scared, but go closer. Step closer to them so that we can hear what they are saying."

Jacob: (nodding) "Okay."

I stepped closer as instructed, I could see the body of the man, but the face seemed blurred.

Jacob: "I see a man, but the face is blurred. I can't see him. I can't hear what they are saying."

Mam'Florah: (praying) "Badimo ba ga Mosue, rea le kopa, re bontsheng ngwana wa lena. (The Mosue ancestors, we beg of you, show us your child). We are you and you are us, please, we are begging you. This is a matter of life and death, use this child of yours as a vessel to locate your child, David."

As soon as she said that, she started burping and I could suddenly hear what the men were saying. I could see the man

on the table. Oh, my goodness! It was David! He was unconscious, with a belted device around his head.

Malome John: "He can see him and hear what they are saying now. Listen carefully and tell us what they are saying slowly."

I just nodded and stepped closer.

Man 1: "Diego, you should have listened to Hashib. She strictly instructed us to kill this boy."

Man 2: "Marco, you worry too much. I have my own plans. Don't you want this boy to work for us? Besides, he already knows too much. The girls trust him, he can make them come to us directly. So, we don't have to use Hashib anymore. She's too much of a liability."

Man 3: "I agree with Diego, Marco. He has a point."

Man 2: "Okay, but I don't want this to fuck up my operation. You fuck it up, I fuck you up, Diego."

Man 1: (chuckling) "Relax, you know I have a bigger market than you do. You talk too much. Miguel

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you know what to do. Make this man lose his memory, he must not remember a thing about being David Mosue. From now on, his name is Luis Garcia, and he works for me now."

Man 4: (nodding) "Okay. I get it, you kept him tied up, but I can't reverse his memory while he is in this state. You beat him up quite badly, so I have to perform hypnosis. The old fashioned way."

Man 1: "Fine, but can you do it while he is unconscious?"

Man 4: "Yes. Make him sit up straight on that chair."

They carried him to the chair and made him sit up as instructed. My poor brother, he was seriously injured. He was badly bruised all over his face and body. Whomever did that was baying for blood.

Man 1: "Get on with it already, Miguel."

The fourth man stood right in front of David and started performing his hypnosis. I tried speaking to David, but it was pointless. No one could hear me.

Man 4: "You are no longer David Mosue, the man named David Mosue is a thing of the past. You are one of the best human traffickers in the business, in fact, you are one of Diego Rodriquez's right hand men. You are now Luis Garcia. At the snap of my fingers, you will wake up. Every time you hear the snap of the fingers, you will tap right into Luis Garcia."

The man snapped his fingers and indeed, my brother woke up."

David: (frowning) "Where am I?"

Man 4: "You are back home in Mexico. Do you remember what happened to you?"

David: (shaking head) "No."

Man 4: "Do you at least know who you are?"

David: (nodding) "Luis, Luis Garcia."

I wanted to scream. I walked closer to David and started shouting at him.

Jacob: "David! It's me! Wake up, brother, wake up and come home to us!"

Man 1: (sniffing) "Someone is in here, an unwanted guest."

Mam'Florah: (shouting) "Jacob, you need to open your eyes and get out of there. Now!"

I felt so frustrated, I couldn't leave my brother there. Yes, I was there in spirit, but I had to do something.

Jacob: (shouting) “David! Please! Come back to us!”

All of a sudden, I felt myself being moved from that room by something I couldn't see. I couldn't even explain it. I saw visions around me, playing like a live movie. Malome John and Mam Florah were screaming at me, begging me to come back, but I just couldn't. I saw my entire life flash before my eyes. I saw myself talking with Phila and Sbu, devising a plan on getting David back. The next thing I saw myself hugging my twins goodbye in front of Ziphora, I then saw myself heading onto a plane along with Phila and Sbu, but something odd just happened – the plane crashed. It crashed with me in there. What the fuck was happening? Did I just have a premonition or what?

Malome John: “This boy wants to die, Florah, do something!”

I suddenly felt overwhelmed with immense heat. I couldn't understand what was happening, but my soul was still present in a weird dark room with that entire image playing in front of me, but physically I felt myself burning from the inside. I opened my eyes and saw Mam'Florah shaking me.

Mam'Florah: "Uzofa wena (You'll die)!"

Immediately as she said that, I found myself coughing blood.

Ziyanda: (worried) "Oh, no! What is happening to him?!"

Malome John: "Get us imphepo immediately."

I felt my eyes become heavier and the sounds of everyone around me become fainter, as I slowly closed my eyes.

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“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Deutoronomy 31:6 - “Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

One week later...

Ziphora

It had been one dreadful week. I hadn't been eating nor sleeping properly. I hadn't even been eating at all, actually. Everything felt like a horrid movie replaying itself in my head. Apparently I had to do a ceremony, a cleansing ceremony since I lost my child. I just didn't want to speak to anyone, and I avoided everyone in my life because all conversations just ended up being a pity party. I had no idea what was going on at church or even at work, but all I just wanted to do was wallow in my own pit of pity and grief. I was grieving a man I had no idea was alive or dead. I was on the

balcony as usual, until my mother came. She came right at me and grabbed my blanket away from me.

Ziphora: (annoyed) “Mama?! Kgante keng (what is it)?!”

Susan: (angrily) “What is your name?”

Ziphora: (frowning) “Mama weh (my goodness, Mama)! I'm not in the mood for this.”

Susan: (shouting) “You're not too old for one fat slap. Ke re ke wena mang (I said, who are you)?!”

I could see she was serious, she could very well slap me.

Ziphora: “Ziphora Mosue.”

Susan: “Were you born a Mosue?”

Ziphora: (looking down) "No, Ma. I was born a Mokoena."

Susan: "Speak properly so that I can hear you."

Ziphora: "I was born Ziphora Destiny Mokoena."

Susan: "Did I ever teach you to mope around when the going gets tough?"

I shook my head.

Susan: "Speak!"

Ziphora: (teary) "No, mme (ma)."

Susan: "What do we do in the Mokoena household when the going gets tough?!"

Ziphora: (teary) "We pray."

Susan: (shouting) "Bua (Talk), man!"

Ziphora: (crying) "We pray."

Susan: "Ephesians 6:10 e reng (what does Ephesians 6:10 say)?"

Ziphora: (teary) "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."

Susan: "1 Chronicles 16:11?"

Ziphora: "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!"

Susan: "Joshua 1:9?"

Ziphora: (crying) “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

I cried, I cried as if I hadn't been crying for nearly two weeks.

Susan: (sigh) “Ngwanaka (my child), I raised you to be a warrior. You are now a queen mother, you are a leader of a big church now. What do you think your enemies are doing right now? They are smiling and rejoicing in your heartache. Yes, you lost your baby, but it is honestly not the end of the world. Your life is still moving, so why on earth are you forcing it to be on standstill? Your husband is missing but that does not mean that you shouldn't keep the faith alive. I am here, I will not sit back and watch my daughter hand herself over to the Devil's joy. Ziphora, you are strong, find that strength again and be the woman God has set you out to be. Live life with the hope and faith that your husband will come back.”

Ziphora: (crying) “But ma, had it not been for Ziyanda and Phila, he would have still been here.”

Susan: (shaking head) “You don't know that. We each have our own fate and our own destiny. I have a feeling he is saving the world before he can come back and save the two of you. Hang in there, Ziphora. Get up, go take a shower, I'll be making us some food. Your sisters are coming to visit. Get your act together, my child. For God will still throw stumbling blocks your way. The key is to keep going, and not to stop praying. You are a prayer warrior, and remember that your tongue and knees are your weapons against destruction.”

I wiped off my tears and did as I was told. I think I needed that harsh pep talk. I couldn't possibly cry forever and shut the entire world out. I just wondered then what was happening in my church as I hadn't even been keeping tabs. I had switched off my cellphone for the entire week. I have been such a bad friend. It was time to get up and face the music.

Ziyanda Zwane

The session that Malome John and Mam Florah hosted with Jacob was so frightening. One minute, he was calmly meditating telling them or us what he was seeing and the next thing he was coughing blood. He had been unconscious for an

entire week. He was breathing, but he wasn't eating or waking up. I had never seen anything like that before. Yes, I have had my fair share of witnessing witchcraft

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but what I saw was just not good at all. I walked into the bedroom and found Malome John and Mam Florah staring at Jacob. They were most probably praying for him.

Ziyanda: "I have brought some food. How is he?"

Malome John: "He'll be alright. He will wake up in a few minutes."

Ziyanda: "What happened to him?"

Malome John: (shaking head) "My child, we are dealing with very dangerous people here. Diego Rodriguez is not just a criminal, he is also vested in witchcraft. Everyone has their own belief system in this world, and he happens to believe in witches and voodoo. So, when Jacob's spirit was in the room, he couldn't feel it until Jacob came closer to David and started

shouting at David to wake up. He noticed that there was unwanted spiritual activity happening in the room, and immediately recognized Jacob.”

That is just some scary shit.

Ziyanda: “And what about the vision he saw right there in Mexico?”

Malome John: “That was Diego's dark side showing him what was about to happen to Jacob.”

I felt my heart drop immediately to the pit of my stomach.

Ziyanda: “Are you saying that Jacob is going to die?”

Malome John: (nodding) “Sadly, yes. His ancestors are going to take him because if they don't he will be taken by the wrong spirits. I am afraid his end is near.”

I just felt so saddened right there and then. Why do bad things keep happening to good people?

Ziyanda: "But, his daughters... they are so young."

Malome John: "Luckily he is favoured by his ancestors. They already showed him the journey he is going to take before he dies. He is going to leave them with Ziphora."

Ziyanda: "She is still angry, and still recovering from the miscarriage, isn't she?"

Malome John: "She is up and about, believe me. She will slowly get there. A lot is still coming, but she will be ready for it. Believe me."

While he was taking a cup of tea from the tray I brought in, Jacob slowly woke up.

Jacob: (clearing throat) "Where... Where is David? I need some water, please."

Mam Florah gave him water and he drank up.

Mam Florah: "You're finally awake. How do you feel?"

Jacob: "I'm okay, actually."

Mam Florah: (smiling) "You enjoy testing limits, wena. You are lucky they didn't hold your soul captive."

Jacob: (chuckling) "I'm sorry for ruining things, I was just hoping to reach out to my brother."

Mam Florah: "Don't worry, you already did."

Jacob: "I'd like to know about what I saw. Please don't lie to me."

Mam Florah: (nodding) "It is true, mfana wami (my boy)."

Jacob: "I see. Can I at least choose another way to die?"

Mam Florah: "It is either a crash, or they kill you."

Jacob: (nodding) "How much time do I have left?"

Mam Florah: "About three months or so."

Jacob: "So I am going to die before we bring my brother back?"

Mam Florah: "I'm afraid so, mfana wami (my boy)."

I was so saddened. I was crying, but Jacob seemed to have handled it all like a real man. It was as if he was preparing himself to leave this world.

Jacob: "I see. I just have one request. Please, do not tell David that I have died until he is back home. I would like my daughters to be well taken care of by someone that will love them, someone like Ziphora."

Malome John: "Don't worry, you saw it all in that vision. She will take care of them."

Jacob: "Okay then, let me get my affairs in order, but please, don't tell Ziphora what is happening with David. Just tell her that he is alive, but you don't know where he is yet."

Malome John: (nodding) "I am proud of you, my boy. You have grown."

Jacob: "This life is only lend to us, Malome. I know for a fact that my mother will get what is coming to her. David will come back and at least I will die without any grudges or regrets."

Yoh, this is the saddest thing I have ever seen. I just couldn't bear it. Seeing Jacob daily knowing that each day is a step closer to his own death. How cruel can parents be? His mother just doesn't deserve to live at all. She basically fed her own children to wolves.

Mam Florah: "Ungakhali (Don't cry), Zee. That witch's days are coming sooner than you think. God can punish, my baby, believe me. Patience is a virtue."

61

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Ziphora: "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!"

Susan: "Joshua 1:9?"

Ziphora: (crying) “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

I cried, I cried as if I hadn't been crying for nearly two weeks.

Susan: (sigh) “Ngwanaka (my child), I raised you to be a warrior. You are now a queen mother, you are a leader of a big church now. What do you think your enemies are doing right now? They are smiling and rejoicing in your heartache. Yes, you lost your baby, but it is honestly not the end of the world. Your life is still moving, so why on earth are you forcing it to be on standstill? Your husband is missing but that does not mean that you shouldn't keep the faith alive. I am here, I will not sit back and watch my daughter hand herself over to the Devil's joy. Ziphora, you are strong, find that strength again and be the woman God has set you out to be. Live life with the hope and faith that your husband will come back.”

Ziphora: (crying) “But ma, had it not been for Ziyanda and Phila, he would have still been here.”

Susan: (shaking head) “You don't know that. We each have our own fate and our own destiny. I have a feeling he is saving the world before he can come back and save the two of you. Hang in there, Ziphora. Get up, go take a shower, I'll be making us some food. Your sisters are coming to visit. Get your act together, my child. For God will still throw stumbling blocks your way. The key is to keep going, and not to stop praying. You are a prayer warrior, and remember that your tongue and knees are your weapons against destruction.”

I wiped off my tears and did as I was told. I think I needed that harsh pep talk. I couldn't possibly cry forever and shut the entire world out. I just wondered then what was happening in my church as I hadn't even been keeping tabs. I had switched off my cellphone for the entire week. I have been such a bad friend. It was time to get up and face the music.

Ziyanda Zwane

The session that Malome John and Mam Florah hosted with Jacob was so frightening. One minute, he was calmly meditating telling them or us what he was seeing and the next thing he was coughing blood. He had been unconscious for an

entire week. He was breathing, but he wasn't eating or waking up. I had never seen anything like that before. Yes, I have had my fair share of witnessing witchcraft

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but what I saw was just not good at all. I walked into the bedroom and found Malome John and Mam Florah staring at Jacob. They were most probably praying for him.

Ziyanda: "I have brought some food. How is he?"

Malome John: "He'll be alright. He will wake up in a few minutes."

Ziyanda: "What happened to him?"

Malome John: (shaking head) "My child, we are dealing with very dangerous people here. Diego Rodriguez is not just a criminal, he is also vested in witchcraft. Everyone has their own belief system in this world, and he happens to believe in witches and voodoo. So, when Jacob's spirit was in the room, he couldn't feel it until Jacob came closer to David and started

shouting at David to wake up. He noticed that there was unwanted spiritual activity happening in the room, and immediately recognized Jacob.”

That is just some scary shit.

Ziyanda: “And what about the vision he saw right there in Mexico?”

Malome John: “That was Diego's dark side showing him what was about to happen to Jacob.”

I felt my heart drop immediately to the pit of my stomach.

Ziyanda: “Are you saying that Jacob is going to die?”

Malome John: (nodding) “Sadly, yes. His ancestors are going to take him because if they don't he will be taken by the wrong spirits. I am afraid his end is near.”

I just felt so saddened right there and then. Why do bad things keep happening to good people?

Ziyanda: "But, his daughters... they are so young."

Malome John: "Luckily he is favoured by his ancestors. They already showed him the journey he is going to take before he dies. He is going to leave them with Ziphora."

Ziyanda: "She is still angry, and still recovering from the miscarriage, isn't she?"

Malome John: "She is up and about, believe me. She will slowly get there. A lot is still coming, but she will be ready for it. Believe me."

While he was taking a cup of tea from the tray I brought in, Jacob slowly woke up.

Jacob: (clearing throat) "Where... Where is David? I need some water, please."

Mam Florah gave him water and he drank up.

Mam Florah: "You're finally awake. How do you feel?"

Jacob: "I'm okay, actually."

Mam Florah: (smiling) "You enjoy testing limits, wena. You are lucky they didn't hold your soul captive."

Jacob: (chuckling) "I'm sorry for ruining things, I was just hoping to reach out to my brother."

Mam Florah: "Don't worry, you already did."

Jacob: "I'd like to know about what I saw. Please don't lie to me."

Mam Florah: (nodding) "It is true, mfana wami (my boy)."

Jacob: "I see. Can I at least choose another way to die?"

Mam Florah: "It is either a crash, or they kill you."

Jacob: (nodding) "How much time do I have left?"

Mam Florah: "About three months or so."

Jacob: "So I am going to die before we bring my brother back?"

Mam Florah: "I'm afraid so, mfana wami (my boy)."

I was so saddened. I was crying, but Jacob seemed to have handled it all like a real man. It was as if he was preparing himself to leave this world.

Jacob: "I see. I just have one request. Please, do not tell David that I have died until he is back home. I would like my

daughters to be well taken care of by someone that will love them, someone like Ziphora.”

Malome John: “Don't worry, you saw it all in that vision. She will take care of them.”

Jacob: “Okay then, let me get my affairs in order, but please, don't tell Ziphora what is happening with David. Just tell her that he is alive, but you don't know where he is yet.”

Malome John: (nodding) “I am proud of you, my boy. You have grown.”

Jacob: “This life is only lend to us, Malome. I know for a fact that my mother will get what is coming to her. David will come back and at least I will die without any grudges or regrets.”

Yoh, this is the saddest thing I have ever seen. I just couldn't bear it. Seeing Jacob daily knowing that each day is a step closer to his own death. How cruel can parents be? His mother just doesn't deserve to live at all. She basically fed her own children to wolves.

Mam Florah: “Ungakhali (Don't cry), Zee. That witch's days are coming sooner than you think. God can punish, my baby, believe me. Patience is a virtue.”

62

“Nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

1 Timothy 6:10 - “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”

Ziphora

I had a really great time with my sisters and my mother. It felt so good to actually catch up with them, and ignore the world for a minute. They told me what everyone was saying about me out there and to be honest, it is rather appalling to see how insensitive the media can be. I had to switch my phone off a week ago because everyone had been pestering me for an interview and all of them wanted to ask about my miscarriage and the status of my missing husband. I feel so bad that I hadn't spoken to my friends in a while, but I made a mental note to catch up with them later on. Charisma is over the moon about her pregnancy, and they decided that they would only tell her husband's family a little later in pregnancy to avoid any mishaps. His family still think she is barren in any case and

they will only just stress her. I can never understand why some families go out of their way to destroy a good thing. Keo and Charisma had to leave, and Mama stayed. She had been staying with me for the past few weeks. I felt so bad that she had to do that.

Ziphora: "Mama, you really don't have to stay with me, you know."

Susan: "Nonsense, I like staying here. Besides, your house has more room than mine. I like the gym and the cinema room."

She chuckled leaving me smiling.

Ziphora: "Seriously, mama. You really do not have to do this. You don't have to be obliged to stay here. You have your own life to live."

Susan: "Ziphora, I'm staying here for as long as it takes. Until I see that you are fit enough to take care of yourself again, I'm staying. A mother's job never ends, Zee, my baby. You have no

one to support you, at least let me do my job as your mother, please. After all, Isaiah 66:13 says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you."

I gave up and just let her be. While I was watching her clean up as she refused to let me do anything, I received a call from security.

Ziphora: "Hello?"

Security: "Ma'am, we're so sorry to bother you so late, but you have a very persistent guest."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Who is it?"

Security: "He says he is your father."

I felt my heart race abnormally. Why on earth would Frank appear out of nowhere at this time of the night? I contemplated letting him in, I mean I barely knew the man and my mother would have a fit.

Ziphora: "Tell him to leave, please."

Security: "We did that two hours ago, ma'am, but he has been here. He says he has nowhere to go and he appears to be in a very bad state."

I took my chances, I mean perhaps that was God's way of teaching me something about my father.

Ziphora: "Let him in."

Security: "He is walking on foot."

Ziphora: "He'll manage. Direct him to my house, thank you."

I hung up with mixed emotions running through my mind. I did not know whether I was angry or hurt, but I did know I was upset. My mother saw me standing right before the door conflicted.

Susan: (frowning) "And then?"

How do I tell her?

Ziphora: "Mama, there is someone coming here."

Susan: (frowning) "Who?"

Ziphora: (nervously) "Ba re ke (They say it's) Frank."

I knew she would react the way she did. She threw a fit.

Susan: (shouting) "Eng (what)?! Over my dead body! A re o batla eng fa (what does he want)?! Modimo o nteka tumelo waitse (God is testing my faith, you know)! Yoh (Oh)!"

Ziphora: "Mama, calm down, please."

Susan: “Calm down?! Ziphora, wa mo tseba (do you know) Frank?! Do you even know that man at all?! He is probably broke or he cheated on his wife.”

I didn't even know what to say. While she was shouting, a faint knock appeared on the door.

Susan: “I swear, you will regret opening that door, Ziphora. Don't do it.”

I took my chances – despite seeing the hurt look on my mother's face and opened the door. I mean I am the only one who never knew my father. I know, my mother did everything for me and there was never a reason to feel the need for a father, but I was curious. I opened the door to a horrid sight. Frank could barely stand; he was so frail, so thin and dirty. One could tell he barely ate a decent meal in the past few days.

Frank: (shakily) “Hello, Ziphora, my baby.”

Susan: (shouting) “Yoh (Oh)! Modimo (God)! Bonang fela (Just look)! He is even shaking! What a brilliant act!”

I couldn't help but feel sorry for him despite him not ever wanting to be a part of my life.

Frank: (breathing heavily) “Can I come in?”

Susan: (shouting) “Oh, I can't sit and watch this shit! Ziphora, o batla mpya eo e gwele mo motseng wa gao (you want that dog to die right here in your house)?!”

Ziphora: “Mama, please. He looks really frail. He needs help.”

Susan: “A thuse ke di febe tsa gae (Let his whores help him)!”

Yep, a woman scorned. That was my mother. She seemed pretty healed but once Frank walked in or anyone mentioned his name she went ballistic. Something tells me this man hurt her deeper than she ever mentioned to anyone. I could see the rage seething through her eyes. I opened the door wider and

let him walk in. He had a plastic bag with a few items of clothes with him and he could barely walk. Something didn't look right, he honestly looked ill and my mother noticed, but she was too angry. Therapy really does wonders to a person. She should have tried that because wow, all that anger buried deep within a person is not good at all. I can't judge her because I was never in such a situation, but surely everyone deserves second chances – I think.

Frank: (shakily) “Hello, Susan.”

Susan: (clicking tongue) “Mxm! Wena (you), Ziphora, sala le mogwete o nna kea tsamaya (stay with this asshole, I'm leaving)!”

She took her handbag and keys and just stormed out of my house. My mother had only been to work a few times and to the shop ever since she had been staying with me. She had no desire to even leave my sight a few minutes ago, but as soon as my father walked in, she just walked. Now, I understand it when they say that the pain a man causes you takes forever to get wiped away. I had no idea how to even go about the entire situation. Was I making a mistake?

Jacob

Ever since I found out that I was going to die an inevitable death, I had been surprisingly calm. I mean, surely I didn't expect to die so soon, but then, it was God's will. I get to fix my life and every mistake I wish to before I die. That is the best gift I could ever expect. So many people die unexpectedly and they die without even getting a proper chance to fix things or to even say goodbye. I had to take my twins from my house and move into Phila and Ziyanda's house temporarily. Besides, our lives were in serious danger and I just couldn't risk travelling at odd hours of the night. They were happy to be playing with Phila and Sbu's children. That gave us enough time to devise a good plan. David has been brainwashed, and who knows what else he was capable of while under the Diego's spell? Everything was a mess, but I vowed to do my best before I left this earth. I had just eaten breakfast along with Phila, Sbu and Malome John, when we started devising the next phase of our plan.

Malome John: "Now that we know what Diego intends to do, we have to move towards the next step of our plan. I have

been thinking; since Diego is getting these girls from South Africa, mostly, he will be sending David to South Africa often to poach these girls. So, we have to get someone to pose as one of them.”

Jacob: “You mean join alliances?”

Malome John: “Something like that. Jacob

you are very familiar with Nova and her brothel, so we will use her to get through to Diego. In turn they will trust her and use her brothel as a way to capture these girls. You know how he operates, he kidnaps these girls, but he won't be able to do that with Phila as a whistle blower. You have to ensure that airports are secured tighter and that the police actually start doing their job, Phila.”

Phila: “That will be difficult for me, Malome, since I am only the Mayor of Gauteng – not the President.”

Malome John: (nodding) “I hear you, but, you will soon be president, once you know what the president is up to. You can eliminate him and make your mark. Once people know you are

against human trafficking and that you take it seriously, they will be voting for you. Believe me when I tell you this; you are going to be President with Sbusiso as the Vice President.”

Phila: (chuckling) “No way.”

Malome John: “You can ask Florah if you don't believe me. You have always known that your destiny would be greater than what you have now. You are of royal blood, but you knew that your destiny was not that of a ruling King, you are going to rule our country, son. It is who you are meant to be.”

I could tell it was a lot for Phila to digest, but that should be a minor problem compared to mine.

Sbu: “So, about Nova, how do we go about it?”

Malome John: “I'll go with Jacob and speak to her, you two will have to go there as well and act like clients. She won't trust a random face, but with you two being political figures – you can win her trust.”

Phila: “Okay. As long as I won't have to sleep with anyone. My wife will kill me.”

Malome John: (laughing) “Trust me, it won't get to that. You just ensure that you are ready. Don't forget the necklace that Florah made for us. It is to protect us so wear it at all times. We need to leave now, boys, time is not on our side.”

We got up and said our goodbyes to the women and left. This mission proved to be a lot harder than I thought. All this shit was happening because of Julia. I don't even know why God would bless a woman like that with children, but then, I am not one to question Him.

Ziphora

After my mother left, I waited up for her hoping she would come back. I even called her endlessly until she eventually switched off her phone. Frank was very ill, although he didn't tell me what was wrong with him. I made him some soup and he barely ate it. He managed to take a short shower and get

into bed. I couldn't understand how life works, you know. I mean, life surely has an interesting way of bringing back unwanted people. Men have it so easy in life; they get to use and abuse us and walk away from their responsibilities and then pitch up years later in times of need. They always seem to know which ones of their children and previous girlfriends are the weakest links. I mean, had it been Charisma and Keo, they would have kicked him out already. I scrolled through my WhatsApp and noticed no messages from the both of them regarding Frank, so I assumed my mother hadn't told them yet. I did manage however to speak to Desiree. She was so worried about me and was thankful that I actually came back to mother earth. We ended up having a very long video call. I tried speaking to Faith, but she literally blue ticked me. I tried calling her as well and she ignored my calls, but I guess I deserved it. I mean, I was not a very good friend. I was going through the most and I must have acted selfishly in a way. She must have been really heartbroken, but I let her be. While I was making breakfast, I received a text from Boitu.

Boitu: "Hi, Zee. How are you?"

She must have taken advantage of the fact that I was online. I had hardly been answering anyone's calls.

Ziphora: "I'm well, thanks, how are you?"

Boitu: "Not very good. I know it is a bit too early for a visit, but it is quite urgent. May I pop by to see you? I am already on the road."

It was 8am in the morning, but then, I had no plans so I told her to come. She told me she would be there in about twenty minutes. I was still in my pajamas, and my deadbeat father was upstairs, so I doubt she would be one to judge. I quickly went upstairs to take a quick shower and change, and headed back down to finish making breakfast. I had stopped bleeding and my breasts were so engorged and I had some breast milk coming out, so my mother had bought me breast pads the other day just to keep me from soaking my shirts wet. The female body is something else; it didn't register my loss as a miscarriage, but rather that I had given birth. It was a painful sight, but then life goes on. Indeed, after about twenty minutes, Boitu called to say she was at the gate. I let her in and she came in after a few minutes. She looked really beautiful as always; dressed in a very cute dress and high heels. I loved how

she was always dressed for the occasion. She would never overdress like the other ladies, though.

Boitu: (smiling) “Hey, how are you?”

She hugged me. She had always been a lovely soul.

Ziyanda: “I've been better, but I can't complain. What's up? You sounded a bit odd over the phone. Is everything okay?”

Boitu: (shaking head) “No, it is not. I have been trying to get hold of you for days, but I didn't want to bother you considering your situation. Things are bad, Zee. Selina has turned the church into something else. She has turned herself into Julia 2.0. She appointed herself as the new Queen mother, and said that since you were unable to fulfil your duties, that she would do it for you.”

Just when I was trying to piece my life back together.

Ziphora: “What? What has she done that is so bad?”

Boitu: “Zee, she has turned the church completely upside down. She has enforced rules, including the same dress code that Julia forced us to adhere to. She even decides every time we have a church service who is worthy of joining the church. Girl, I know, you are going through a lot, but we need your help – please. I don't know what is happening, but something tells me that she is about to do more damage than good.”

She really seemed like she was not telling me everything, but I thought that it was due to the fact that she was anxious and she couldn't spill everything at that moment. It was Saturday morning, so I assumed that there was no church.

Ziphora: “Okay, I'll come to church tomorrow.”

Boitu: (shaking head) “That will be too late. We have a meeting at 9am, which is why I had to come to you right now. Please, Zee, do something. Restore the church back to its grace. We are losing valuable members because of Selina.”

I didn't think things were as bad as she made them out to be, but I decided to go.

Ziphora: "Okay, let me grab my bag and I'll meet you there."

She really looked so relieved that I actually agreed. What on earth was going on in my church?

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- "A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched."

Ziphora

I just took my bag and got into my car. I left Frank a note with some porridge on the kitchen table and off I went. During the entire drive, I was deep in thought. I wondered why some women like Selina just never had any peace in their lives. I was a bit anxious, but I decided to go with it. I finally arrived at church, and I saw unusual cars. I mean I was under the impression that it was a meeting amongst the Church Wives only, but I guessed with Selina putting herself in charge, one just never knew. I wasted no time and headed out. Upon arrival, I found Selina basically insulting Boitu in front of the rest of the wives, along with a few other women I didn't recognize as part of the team. Boitu was sitting on a chair, surrounded by everyone, with Selina basically shouting at the poor woman while pointing at her. What a barbaric act of humiliation.

Selina: (shouting) “Boitumelo, you know very well what the rules of this church state! You had no authority from us to wear what you were wearing the other day to church. That is not what we Church Wives stand for! How dare you come to church wearing pants?! You were supposed to notify us of your outfit before you came wearing those hideous pants of yours. Do not forget that your husband works for the church – so basically we own him and we most certainly own you! This is the reason why God does not favour you enough to give you a fruitful womb! You tried to defy Him just like that stupid Ziphora did and what good did it do to her? She couldn't even do a task as simple as bearing a child. You young folks think you know it all.”

I felt so pained; I mean how cruel can a woman her age be to another? How dare she attack Boitu about her inability to conceive and attack me without my presence about the loss of my child?! I felt so disgusted by her. She didn't even see me staring right at them. Poor Boitu, I only saw her back, but I could tell that she was heartbroken. Nothing is more painful than people attacking you for something that is beyond your control. Just because others have children, it does not put them in a more favourable position with God. Selina was

clearly an evil woman, no wonder she and Julia were friends. I felt the rage creep up from the pit of my stomach.

Ziphora: (angered) “What is going on here?!”

They were all so stunned to see me, that some felt speechless. I looked at the other women, specifically Amo and Atlehang and they didn't even stand up for their own friend. I expected such from Amo, but not Atlehang. I mean wow. Selina looked like a cat had caught her tongue.

Ziphora: “I asked a question, Selina.”

I was so livid – I didn't give a fuck about putting Mama before her name. Fuck respect. She didn't deserve any of it.

Selina: (nervously) “Oh, Ziphora, my darling. How are you? Aren't you supposed to be in bed, you know, recovering?”

Wow, what a 360 degree turn. Fake bitch.

Ziphora: (chuckling) “That is not what you said a few seconds ago, is it?”

Selina: (embarrassed) “Well, I must have gotten carried away, I mean, I didn't mean it in a bad way. Surely, you understand, don't you?”

Ziphora: (deep breath) “You ought to be ashamed, Selina. The same goes for all of you around here. I went through something that most of you can possibly relate to and yet, instead of offering support by ensuring that this church stays a door of hope for many, you do everything in your power to tarnish it.”

Selina: “Oh, come on, Ziphora, it isn't like that - “

Ziphora: (interrupting) “Boitu, please, move out of that circle and sit on your chair, please.”

She looked so relieved to see me, and I could tell that she was trying so hard not to break down. The poor girl. I had had enough of those old bitches and it was high time I showed them. I walked right in the middle, surrounded by the chairs, while I stared at Selina right in the eye. She could barely look at me as she went to sit back down. Bloody hypocrite.

Ziphora: “When I joined this church, I changed everything – I mean everything. None of you – except for Boitu tried to reach out to me. None of you. I can clearly see the kind of women you really are.”

Selina: “Ziphora, please, calm down.”

Ziphora: “You have had ample time to speak, Selina, now it is my turn to speak. Please, do not try and interrupt me.”

She looked down in regret.

Ziphora: “I cannot understand why you even bother to come to church, why you remain a member of the church wives if you

are going to behave like a witch on fire. You of all people should know what it is like to be judged and humiliated. Since when does the Church Wives stand for humiliating a fellow wife or anyone for that matter? I was not here for a mere two weeks and Lord only knows what else you have done to break the fellow women of this church. No one, I mean NO ONE owns anyone in this church. No woman deserves to lose their child or deserves to be ridiculed for not being able to conceive. You are such a disgrace for even taking part in this vile act against another human being. Romans 3:23 tells us; "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." So, why Selina, why do you go around acting like you are so perfect?"

She couldn't even answer me as she kept quiet and looked down in shame. She was most probably pretending.

Ziphora: "Galatians 6:7 says; "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap." You should be ashamed telling another woman that she cannot receive a blessing of bearing a child because she defied God. Have you not defied God enough by being the vile person that you are? Proverbs 26:27 says; "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling." That goes for all of you; you surely have dug a huge pit

for yourselves and it shall surely backfire on you. Clearly I have chosen the wrong women to be a part of this committee. My husband must be ashamed wherever he is. Here I am, trying to be strong, trying to maintain my peace, while the rest of you go out of your way to ensure that whatever we have tried to build comes crashing back down. I think that the journey for some of you ends here – I shall decide on a new group of Church Wives as soon as possible. Before tomorrow, actually.”

They were all shocked as some were gasping and murmuring amongst themselves.

Selina: (worried) “What do you mean, Ziphora? Surely that is a bit harsh.”

Ziphora: “Harsh does not even begin to describe what you have done to Boitu – and to me. Now, all of you – leave. I would like to speak to Boitu alone.”

Atlehang finally decided to speak – I mean, of course she only decided to do so because her precious status of being a Church Wife was taken from her. I don't even know why I never

eliminated that committee, because I honestly had hope that they would influence the church in a better way. To be honest, a pastor cannot run the church alone – but they proved to me that day, that they were indeed useless. I could not keep them on my team.

Atlehang: (shaky voice) “Surely, we can work it out, Ziphora.”

I was so tired of pretending; so tired of being nice.

Ziphora: “You know what, Atlehang? Your own best friend was sitting right here in front of these vicious women, being humiliated and ridiculed and you said nothing. Now that I'd like to reshuffle my entire committee, you suddenly feel the need to talk. If I didn't know better, I'd say that you actually remind me of Peter, and how he betrayed Jesus. Friends don't do that to each other, and you surely do not deserve that title.”

She could barely look at me. I didn't even wink one bit until they all left one by one. They didn't even have the decency to even apologize to Boitu. As soon as they all left, Boitu decided to break down. It was as if she had kept all that hurt inside of

her. She was always such a joyful person and she always kept the group together, but for some odd reason everyone just felt the need to shit on her. I hugged her and brushed her back until she stopped crying. It must have been a good old ten minutes. I actually felt her pain; it was as if she was letting out all the pain she had endured for a good few years.

Boitu: (sniffing) "I'm so sorry

Zee. I didn't mean to lose it like that."

Ziphora: "Nonsense, Boitu, you are a human being. You have every right to break down. You are no robot."

Boitu: "You know, ever since I got married, everyone has been pressuring me into having a child. When my husband stood up for me – my in laws accused me of bewitching him. He allowed me to further my studies and we decided to wait on having children. When we finally decided to try, nothing happened. Six years later, we're still childless. He always says that it is God's will and we shall have our child when the time is right, but a part of me feels like giving him a chance to leave me in order for him to be free. Thomas loves this church, Zee. He does so much for all these young men in this church, and for

Selina to say that the church owns him – us, I just felt like she was really mean. I try my best to be a good person, but how could she?”

Zipora: “Boitu, in life, we all make our own choices. One of those choices is that we choose to be happy. We choose who gets to hurt us, and yes, Selina did say some hurtful things, but at the end of the day, she isn't God. I am so sorry I didn't get rid of her and those old hags sooner, but I think it is high time that Agape Church of Christ received an entire make-over. What do you say?”

She smiled at me with so much relief. I was not really a big church-goer before marrying David, but obviously that meant that I was chosen to lead a nation. I had a purpose to fulfil and if it meant that I had to get rid of people like Selina as a start, then so be it.

Malome John

I felt so horrible; more especially for what my nephew Jacob was going through. I could never understand some

parents. Julia decided to become the most evil version of herself and now, the children were the ones to suffer. Sadly, fate cannot be overturned and it was what it was. Jacob really received the news rather well. He seemed to want to get everything ready and in place for the day he would leave this earth. Ziphora was another one on my mind, I feared that she was about to lose it, but I knew that the twins would make her get a new lease on life. Her father appearing out of nowhere back into her life also would give her time to reflect on life and teach her to forgive. She was about to open doors for many and be an example for a lot of people. Phila, Sbu, Jacob and I had finally arrived at Nova's brothel to speak to her about our plan. A lot of people found it quite odd that a whole missionary like myself had no problem entering brothels and taverns, but I mean, Jesus did it. He loved everyone, so why couldn't I? A part of me hated using other people as bait, but the girls knew that they would be undercover and we just had to try something. Phila rung the bell and Nova immediately responded through the intercom while looking at us through one of her cameras.

Nova: "Oh, Mr. Mayor, long time no see. Looking for some fun, yes?"

Phila: (chuckling) "Hi, Nova. Please, let me in."

Nova: "Okay."

She opened the gate and we drove in. We wasted no time and walked in. She was a bit surprised to see us all together.

Nova: (surprised) "John, why you here? You bring new man too?"

She pointed at Sbu.

John: "Hi, Nova. This is Sbu, Phila's brother. He heard about your club and decided to check it out. I hope that is no bother."

Nova: "As long as he not bother my girls. What kind of fun you looking for today, boys?"

Phila: "I have it covered, Nova. We'd like to Gentlemen's suite, please."

Nova: (smiling) “Hmm, big spenders, I like, I like. Shall I bring girls?”

Phila: “The finest you have, please.”

Nova smiled with pride. I could never understand the joy her job brought her, but as we all know, the past has a tendency of turning a person into something else.

Nova: “Okay, you go and I send them to you.”

Phila, Jacob and Sbu went to the gentlemen's suite while Nova organized her finest girls to go entertain them. She saw me standing there and she knew that my presence was more than just a courtesy call.

Nova: “I know you, John Mosue. You did not just come to say hi. Some tea?”

John: (smiling) "I thought you'd never ask."

She led the way to her famous balcony where she and I would associationally chat. A lot of people had accused me of being a fraud, for befriending someone like Nova, but in all honesty, she was not keeping anyone against their will. She picked up helpless girls from the street and gave them a place to stay. A lot of them did prostitute themselves willingly because of the payroll. Of course, Nova only gave them five years max to do the job and after that meant that they would do something useful with their lives. It was rather complicated, but who was I to judge?

Nova: "So, what really brings you here, John?"

John: (sigh) "You know me too well, Nova. Well, my nephew is in trouble. David, one of your previous regulars, he got kidnapped and Diego is holding him captive."

She immediately frowned in shock.

Nova: (shocked) "David?! The news did say he was missing, but I never knew it was this bad."

John: "They don't know, and we'd like to keep it that way. Which is why I need your help. I wouldn't ask if it wasn't an emergency. I need to use you and your premises as an undercover place. That way, we could get Sbu to somehow find a way to David or Diego."

Nova: "Diego is dangerous, John, you know that."

John: "I know, but we'll provide you with all the security and safety you need. Please."

She didn't like the sound of it much, but she would have done anything to help me, just as much as I have helped her.

Nova: "You know, I do anything for you. What about my girls?"

John: "We'll pay all of them for a few months and bring our undercover girls. We really need this, Nova, please."

Nova: (nodding) "I only do this for you and for David. He was troubled, but he was good customer. He also tip really well."

We both laughed, but in all honesty, I laughed in relief. I had no other choice. The visions I had been having about David and the person he had become were so bad, I could barely sleep some nights. There was a glimmer of hope and I knew that at least we were one step closer to finding my nephew.

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“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Romans 15:13 - “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

Ziphora

I had decided that it was finally time to take back charge of my life. I wasn't sure how I was going to go about it, but I knew that I had to start with getting the church back to its original state. I had no idea how I was going to wake up each day without my David, not knowing where he was and if he was alive or not, but I had hope. I just had to have hope. I decided that I would take each day as it came and that I would make a plan and go see Ziphora and Phila sooner or later. I mean, they surely knew something and the last conversation we had was not very pleasant. I wasn't very kind to them. After the intensely emotional session Boitu and I had, she felt calmer at the end of the day. I reassured her that the church would be brand new by the following day. I headed back home without any text or call

from my mother, still. It really saddened me, but I decided to give her space. She really didn't want to talk to me and I had to respect that. I went home after midday, only to find Frank lying on the couch, looking like a half-dead person. He had only taken a few spoons of the porridge that I had made him, and he still looked weak. I decided that it was high time to speak to him.

Ziphora: "Frank! Frank, wake up."

I couldn't even call him Papa or Dad, I just couldn't relate. It seemed really foreign to me. He opened his eyes and at least managed to speak.

Frank: (faint smile) "Hello, Zee."

Ziphora: "Why are you here? I mean why aren't you with your wife and other daughters?"

Saying that out loud, actually facing the man that decided to leave me and not father me like he did with all my other

siblings felt a little bit painful. I was on the receiving end of rejection from the onset of conception.

Frank: "My child, please, forgive me."

Ziphora: (angrily) "I'm not interested in your apology! I want to know why you are here and not with them!"

I felt warm tears flowing down my face. Damn, I never thought that I would ever feel so sad speaking to my deadbeat father, but then, the past can either make you or break you at some point.

Frank: "I am sorry, Zee. But, the truth is, I was not a good man. I was not a good man to your mother, and I was not one to my wife. Yes, I fathered other children and left when your mother was pregnant with you, and I deeply regret it. When my wife found out I was ill and that all my pension money had been finished, she kicked me out of the house. My two daughters want nothing to do with me now."

My heart ached, to be honest. It really hurt like hell. I couldn't understand, I mean I grew up with everything my mother could possibly offer me and way more, but it just ached seeing him saying those words to me. It really felt so painful thinking that I was the one who never even got a Happy Birthday message or phone call from him. It really ached thinking that Dineo was in my classes all along and she was my sister; she was on the receiving end of his love yet I wasn't. I just couldn't get why I was upset, but it burned like hell.

Ziphora: “Did you ever really love me? Think about me? Did you ever really care? I mean all those years you never even bothered to call or send a message – nothing, yet you decided to pitch up on my wedding day!”

Frank: “That was not my plan, my child, it was my brother's plan. I really didn't want to bother you, Ziphora. As painful as it is for you to hear, I felt as if I could never be a good father to you. I had failed your mother in so many ways, and I failed Keorapetse and Charisma and on top of it all, I had failed you long before you were even born. I was as horrible man, so I opted for the easy way out. I decided to stay with my wife, though I didn't love her. I chose to be a good father to Dineo and her sister. Of course, I thought about you – all of you. I

stalked your Facebook profiles for years, and I was so ashamed to even make an appearance. I know, it is selfish of me to pitch up on your doorstep looking like death itself, but I just wanted to say that I am sorry. I wanted to apologize before I left this earth. I really didn't mean to hurt you the way I did. Words cannot undo the damage I have caused you, but that is the least I can do.”

I felt so enraged all of a sudden. A million thoughts were racing through my mind. I asked myself why I had to take care of him when he never even bothered to take care of me. A part of me felt like he came to me because I was the weakest link – I didn't know him – at all. I had money and he took advantage of that.

Ziphora: “ Perhaps you should leave. Find someone else who can take care of you. I can't do this.”

I thought he would protest, but disappointingly, he didn't.

Frank: “I understand.”

He got up slowly, even a blind person would have noticed just how ill he was.

Frank: "I hope that you do forgive me one day."

He took his small bag with the little belongings he had with him and he tried to walk. It would have probably taken him ages to get to the gate, but he got up and walked. I was so conflicted. I was not a mean person, and God knew that. I was so angry, so hurt that the very same man who never bothered about my mere existence, came to me for help when he was dying. I asked myself if he would have come had he been healthy or not. The moment he closed that door, I broke down. I cried as if I was mourning a father I had never known. It was half true, though. While I was crying, I decided to do what I hadn't done in a very long time. I knelt down and decided to pray.

Ziphora: (crying) "Modimo wa ka o a rategang (My loving God), the God of Mercy and Grace, the God of love, the God of peace and Love. Why have you forsaken me? Why do I feel as if you have left my side? I lost my baby and where were you? I lost my husband and where were you? Badimo ba ka (my ancestors), where were you when I needed you? Mme (Ma) Adelaide,

where were you? You came to me when I was engulfed in flames and you saved me – yet you failed to save my baby; my husband. Why have you been so quiet? Why are you giving me such a hard time? You blessed me with overflowing blessings, yet you took them away from me in an instant. Now, you decide to bring this man back into my life – 26 years too late! Why are you so cruel?!”

While sobbing, I heard a voice.

Adelaide: “We are not cruel, my child. Life has its own way of planning out. You just have to follow God's voice, our voice and you will never go wrong. You were so enriched in the spirit,

Ziphora

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why give up now?”

Ziphora: (crying) “Life is so hard, Mme (ma).”

Adelaide: “When God created earth, he never promised an easy life, but he promised a good one for as long as you trusted and

had faith in Him. Go fetch your father, my child. There is a reason for everything. Go fetch him; nurse him and you will find out what awaits you. God will bless you – tenfolds even. Remember the story of Job, my baby. Remember that.”

With that said, she was gone. I suddenly felt an immense feeling to get up and go after Frank. I had no idea what was in store for me, but a whole Pastor's wife couldn't just let her father go die in the street. It just wasn't me. So, I walked out and I couldn't see Frank in sight. As slowly as he was walking, he sure did make it far enough. I went back into the house, took my car keys and got into my car, my beautiful car that David had bought for me weeks ago. It was a bitter sweet feeling. I drove out slowly looking for him, amazingly he was already out of the compound, but luckily I found him walking on the side of the road. I stopped right beside him and rolled down the window. He looked at me in awe.

Ziphora: “Get in.”

He was probably exhausted as he didn't protest and got in. I didn't say a word to him, but instead of driving back to my house, I took him straight to the hospital. Upon arrival, I

received assistance very fast since I worked there. The staff were so happy to see me and of course everyone was looking at me with deep-rooted pity, but the show had to go on. While Frank was being taken in for testing, I decided to go look for Desiree and Faith, and luckily Desiree was the oncologist on call and also the one who was dealing with Frank. I was rather surprised why they had brought an oncologist on board, but I figured that Frank was most probably that ill.

Ziphora: “Hey, Des. How is it going with him?”

Desiree: “Hey, love. Not good at all. I'm afraid he has Stage 3 Pancreatic Cancer.”

For some odd reason it felt like a huge blow for me. I didn't know him nor was I ever part of his life, but it felt painful hearing that.

Ziphora: (teary) “How long will he have left? Is there anything you can do?”

Desiree: "I don't know for sure, I mean you know that Cancer of the pancreas is one of the most evasive ones. Most probably six months or so. We could try radiation and perhaps chemo, but it will be really risky."

Ziphora: "I'm willing to risk it."

Desiree: (sigh) "Zee, I know, you always see the best in people, but perhaps leave it all up to him. I don't want to see you get hurt again, I mean, you don't know this man."

Yes, she was right. I didn't know him, but I had to at least try. I didn't even know what I was hoping to achieve but I had to try.

Ziphora: "I hear you, Des, I really do, but I have to try something."

Desiree: "I hear you, just don't get your heart broken again, okay? You already have a lot on your plate."

I knew she was coming from a good place, but I just couldn't help it.

Desiree: "Listen, I am on call tonight. Let me know when we can do lunch or something to catch up, okay?"

Ziphora: (nodding) "Okay, thanks again, Des."

Desiree: "Don't mention it."

She gave me a faint smile and left. I decided to walk down to the canteen to get something to eat. I only realized that I hardly ate my breakfast in the morning. I didn't really eat anything at all that day. While I was about to order, I saw Faith walk down the stairs. I was so happy to see her, that I rushed towards her.

Ziphora: (smiling) "Hey, Faith!"

I was about to hug her, but she took one good look at me and returned my affection with a look of pure disgust. I had never

been so hurt by Faith before. She must have been really mad at me. I most probably deserved it.

Faith: “Oh, it's you. You're alive.”

Ziphora: “Hi, Faith. How are you?”

Faith: “Now that you feel the need to ask, I'm fine. What are you doing here? I mean, since you don't bother answering anyone's calls I might as well ask you now.”

I couldn't understand her coldness, I mean I had reached out to her a few days before, explaining my reason for being so cold. She knew I was going through a lot and yet she still remained so cold.

Ziphora: (hurt) “Oh, I brought my father – Frank here. They say he has cancer.”

She did the most appalling thing anyone could ever do to a fellow human being. She laughed, not even chuckled, but she laughed out loud.

Faith: (laughing) “Heh banna (Goodness)! Ziphora! Are you trying to save the world, na? I mean you miraculously survived a miscarriage, your husband went missing and now, you brought in your deadbeat dad to the hospital because he has cancer? Wow, your life has become more eventful with every tragedy you experience. Anyway, who's paying for his stay? You? Your husband?”

Okay, I get that I was perhaps mean by not speaking to her or anyone as a matter of fact, but her reaction was just not right.

Ziphora: (surprised) “O serious (Are you serious), Faith?”

Faith: (laughing) “Kgante wena o re ka dlala (You actually thought I was kidding)? Ai, maybe you need some more “healing”. I mean you practically ghosted me while you are not the only person to experience a miscarriage nor are you the last.”

Her words really cut me deep. I stood there in front of her, speechless, thinking that it was all a dream. I had known Faith nearly all my life and she decided to become so atrocious towards me.

Faith: “Anyway, let me love and leave you. We'll talk some other time.”

She just left me standing there and I immediately wiped my tear away. Friends could be really mean, but what I had just experienced with Faith was uncalled for.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’”

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Ziphora

I had to take a few moments and recover from what Faith told me; actually from her entire attitude as a whole. I had to leave Frank at the hospital under observation, because he was just not in any state to go back home yet. “Home”, huh, I didn't even know if what I was doing was right, but it felt right, you know. I still hadn't spoken to my mother ever since Frank appeared out of nowhere and she just stormed out. I kept staring at my phone hoping she would call me, but nothing. My sisters also never said anything, so I also had no idea where to start. I also thought to myself that it would be incredibly selfish of me to call Desiree after so many weeks of not talking, and she was on call the entire night in any case. I had no one to talk

to; not even my David. Life became so lonely in a span of just a few weeks. I guess that was Julia's all night prayer for me – to be miserable and alone without David.

I guess I was paying for my only sin – falling in love with her first born son. Cruelty was her middle name; she strived to make my life a living hell and it was not enough that her son was missing; I bet she was the reason for that. I hadn't even spoken to Jacob in a while – not even Malome John. Was I really a selfish person? While deep in thought, I drove to my house only to find two very familiar cars parked right outside my house. I figured why they were there at that time of the day – on a Saturday even. I slowly walked out of my car and they were really anticipating my return home. Charisma looked like she was crying – it must have been the pregnancy hormones because she was hardly a crier – I was the cry baby. Keo looked like she was about to skin me alive. I approached them nervously.

Ziphora: (nervously) “Hey, guys. What have I missed?”

Charisma: (teary) “Ka nnete (really), Zee? Really? Out of everything, you decide that you are going to take that dog back and welcome him back into your life?! Our lives?!”

I totally understood where she came from – I really did, but I felt as if no one understood my point of view. I didn't know him and surely I deserved a chance to make my own choice and see Frank for who he was myself.

Keo: “Charisma, ema nyana (wait a minute), please. Let's go inside and talk.”

Charisma: (crying) “Is he in there?! If he is I'd like to see him take his last breath!”

She was really angry – pain does that to people. I really refrained from talking until we got into the house. I unlocked and headed straight for the wine bottle, and got Charisma a bottle of juice. Thankfully, Keo came to help me.

Keo: "I understand why you did it, believe me. I would have done it if I were you."

Ziphora: (surprised) "You do?"

Keo: "Yes, I mean, come on, Zee. You are the only one who didn't get even an ounce of love from our father. At least Charisma and I knew him – a small portion of him, but you, you were really robbed to be honest. I think this is God's way of allowing us, but most of all you to get some sort of closure and peace. You would have never healed had he died without even apologizing."

Keo had always been the sane one amongst the three of us. No wonder she became a lawyer.

Ziphora: (sighing) "I am so glad you think that way, because I was so afraid to tell you guys anything."

Keo: (laughing) "Don't worry, Mama told us the very same day he rocked up here."

Ziphora: (shocked) “But you two never said a word.”

Keo: “Yes, we wanted you to tell us yourself. To be honest, I was never going to raise it, but Charisma was falling apart slowly, so I suggested that we come to you.”

Ziphora: “Mama yena (what about Mama)?”

Keo: “She'll come around. She's just upset – pissed to be exact.”

Ziphora: “She's not even answering my calls and my messages aren't even going through. I think she blocked you.”

Keo: (chuckling) “Yes, she did. But, she'll come around. The same way you were given time to mourn the loss of your child, allow her to mourn this period. She really endured a lot from Frank, so it is totally rational and understandable that she would be angry. She doesn't hate him, she's just angry that he

still manages to resurface after doing all that he did to her. It is a long process.”

Ziphora: “You should have been a psychologist instead.”

We both laughed.

Keo: “I deal with enough crazy thoughts in my own head. Come, let's go before Charisma thinks we're plotting against her.”

I was really glad that at least one person thought I was doing the right thing and was on my side. We headed to the lounge and Charisma was still in tears. I had no idea what to do.

Keo: “Sis, here you go.”

She handed her a glass of juice.

Charisma: (teary) “Thank you.”

Ziphora: “Are you okay?”

Charisma: “No. Would you be? After your crazy father resurfaced out of nowhere, after neglecting you your entire life he suddenly appears to do what?! Make your life more hellish?! Ask for money?! What?!”

Okay, Charisma was really getting deep but it was important for us to allow her to let it all out.

Keo: “We totally understand your frustrations, Charisma, really.”

Charisma: (raised eyebrow) “Really? We? So the two of you are a team now?”

Keo: (sigh) “Charisma, I honestly don't get why you're upset. How old is my daughter now? Did I ever ask anything from Frank – ever? We had Mama and she did everything for us. Not once did we feel the need to have a father in our

lives. Yes, him appearing on Zee's doorstep does bring up a lot of old wounds, but that should not define who you are. You have a beautiful gift growing inside of you and you are robbing yourself a chance to enjoy these moments by worrying about Frank.”

Oh, yes, that was my queue to tell them about what really went on with Frank.

Charisma: “Where is he anyway?! Is he hiding upstairs? What did he tell you? That he is dying?!”

Little did she know her sarcasm was actually true.

Ziphora: “Actually...”

Charisma: (shocked) “Actually eng (what)?!”

Keo: “Is he really dying?”

Ziphora: “Eish...”

Charisma: “For goodness sake, bua (speak), Zee!”

Ziphora: “He has stage three pancreatic cancer.”

The shock on both their faces was just inexplicable.

Keo: “You must be joking, right?”

Ziphora: “Sadly, it is true. I took him to the hospital earlier today and he had tests run on him.”

There was a short moment of silence; I think they were both trying to process the news and comprehend that death was lurking and to make matters worse – they weren't even a part of his life.

Keo: “What about Chemo?”

Ziphora: "It is a possibility, but Desiree said that it would depend on him and his willingness. I can't exactly force him."

Charisma: "Why did he come to you, though? I mean I get why he wouldn't pitch at my doorstep nor Keo's, but what I mean is where is his family? His wife and two daughters?"

Ziphora: "He briefed me on the situation, but basically – they threw him out. I don't know the entire story, but I don't think they are priority right now."

Keo: "I understand what you're saying, but we need to know the entire story, Zee. For all we know, Frank could be back to his old ways hence his wife kicked him out. Who deserts her husband when he is dying of cancer? Something just doesn't seem right."

Perhaps she was right; lawyers always had a way of over-analyzing every situation, but she had a point. Surely, if his wife kicked him out as he said, then she had every reason? I doubt I could ever have the heart to desert David in such a situation. I could never forgive myself. At least, my sisters and I found

some sort of common ground, and for the first time in my life I actually felt as if I was healing from the broken heart caused by my father. Never have we ever sat down together and actually spoken about him like that before. They would always just close up or brush the topic off whenever I asked about him. Death is something else; yes, it is a painful reality, but it has a way of making estranged people come together. I found out so many things about my father that day that I never even knew of.

Charisma: "I remember when I was in the first grade; Samantha, the prettiest girl in the entire school would always pick on me. If you knew me back then, you'd know that I was very thin and timid before I hit puberty and I wore glasses, so I was always the victim of bullying. I came home crying after she cut one of my ponytails off because I "looked like a freak". Mama was at work as always and Papa was home. He was so startled, he got upset immediately and stopped reading his newspaper. He even left his glass of cognac and attended to me. I explained to him what happened and of course, he didn't like it at all. He took his car keys and got me into the car. We immediately drove to Samantha's house, and all hell broke loose."

Keo was dying of laughter, but of course since I had no idea what they were even talking about, I had to listen attentively.

Ziphora: “What happened?”

Charisma: “He found Samantha playing outside with some other kids from the neighbourhood. Remember, we still stayed in Orange Farm that time

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so, he grabbed her by the shirt and asked her why she did what she did to me. Of course, she denied everything, but Papa went ballistic.”

Keo: (interrupting) “Ke belega ngwana wena wa ntshenyetsa? O nale sebeta, man! (I created a child and you decide to ruin her? You have such audacity, man!)”

They both laughed as Keo was imitating Frank, I guess. I was so envious, they got to experience his love and presence while I never did. I never knew how much I yearned for that until I saw them conversing about him while I couldn't relate. They must

have noticed how clueless I was about the entire conversation, until Keo stepped in to explain.

Keo: (chuckling) “Oh, that was Papa's favourite line whenever someone bothered us.”

Ziphora: (faint smile) “I see. So, what happened to the Samantha girl?”

Charisma: “Oh, he grabbed her and walked right into her house, and cut the hair off her entire head while her parents were watching. He even said to them that if they had a problem with what he had done, they knew his address. He took me with him and bought me ice-cream on our way home. He ensured that Mama never found out about the events of that day, so he cut my other ponytail and gave me a new hairstyle. Of course, Mama thought that he was just trying to be creative, but til this day, she has no idea of what really transpired that day.”

They both laughed while I smiled faintly. It hurt, to be honest. What hurt me even more was that I felt as if I got the lesser end of the bargain; my own father never was a part of

my life and yet he came back in his time of need. I had to be there for him, and I felt as if I would never experience his short-lived love like they both did.

Keo: “Hey, don't be like that. Trust me, if Frank is still the same man we knew back then, then you will get to experience that.”

Ziphora: “If Frank was really such a good father, why did he never want me?”

Charisma: (shaking head) “It's complicated.”

Ziphora: “Uncomplicate it.”

I was so tired of everyone trying their level best to protect me from what I never knew about. It just didn't feel fair to me.

Charisma: (sigh) “Papa le Mama (Mom and Dad) did their best to give us that close-knit family life. They did everything together, you know. We went everywhere with them – and

every Friday we would go out as a family - before you were born. The problems occurred when he met Lydia.”

I assumed that Lydia was his current wife's name.

Charisma: “She worked with him and Papa had his own company at the time. So, he hired her as his PA. The next thing we knew, Papa changed drastically. He stopped doing everything le (with) Mama and started going out alone; sleeping out a lot and he was just not that involved any more. Mama thought it was a phase until he started hitting her. That was when she couldn't take it any more. One day, he just packed his bags right in front of us. It was the day Mama told him that she was pregnant with you; he just lost it and walked out on us and we never saw him ever again.”

That really made me feel like complete shit. So, basically I was the reason why their marriage ended. In my mind, it felt as if it was my fault – entirely. I forced a tear back, while it fought so hard to escape my eye.

Keo: “It is not your fault, Zee. Mama did her best to protect you because she felt that you would suffer due to the spirit of rejection. It was not easy living without him anymore, believe

me. To make matters worse, Mama found out that he already had a child with Lydia before you were born, and at the same time that she was pregnant with you – so was she with Dineo. Lydia went out of her way to make Mama a laughing stock, so we moved to Pretoria. For some odd reason, they moved to Pretoria too, years later.”

So, they all knew all about our other siblings but me?

Charisma: “We knew all along and it was not easy, but we managed, babe. And now, look at you – you managed just fine without him. You surely don't have to beat yourself up about it. Mama is having a hard time right now. She is going through a whirlwind of emotions and she won't even let us in. She is not angry at you, don't you worry, she'll bounce back.”

I myself was going through my own whirlwind of emotions. It felt as if so many things were hidden from me, but I suppose they all had their reasons why they did what they did. At times, family protects us from a lot of hardships so that we needn't experience the same trauma they did. As painful as it seemed, I really understood where they were coming from – all of them. I didn't know Frank and I wasn't sure if he was back with

good intentions, but Koko (Grandma) Abigail, ensured me that I would find out soon enough why he came back and why he chose me. I guess time would tell. All I know is that God's mercy is eternal, so it is said in Lamentations 3:21-23 "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

I woke up the following morning, feeling all sorts of weird. I had prayed the previous night; something I had forgotten how to do ever since the loss of my child. It used to be David and I's thing, you know, praying. In the short time that I have known David, we surely have overcome a lot. I woke up feeling a bit down because I had a dream about him. In the dream, he seemed really far from me – almost like oceans were parting us. He kept screaming from a distance, calling my name and shouting for me to help him. I figured he might be in some kind of danger, but what else could I do? I woke up drenched in sweat just after 3am and I hadn't been able to sleep ever since. Keo and Charisma left just after 6pm. Their husbands were just as over-protective as mine. It felt so weird speaking about David in the past tense, but I had to keep hope alive. So, I decided that I'd keep on praying. I had promised Boitu and the rest of those witchy women that I'd make drastic changes

to the church. So, I spent my sleepless hours preparing for that Sunday's service. It was my very first Sunday service back and also, my very first sermon without my David. Nothing felt the same without him; breakfasts were lonely; my days felt so dry since I didn't receive any message from him and the three most overused words "I love you" can make your day so much more meaningful. I dragged my feet to the bathroom because I knew that I had to get through the day. I didn't feel like going anywhere, but moping around wouldn't do me any good. The media was always all over me and I just had a weird feeling. While I was taking a shower, I heard my phone beeping with endless notifications. I started checking my WhatsApp first, and as soon as I saw messages from my sisters, I knew that something was off.

Keo: "I hope you're awake – check Twitter."

Charisma: "You're making headlines again."

I felt my heart race abnormally as I headed straight to Twitter. If you want to know what's what in the world – check Twitter. Indeed, I was trending. #HandsOffZee; #ZiphoraMosue; #DavidMosue; #CrimeinSA. It was too much to

cope with. I went through a few tweets and wow, people have too much time on their hands to be honest. One news headline caught my eye. “Ziphora Mosue, wife of the prominent Architect of the year and former owner of The Agape foundation for young women David Mosue, is expected to make her first appearance at their church, The Agape Church of Christ after recently suffering a traumatic miscarriage. It is reported via a reliable source, that Mrs. Mosue is finally ready to be hands on with the church again, right after the recent abduction of her husband. We don't have all the details as yet, but it has been reported to us that the police were never notified of Mr. Mosue's disappearance. He has been missing for nearly three weeks apparently after being abducted in a vehicle driven by the newly announced Gauteng Mayor Mr. Phila Zwane. A lot of speculations are doing the rounds regarding this entire story; while some people are dragging Mr. Zwane's “shady” hidden past, a lot of people might want to refrain from saying anything damaging to any of the above mentioned parties to avoid a hefty lawsuit.”

While I was going through some of the comments, another shit-storm comment caught my eye. Someone with the Twitter handle “@God's Favourite” commented saying “I work at the same hospital that she used to work at, I won't even mention

any names, but Ziphora has recently made up with her dead beat father and he has been hospitalized with stage 3 cancer.” I felt a huge lump in my throat. A lot of people were telling her where to get off, while some were asking themselves why I'd pay for my dead bead father's hospital bill. Comments ranged from “She's crazy, but I guess that is how Bible brainwashed b*tches are”, to “Don't you people have any hobbies? Ziphora is going through a lot. Mind your own business.” This God's Favourite person seemed to have a heavy vendetta against me for some reason, because while people were standing together for me, she kept telling them things about me – things that no one would know other than my family and of course my two friends – Faith and Desiree. I decided to check out this person's account and I got the shock of my life. There's no way – this can't be true!

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"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

Mark 7:21-22; "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness."

Ziphora

I was a bit confused, but most of all I was hurt. People can go out of their way to hurt you; to break you. While I was trying to overcome the shock that had consumed me – Keo called me and I answered.

Ziphora: "Hello."

Keo: "Zee, whatever you do – don't respond. She's going to get one hell of a lawsuit coming her way. I'll make damn sure of it."

Ziphora: “I won't respond, but I mean where the fuck does she get the right to do that?”

Keo: “I don't know, but most probably just to hurt you. She's bitter, that's for sure.”

Ziphora: “Okay, let me get ready for church, we'll talk later.”

Keo: “About that – I think you might have to be careful. The media will most probably be there and I just want you to be safe. I'll be coming to church and so will Charisma.”

I chuckled briefly, I mean Charisma isn't exactly a churchy person, but I figured they did that to support me. I really had hope that my mother would be there. I mean, no one can make you feel the way a mother makes you feel. But then, I had to put on my big girl panties and face the music – the way David would want me to. I said my goodbyes and hung up. I mean, she deliberately wrote that shit about me yet she doesn't even know me. So, obviously someone told her all those things about me and added some spice to it. I decided to wear one of my best outfits bought for me by David – my black

leather Prada dress with red Lous button's. It was time people got to know the real Ziphora; the strong and unshaken Ziphora Mosue. I was about to prove to them that they could throw sticks and stones and tongue lashes at me, but I remained unshaken. I got into my customized car, it always reminds me of David's love for me. I knew for some reason that he would make his way back to me. I never knew when or how, but I knew that he would. He just had to. I had a taste of what families of all missing people went through daily and it was a real bitter taste. I played the radio and for some odd reason, Soul Kulture's Gugu was playing. It gave me a warm, fuzzy feeling inside as it reminded me of our wedding back in Turkey. How could I forget David's beautiful voice as he sang that for me while I was walking down the aisle? Nonetheless, as painful as it was, I refused to shed a tear. My make-up was on fleek, and I refused to cry over spilled milk. Upon approaching the church, of course, I had been warned. The media was everywhere; they had their cameras ready and were filming every move and everyone in and outside the church. I needn't ask myself who gave them permission as I saw Selina showing them all where to go. That woman just didn't know where to quit, but I had a great plan. Her little rule over the church – my church, was about to come to an end. As I drove in, I could see them running towards me with video cameras and flashing lights all over my car. I could barely get out but I

had to try. Just before I got out of my car, I heard a familiarly stern voice.

Jacob: “Back off before I have you thrown out.”

I could hear one or two journalists apologizing and the cameras, flashing lights and what felt like a million people's feet slowly fading away from my sight. I looked up and saw Jacob smiling at me as he extended his hand to me. He was dressed in his church robe. My goodness, did he really come to church – for me?

Jacob: (smiling) “Hi, Zee.”

I felt so embarrassed because he was one of the people that I “ghosted” as Faith once said to me.

Ziphora: “Hi, Jacob. How are you?”

Jacob: "I'm great now that you have finally decided to come back to the church. Honestly, it was never the same without you."

Ziphora: "I feel so embarrassed, you know, for not returning any of your calls and messages - "

As I was about to finish my sentence, he politely cut me off.

Jacob: (interrupting) "No need to apologize, Zee, honestly. You were going through a lot – and so many people just can't relate. Don't ever make anyone make you feel like you're any less of a human being just because you decided to grieve differently."

I looked him right in the eye and there was a bit of gloominess about him – I just couldn't tell. He always had that feel about him, but that time it seemed different – like he was just hiding in a deep pit of sadness.

Ziphora: "How are the twins?"

Jacob: “We can discuss that later, come. Let's get you prepped for your sermon.”

I smiled as we walked together hand in hand to the church office just behind the pulpit. It felt as if he was trying to get me away from everyone's staring eyes.

Jacob: “I'm glad that we're alone. I wanted to talk to you.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “Is everything okay?”

Jacob: (surprised) “Zee, out of everyone – we should we asking you that. You have gone through a lot and you still are. I want you to know that we'll do everything in our power to get him back. He will come back to you, Zee.”

Why did I feel as if he was excluding himself from that equation?

Ziphora: “So, you do know where he is?”

Jacob: “Not exactly, but we're working on it. He will come back – rest assured. I actually came to ask you something in person. It is rather personal, so I couldn't do it over the phone.”

Ziphora: “Yes?”

Jacob: “I have been thinking of amending my will, you know, since I have the twins now and that Jeannette is no longer part of my life. I was wondering if you would mind taking full guardianship of the twins as their mother should anything happen to me? I mean, should I die, they would need to know you as their mother – not Jeannette and of course, David as their father.”

Wow, that was surely a big ask, but I was very humbled that he even thought of choosing me. He didn't really have many choices to pick from, but I was really glad he thought of me.

Ziphora: "Wow, Jacob, that's something big to ask of someone. Are you sure?"

Jacob: "I am very sure, Zee. No one would be a better mother to them than you."

He seemed so nervous, as if he thought I'd say no. I could never, I mean I doubted that Jacob would die anytime soon, but then, it was really an honour.

Ziphora: "It would be my honour, Jacob. I'd love to be there for your twins. I'd love to be their mom."

Jacob: (sighing in relief) "You have no idea how much that means to me. Thank you so much, Zee. I honestly don't know what I would have done had you said no."

Ziphora: (laughing) "I could never, come on now. You are not going anywhere, that's for sure. You'll see them take their first steps and all."

He brushed my statement off which surprised me. Jacob loved talking about his children more than anything.

Jacob: "Let's get ready for church. By the way, what are you planning on doing about Selina and her hideous squad of gogo's (grannies)?"

I burst out in laughter. Jacob was always very serious and I never really got a chance to speak to him in such a manner.

Ziphora: "I have a few tricks up my sleeve that will ensure they are banished from this church forever."

Jacob: (laughing) "Do what you have to do, she's a nuisance and everyone has been complaining about her. "

I didn't even want to ask who nor why, but the truth was that Selina had already stepped on way too many toes. It was high time to bring the church back to life. Jacob and I prayed together just before we went out. That was what Ntate Moruti taught us to do just before every church service. I was a bit sad

because I was doing that without David, but I knew he would come back. He just had to. After our prayer, I grabbed my phone and my notebook as we headed out. The choir started singing, and by the looks of it, Selina had tried to overstep her mark once again, by conducting the choir. They weren't singing as I was used to. I looked around and saw a few new faces in the choir, and to be honest, they sounded hideous. The media was all over my church – apart from the usual camera man we had in church who always recorded our sermons. I looked around and saw my sisters along with their husbands and Keo's daughter, and to my surprise, my mother and grandmother right in the front row. I smiled at ease because I knew that they had come to support me. I looked around and saw Boitu sitting in the Church Wive's area, nervously, but I smiled and winked at her as reassurance. Of course, the other wives were right there, and they were dressed to impress. They must have thought that I had amnesia of what had happened the previous day. The choir was beyond annoying, so I signalled to them to stop singing. Of course, Selina was really irritated, but I knew that she had to pull out her fake Mrs. nice girl act because the media was there. I just wasn't interested in a show; I was interested in making people know that God loves us all despite everything. I was there to restore hope in a lot of people's lives – even if I could touch just one person's life, then it was more than enough. It felt so bitter-sweet standing on that stage all

alone – without my husband staring at me while smiling non-stop, but Jacob was there. He was there to support me and that was more than enough at that moment. He smiled at me and nodded, while I took a few seconds to bask in the amazing scent of that church. I smiled to myself while I closed my eyes briefly, as I immersed myself in the perfect silence. I took a deep breath and started speaking.

Ziphora: “Good morning, my fellow congregation. Bazalwane (congregation), it has surely been a long time since I have seen your faces.”

Congregation: “Amen.”

Ziphora: “It feels so good to be back on this stage, as I am even seeing a few new faces. I surely do hope that God was the one who brought you here – and not the filth you read about me in the media. Am I right?”

A few of them chuckled, while a lot of them, my sisters amongst them shouted “Amen.” I was about to begin until I saw something that was rather shocking to my eyes. There she

was; the very person who wrote trash about me for the entire world to see – she stripped me naked in an attempt to humiliate me, but I stood right there – unshaken. Dineo, my father's youngest daughter, who was also the same age as I was, was walking into the church, alongside her mother and her other sister who was carrying a baby. Of course, they were wearing ridiculous clothes while the mother was wearing a very large, oversized hat. They intended to make a statement, of course, and not the good kind. I must have been quiet for far too long when everyone's eyes glanced straight at them – including the cameras. I ignored them as they were walking around hoping that people would move for them. Who did they think they were? God's favourites? I chuckled briefly as I saw Selina wave at them to go and sit alongside the wives. These ones didn't know me, shame.

Ziphora: “As I was saying, Bazalwane (congregation), before I was rudely interrupted. It feels so good to be here, and I know that a lot of you didn't come to hear the word of God. So many amongst you, are sitting right there, testing the work of God because you wanted to see if I would crumble; a lot of you came to see if I was still standing strong; if I was still the same weight I was when I got married a few months ago; a lot of you came to see if I would lash out at all those who were speaking

about me on social media. The truth is, life is unpredictable, a lot of you are just living as if there is indeed a tomorrow, but what if today is your last day? What would you say to God if you arrived in heaven today? Would you tell him that you did your best to be kind to others, or that you went out of your way to make someone's life a living hell? Which one is it, bazalwane (congregation)?"

I could hear a few people murmur amongst each other, but I didn't stop there.

Ziphora: "It is okay to have an opinion, because at the end of the day, if you don't speak your mind, you might never get the chance to do so, am I right?"

A few people clapped their hands.

Ziphora: "Today, I stand before you a woman in pain; I am in pain because I lost my unborn child before I could even meet him. I stand before you in pain because my husband is missing. So many people had hoped that it would happen, or that one of us would die because "who am I to be blessed so

much”, right? I stand here today, because I want you all to walk out here having learnt a lesson. Whether it will be a painful lesson or a life-changing one; that is entirely up to you. I will start my sermon today with Ephesians 4:32; “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” What is kindness to you, bazalwane (congregation)? How many of us have ever been in a sticky situation? A lot of us, I might add, but how many of you can actually stand up and say that at least one or two people were kind to you while you endured that sticky situation? Proverbs 11:17 says; “A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself.” I have quite a number of people who were kind to me and who have shown me compassion during these past few weeks; people who were in my life for an entire lifetime and some people I met a few weeks ago, while some I have never even met before. Compassion is a part of love, bazalwane (congregation), you cannot love without being kind.”

As I was speaking, I saw Ziyanda walk in alongside Phila, with their four children, her brother-in-law Sbu and his wife Rachel, along with their children and Gog'Khanyi and her husband, Tony. It felt so good to see them, although I felt a bit lumpy as I recalled my last conversation with Phila and Ziyanda. Of course, she smiled at me and nodded for me to continue,

although everyone was trying to make a bit of a fuss since the Gauteng Mayor had made an appearance alongside his prominent wife and family.

Ziphora: “I have gained a few friends in a very short time, I can honestly say to you that I have kept a few friends who decided to stay in my life; and I have lost a few ever since my tragic encounter.”

I recalled Faith's painful words to me the other day, but I soldiered on.

Ziphora: “Proverbs 31:26 tells us that; “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” I have a friend, a very dear friend she once was, who said the most malicious things to me when I saw her for the very first time since I lost my child, and since my husband was abducted as you all say. I was so consumed with grief and heartache for a few weeks, that the entire world out there never existed. Grief attacks us like a thief in the night; and to be honest, we all handle it differently. However you handle it, does not define you; nor should it break you. 1 Peter 5:7 says; “Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” Psalm 147:3 says;

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. “ And Matthew 5:4 says to us; ““Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Mourning is a big part of grief. I stand here before you and speak to all those who have lost someone they love; be it a father, mother, a child, nor a husband even a wife. You are not alone – for He shall comfort you, For Psalm 34:18 says; “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Matthew 11:28 – 30 says; “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” If we learn to lay ourselves bare to Him instead of the world, He shall lessen the burden we have put upon ourselves. He never promised us a lifetime of happiness without sorrow, grief and pain, bazalwane (congregation), but he promised us everlasting life for as long as we have faith in Him.”

I felt as if the spirit had overcome me and I had forgotten about all the nasty people who had come to my church to make a point, but I went ahead.

Ziphora: “Now, let us talk about gossip. All those who choose to listen to gossip about you right before they even verify, or choose to ignore based on the fact that they know you. What do we call those kind of people, bazalwane (congregation)? All those who choose to spread malicious words and slander about you, but forget to look within themselves, bazalwane (congregation). Are they not committing a crime against you and themselves? Psalm 101:5 says; “Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.” Yes, I know what the world is saying about me right now – what people who have never even met me are saying about me, about my husband, about my family. The truth is, I owe no one an explanation, but whoever sees it fit to spread malicious rumours about me instead of reaching out and asking me how can they help, are guilty of gossip. James 4:11 says; “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.” Judgemental people have no place in my life, my fellow congregation, nor do people who choose to deceive others using my name. Exodus 20:16 says; ““You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Now, let me address certain issues. I know, it is getting hot in here, my people, but

rather it get hot in here whilst you're still alive and can fix your wrongdoings, than to burn in hell because you ignored the chance, am I right?"

The people were clapping hands – everyone except of course Frank's weird family.

Ziphora: "Yes, my father Frank Mokoena came back into my life. He appeared on my doorstep a few days ago, after I had never really seen him before in my life, except on my wedding day and on my graduation day. The truth is, bazalwane (congregation), my father left my mother and my two sisters when I was still developing in my mother's womb. I have no idea why he did that nor do I know what happened exactly, but yes, he was never a part of my life whatsoever. He chose to live his life with his wife and two other children, but now, the question is, where were they when he needed them most? Yes, my father has been diagnosed with Stage 3 Pancreatic cancer, and now my question to you, bazalwane (congregation) is that would you desert a man who left his family to make one with you at his time of need? Would you leave him when he is dying?"

People were mumbling and whispering amongst each other, while a lot of them were shaking their heads. I kept looking for approval from my mother, by looking her in the eyes, and of course she just smiled at me with tearful eyes. As I was speaking, Dineo, and her rather disgusted mother and sister, stood up and walked out. I didn't give them due to make my church a laughing stock, so I decided to speak.

Ziphora: “Yes, he abandoned us, but who said that he didn't need a second chance? What if this is his chance to fix whatever he did to wrong us – all of us? Who are YOU to say that he is not worthy of God's favour? Who are YOU to say to me that I am stupid for even letting him back into my life? How many people has Jesus helped and not one of them fit the perfect criteria of a Godly person?! My father is dying and if God saw it fit to lead him to me – to the family he abandoned before his current family – then so be it. I shall do what is required for me until his departure on this earth. All of you are so quick to judge – you expect people to give you facts and information and explain themselves to you regarding their own lives. How many of you can stand here before me and say to me that you have no secrets? You have never killed? You have never abandoned any of your children? Matthew 7:5 says; “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then

you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” This church stands for love and everything surrounded by love, if you are not capable of loving your neighbour, then the door is right there for you.”

I heard a lot of them clap hands.

Ziphora: “It has come to my attention that while I was away, a few changes were made. Rest assured, I was not part of those decisions made on my behalf nor did I give anyone the permission to do so. All those changes shall be revoked – everyone who feels the need to belittle people in MY church shall no longer be a part of this church; starting with immediate effect. My original choir members as well as my youth committee shall come back with immediate effect. I shall abolish the Church Wives committee and I shall only keep a few members, who will be notified in writing. I say this again, this church stands for love and anything done to humiliate and embarrass a fellow church-goer is a form of hatred and we do not approve. I hope this stands in your favour, bazalwane.”

The entire church stood up, except for Selina and her crew and small group of followers. They decided to excuse themselves

but I didn't care. The church clapped in awe as I felt I needed to hear a song dear to my heart.

Ziphora: "My fellow people, may we stand up and rejoice as we sing together, this song that is very near to me. Please, join me as we sing "Babe ngisite", I feel we all need God's divine intervention and protection against anyone who feels they belong against you."

Congregation: "Amen."

We sang and worshipped together, I felt that I was singing that song not just for myself, but for David as well. I was hoping that he remained protected wherever he was. A small part of me knew that he would make it back to me. It wasn't even hope, but it was a feeling of faith. I knew then that I had made the first step to recovery.

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“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

2 Corinthians 11:14 - “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

Ziphora

My sermon was great; so great that I had people inviting me to Sunday lunch left, right and centre. I wasn't about that life; more especially since my husband was missing. Ziyanda and Phila invited me over for lunch, and I couldn't say no because it felt as if they wanted to inform me about David or something. On the other hand, my mother was at the church and I was yearning to speak to her again. It had been so long since we had said two words to one another.

Gog'Khanyi: “Ziphora, would you and your family like to join us for dinner? It would be such an honour to host the next greatest Pastor.”

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Oh, I don't know if they are up to it."

I honestly didn't know what to say, but Keo and Charisma were so keen and their husbands really didn't mind at all.

Keo: "We'd love to be hosted by the Mayor and his family. Isn't that right, sis?"

Charisma: "Of course. We'd be delighted."

I honestly was craving my mother's response to the question.

Ziphora: "Mama?"

Susan: "Yes, we don't mind. I'll travel with you since I came with Charisma and her husband. They need some alone time without me crowding their space."

I felt a bit relieved, but I knew she wanted to clear the air in the car on the way to Phila's house.

Ziyanda: (smiling) “Well, then, it is settled, we'll meet you there. Jacob will follow us, plus we left Malome John at the house.”

I was wondering what Malome John was doing at their house since he preferred sleeping at hotels, but I guessed that their house was holy enough for him. I had no idea, but I chose to go with it. I walked to my car followed by my mother. She got into the front passenger seat and barely said a word. I felt so tense, so afraid, as if there was a huge lump stuck in my throat. I knew she wanted me to sweat first, but I just gave it a go.

Ziphora: “Mama...”

Susan: “Hmm?”

Yep, typical Susan Mokoena.

Ziphora: (deep sigh) "I'm sorry."

Susan: "For eng (what)?"

Ziphora: (nervously) "I'm sorry for not listening to you; for allowing Frank back into my life. I'm just sorry for everything, Mama. The silent treatment is killing me. I hate going a day without speaking to you. You're my rock, Mama, I don't like this."

Susan: "Who said I'm angry at you? Don't dampen your mood by thinking nonsense. Now, play some music for us."

Yep, just like that my mother decided to be the Susan I wasn't used to. I was hoping to clear the air, but clearly she wasn't in the mood or she was testing me perhaps, I don't know. I played some music for us while she sang along almost every song that played. She never touched the topic – not once while we were driving to Phila and Ziyanda's house. I was a little irritated; I mean why bother even to ride with me to our destination if you are going to give me a hard time? I chose not to channel my

irritability and chose to just keep quiet and keep my peace. We finally arrived and I walked out almost immediately. I had been craving a glass of wine because wow, my mother was just a tad-bit unreasonable. But then, life had to go on. It felt a bit sorrowful for me to walk into that house again – since the last time I was there was that tragic night when things just fell apart in my life. Everyone around had their husband by their side – except for my mother and I of course, and it just felt a bit surreal. I tried my best to just hide the pain because I had achieved a lot in that sermon. I made a huge comeback. I even heard Charisma tell me that Twitter was booming so much and that God's favourite had deactivated her account. I still wondered who on earth told Dineo everything she spilled on social media because there was no way that she could have known any of those things. Desiree had sent me a message of support straight after the sermon, but nothing from Faith. I felt a little sad because we used to be the Tripod, you know, because the triangle is the most strongest shape in the entire universe. We shared a lot, but something inside of me told me that I needed to let go of Faith with immediate effect as she was becoming a liability.

Gog'Khanyi: “Please, sit. I am going to call John and Florah to come and join us.”

Oh, yes, Mam'Florah was just as deep as Malome John. They would just take one good look at you, stare you deep in the eye and then you'd know that shit was about to hit the fan. They did hint at me of what was to come right before I had the miscarriage, but I guess such is life. They came to join us and of course, Malome John was so happy to see me. We prayed for the food and gave thanks to the Lord.

Ziyanda: "Father God, we humble ourselves before you. We thank you so much for bringing us all together, as meals around family are the greatest. They remind us of what we have to live for and that we have so much to give thanks for. We ask that you please bless this meal; not forgetting of course our beloved friend David and husband to our friend Ziphora, may you please protect him wherever he is and bring him back to us. We owe you so much, oh, Lord, but gratitude is what tops my list. We are here, alive and healthy and it is only by your mercy and grace. We thank you once again, oh, Lord. Amen."

I felt a little bit of peace wavering around me after Ziyanda's prayer. It felt so good to know that they were not angry at me for my outburst a few weeks ago, but that they were there to

support me and help me get my husband back. It wasn't easy waking up and going through my day not knowing where my David was, but it was comforting knowing that there were people who were ready to assist me in my time of need. We had a great meal, and the drinks were flowing – so was the conversation. Of course it didn't take anyone that long to divert the conversation to my father.

Phila: “So, Ziphora, how is it going with your father?”

I felt myself tense up because it felt as if my mother was still punishing me, but to my surprise she was so chilled and carried on drinking her wine while eating.

Susan: “Araba (answer).”

Ziphora: “Uh, well, I have no idea. I still have to go check on him. The last time I checked he was a bit weak.”

Phila: “Hmm. Well, my mother also was recently diagnosed with cervical cancer, but luckily we detected it early and she is

now up and running. I found a pretty good specialist. I could organize him for your father, if you'd like that.”

I felt like I was put on the spot. I had no idea what to say as I kept looking at my mother, who seemed so unbothered.

Keo: “Mama weh, Zee is afraid to speak up because she wants your approval.”

Susan: “Nna (Mine)? Why? I am not Frank's keeper. I could never stand in the way of a daughter trying to save her father.”

Okay, just like that.

Keo: “Well, Phila, Charisma

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Ziphora and I would really love that. It would mean so much to us. We really need to repay you for your kindness.”

I saw my mother stare at Keo faintly; I guess she had no idea that Charisma and Keo shared the same sentiments as I did.

Phila: "Please, there is no need to thank me. Once he is home, please, let me know. I will get Dr. Strachan to fly in first thing tomorrow."

I was relieved that there was a glimmer of hope for my father, but it must cost a fortune to have someone like that doctor fly in from wherever.

Jacob: "I need to check on the twins. Zee, do you mind joining me?"

I wasn't sure how I felt, I mean babies were still a sore subject for me. Seeing them felt even more painful, but I couldn't hide behind those scars forever.

Ziphora: (faint smile) "Sure."

I walked up the stairs with Jacob and amazingly, the bedroom upstairs was turned into a nursery. I was surprised, but Ziyanda and Phila had a way of just warming everyone's hearts by making them feel comfortable.

Ziphora: "Is this room yours?"

Jacob: "Temporarily, yes. Rachel and Sbu are expecting twins. They found out a few days ago, so Ziyanda wasted no time hooking this room up for them and I was given the go ahead to use it while I was still here."

That was so kind of them.

Ziphora: "I see."

Honestly, I was trying to create conversation because I was a nervous wreck. I didn't know how I'd react seeing those babies, but to my surprise they had grown so much since the last time I had seen them. They were bigger, and cuter and I just found myself staring at them and instantly falling in love.

Ziphora: “Wow, they have grown so much. I can't even seem to tell them apart.”

Jacob: (laughing) “You'll get the hang of it soon, you'll see. Do you want to hold one of them?”

I just nodded as he handed me one. I took a moment and stared at her in the eye. Oh, my heart just broke a little, thinking of the amazing moment I experienced when David named them over the phone. He was so proud of Jacob for being a father to them even before they were born. I couldn't help but feel a tear escape my eye.

Jacob: “I'm sorry for your loss, I know, you have been getting that a lot lately, but honestly, no one can ever understand how you feel right now. You lost your husband and your baby all in one go.”

Ziphora: (teary) “Will he come back, though, Jacob?”

Jacob: "I'll make sure of it – even if it is the last thing I do on this earth."

There he was again; speaking as if his days were numbered. Perhaps I was missing something, but I didn't want to pry. I thought to myself that the situation with David was probably too deep for him to comprehend, and hence he kept speaking in deathly syllables. All in all, I had a tremendous day. After checking on the twins, Jacob and I went downstairs with them for everyone to enjoy them. My phone beeped while I was about to hand the one twin to my mother. I quickly did that to check my phone, and I became immediately startled. An sms came through from an unknown number; "Nice stunt you pulled in church today. I guess you're ready to die for that church of yours? Well, that can be arranged. See you soon, Ziphora Mosue." Don't people have any hobbies, though?

Julia Mosue

It had been a weird few weeks. Diego and his crew had been ignoring my calls and messages for days and I wanted to know why. Things were just slowly falling apart and they hadn't been

giving me my cut as usual. I mean, I was the one who was organizing them the girls and yet he decided that he would just blatantly ignore me like that? I sold my soul and gave them my son; my David and they still chose to fuck me over? I decided to video call him for the umpteenth time, and this time he answered.

Diego: “Julia. What nice surprise.”

Julia: (annoyed) “Diego, why haven't you been answering my calls? I get the feeling you are avoiding me.”

Diego: “Are you wife? Why you act like my wife? Julia, you are old news. I have new guy; Nuevo bastardo duro (a new, tough bastard). You have been replaced, Julia. With immediate effect.”

I felt my blood racing.

Julia: “Who are you to replace me on my own turf?! I started this business – I made you richer, you son of a bitch!”

Diego: (chuckling) “Did I ask you to do so? You practically give me son on silver platter. Luis, come say hello to Hashib.”

I got the shock of my life when I saw David appear on screen.

Julia: (frantic) “David?! You're supposed to be dead!”

David: “Saludos mi señora (Greetings, my lady), I'm Luis, Luis Garcia.”

I was so shocked. David looked so different. He seemed different; he spoke differently and since when could he even speak Spanish?!

Julia: “Diego, you bastard! What have you done to my son?!”

Diego: (laughing) “Luis, do you know this loco puta (crazy prostitute)?”

David: (shaking head) “No, señor (sir), I have never seen her in my life.”

Diego: “See? You gave me your son on silver platter. You and me are done. No more Hashib. I have new mastermind now, tougher; smarter. You are old news.”

Julia: (fuming) “Diego, you'll pay for this!”

Diego: “Adios (Goodbye), Hashib.”

He hung up on me. What the fuck was happening?! Diego used to fear me. I called the shots and now this?! What the fuck was he playing at? I felt as if my entire head was spinning and I threw my phone against the wall. While I was trying to breathe, lo and behold, my annoying ghostly dead husband appeared right before me, smiling wittingly.

Julia: “Give it a rest, will you, Mac? I am not afraid of you – I have never been and I will never be.”

Mac: "Your life is falling apart, Julia. This is the start of many downfalls for you. The ancestors are watching your entire movie. Whatever you try to plan against Ziphora, shall never succeed. You will be your own downfall, Julia."

I was so angry that I started screaming at him!

Julia: (screaming) "Leave me the fuck alone!"

Buda: (shocked) "Eh, baby, o shap (are you okay)? O rasetsa mang (who are you shouting at)?"

Julia: "No one. I'm just having a rough day."

Buda: "O sure (Are you sure)?"

Julia: "Yes! Just give me a minute."

He left me while I tried composing myself.

Mac: “As of today, I shall be with you wherever you go, my love. You will see me in your car, whenever you sleep with your toy boy; whenever you plot your nonsense with Selina – I will be right there.”

Julia: (chuckling) “You think I'm afraid of ghosts? Be my guest, Mac.”

He just smiled and laughed as he stood there staring at me. Usually he faded away and left me alone, but perhaps he was serious. He wanted to scare me; play with my head and I refused. No stupid ancestor will do that to me. They don't even exist – it is just a pawn to fuck around with people for more money. The ball was in my court, and I had the power. Speaking of Selina, that ugly bitch failed a simple mission. Her only duty was to overrule Ziphora and make the church hate her – despise her, but instead, she got kicked out of the church. I just could never understand why I allowed such dumb bitches to be part of my committee. I made a mental note to call her once Mac got the fuck out of my face.

Chapter 69

James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Ziphora

The rest of the day was rather okay – despite the odd message I received while trying to enjoy my few glasses of wine. I didn't tell anyone about it because that would have just aggravated the entire situation. I decided to ignore all social media and focus on my life. For some reason, it felt as I was about to enter a life-changing era in my life, but then, I decided to put it all to God. I still couldn't understand why Desiree was the one who was responding to my messages, but Faith wasn't. Faith even exited our WhatsApp group. I felt a bit hurt, but then life just had to go on. I made a choice that day; more especially after my conversation with my mother. She still really didn't open up to me, but Charisma and Keo had already told me the real reason why Mama was so angry when Frank came to my house.

She did though, influence my decision to give my father a chance to live. It might not have been a long life, but then I had to try. He was not in my life – yes, but then, would ignoring him make me feel better about myself? I don't think so. I didn't go to see him that Sunday evening, but Desiree kept me updated. Apparently he was responding really well to treatment, although he hadn't decided if he wanted to do chemo or even get operated on, but I was glad that there was hope. I woke up the next morning and still felt a bit sorrowful since I had a dream about David yet again – the very same dream. We were oceans apart and he was shouting at me to help him. I knew he was in danger, but it looked like a weird kind of danger. It was a confusing dream, but I made a mental note to bother Malome John about it. Speaking of Malome John, apparently I had to get cleansed as soon as possible since I had a miscarriage. It was too much to do, but all I had to do was make an appointment with him. Thankfully, Julia needn't be part of anything. I decided to drive one of David's cars just to ensure that I have some sort of memory of him. I took the keys of the GLC SUV. I immediately smelled him. His cologne could hit your nostrils a mile away. It was rather bitter-sweet – especially seeing his little secret stash of cigarettes. He knew I hated the smell of cigarettes, so he would smoke whenever I wasn't around. After we got married he became worse, he only

smoked whenever I wasn't around. I appreciated his effort for me, and now, mornings and evenings were rather lonely. I headed to the hospital, and the tracking company called me immediately. They thought that David's car was stolen since he was then reported missing, but then, I had to reassure them that it was me who was driving. I arrived at the hospital just before 10am. Desiree was off that day, but she reassured me that I'd find assistance from her co-workers. I loved how hands-on she was with my father. I asked around about Faith, but apparently she had resigned because she got a job overseas. Desiree didn't tell me anything, so I made sure to ask her about it. I decided to text her before going to see my father.

Ziphora: "Hey, Dee. You never told me Faith resigned?"

Desiree: "Ai (oh), I also found out yesterday. Perhaps we can talk about it over some breakfast. I'm at the mall. Are you around?"

Ziphora: "Yes, I just arrived at the hospital. I'm about to go see Frank."

Desiree: “He is fast asleep and might only wake up after noon. Doctor's orders. Come join me for some long overdue lunch, I'll be sure to get one of my assistants to call you as soon as he wakes up.”

She was really nice – always had been. I decided to join her after all and within five minutes I had arrived at the mall. She asked to meet me at Mugg and Bean. Desiree could never say no to a plate of good food. She had always been a bit chubby, but had the most beautiful features and genes I had ever witnessed. She was rather happy to see me and I was actually quite glad to see her as well. Yes, I had seen her a few times after my ordeal, but seeing her in that setting hit differently. It was always nice to catch up over a few drinks and good food. We hugged immediately – for a long while before being seated.

Desiree: (smiling) “How are you?”

She looked a bit different – she was glowing.

Ziphora: “I feel so good amongst the circumstances.”

Desiree: (smiling) "You want to talk about it?"

It felt so good for her to ask me that, but honestly, I didn't want to depress her with my sad story. She seemed to happy for that.

Ziphora: "Not really. It was so tough, but for some reason I feel a lot better now. I'd rather talk about you. I've neglected you for so long. I feel so horrible."

Desiree: (shaking head) "Zee, I'm not Faith. Do not ever feel bad for mourning. We all mourn differently. You can't always be there for everyone. There is no recipe for life itself. You are doing great even though you might not believe it."

Ziphora: (sigh) "But, she was so harsh towards me. She even said that I am focusing on my father, my dead beat."

Desiree: (chuckling) “Faith has issues. I mean, she started changing a long time ago – before you even got married to David. Even when she heard the news of me being engaged - “

I immediately looked at her ring finger and spotted a ring. I had no idea why I didn't spot it before.

Ziphora: (surprised) “You're engaged?! My word, babe! I'm so happy for you! Congratulations. I'm so sorry I wasn't there and now I feel horrible.”

Desiree: “No, don't feel bad about it. That's why I have been begging to meet with you. I didn't want you to hear from other people, I mean wow, you're my best friend. Yes, it was not nice not being able to share the news with you, but in all honesty, I understood what you were going through, honestly.”

She was really understanding, but it didn't make things easier.

Ziyanda: “Still, babe - “

Desiree: (interrupting) “No, Zee, you have been through the most. Even after your miscarriage, you still can't really move on. You constantly have to get up and be asked where your husband is and if you have found any lead while dealing with the fact that he has gone missing. You can't do that to yourself. You're only human. Don't let anyone make you feel guilty.”

She was right and it felt a bit of a relief to hear her say that to me.

Ziyanda: “It means a lot to me, Des, really. So, tell me how he proposed to you.”

She laughed and beamed with excitement while she told me everything I had missed out on; from the proposal in the chopper across the Mauritius ocean, to Faith acting cold all of a sudden. I never really noted Faith as someone jealous, but after Desiree mentioned a few highlights that I have clearly missed, it was clear that she was a bit of an envious person. We went on to talk about my father, while she shared her sentiments as well. I was so glad that things were good between Desiree and I. I could speak to her about everything

without feeling judged. It is always good to have a friend; even if it is just one good friend. After our great breakfast, Desiree decided to accompany me to the hospital, seeing as Frank knew her more than the others. The moment I walked in, he was so happy to see me. He actually looked a whole lot better and hydrated.

Frank: “Oh, ngwanaka (my child). Thank goodness you came. Please, tell me you have come to take me home. I am so tired of this place. I hate hospitals. They just remind you of death.”

I couldn't help, but chuckle. He sounded just like Keo, she hated hospitals just as much.

Ziphora: (chuckling) “Ao (goodness), Papa (daddy). You still have a lot of treatment to get through.”

Frank: (shaking head) “I don't think I can, my child. I have caused you too much pain – all of you. It is time for me to face the music and accept my fate.”

I was rather saddened; so much that my smile faded immediately. He must have noticed.

Frank: “Forgive me for sounding so ungrateful, Ziphora but all I ever wanted was your forgiveness before leaving this earth.”

Ziphora: “I totally get that, but don't you think you're being a little bit unfair? Towards me especially. I mean, I of all people don't know you at all. The least you could do is at least try to get better – for my sake. Let me just enjoy the few months I have with you. Allow me to enjoy having a father – despite the circumstances.”

Frank: (shaking head) “It is not fair upon you, Ziphora. You don't deserve nursing me like a helpless newborn.”

Ziphora: “Don't call it that. At least give life a fighting chance – I am begging you. That is the one thing you can do for me.”

He sat there and stared me right in the eye. It really seemed as if he wasn't interested, but luckily he contemplated it and made a sound decision.

Frank: "If I agree, how am I going to pay for all the bills? I have no dime to my name."

Ziphora: "Leave it all to me."

Frank: (nodding) "Okay."

I get it; he didn't want to be a burden more especially after he abandoned us, but then, that was the least I could do for him. A lot of people might have thought that I was out of my mind to pay for my "deadbeat" father's medical bills, but if that is what it took for me to experience a father's love – then so be it. I had to do it; not for anyone else but me. I needed that closure somehow.

Desiree: "Okay then, we can start off with prepping you for some medicinal chemo and then we can try removing the

cancer via operation if possible. It has already spread, so I don't think that operating right now would be wise.”

I trusted Desiree, and I was honestly happy that she took time out of her off day to explain all of that to Frank.

Frank: “Okay, but can I please go home today?”

Desiree and I both chuckled. I mean, wow, we do get a lot of patients that are deathly afraid of hospitals, but imagine being so ill with cancer and still being afraid of hospitals. It must suck.

Desiree: “Yes, you can go home, provided you take your daily dose of meds for two weeks. Thereafter, I'd like to see you for our scheduled appointment.”

Frank: (sigh) “Thank goodness. I might be ill, but I won't forget.”

At least he had good memory. I on the other hand had always been a notetaker. My cellphone had so many reminders and

alarms for almost each day for every appointment. My patients were rather saddened that I couldn't work with them, but I had decided to take some time off and focus on myself. Frank got changed into his clothes and we went home; to my house. It felt rather good to have him by my side even though I had no idea what kind of person he was. Something was telling me that I was doing something right and that I was making the right decision. Only time would tell if I was indeed correct about that.

Phila

It had been a rough month and luckily we broke the fast just yesterday after church, otherwise I wouldn't have made it so far without sex. That was the worst part of it all. We had two more months to go before our plan was finalized, and honestly, I was starting to lose some hope. We hadn't heard from any movement on Diego's side and David hadn't set foot in South Africa ever since. Something just wasn't adding up. It felt as if we just weren't digging too far enough. We had an entire team of intel ready – almost everywhere – except for the President's office. Nova's brothel was fully functional and ready. We had all the necessary measures and precautions in place and all our “girls” were ready. Pierro was getting everything ready for us,

but it just felt as if I was missing something. Just as I was pondering my mind, I received a call from him.

Phila: "Ricci, talk to me."

Pierro: "Mamba, I'm afraid I have bad news. Diego is striking; he bring David to South Africa. He's on plane as we speak. Private jet. Diego style."

My heart started racing. How the fuck could we miss that?!

Phila: "Ricci, how could your men miss such important information?!"

Pierro: "I don't know, but you can fix it. They are getting sloppy and I hate sloppiness. Look, get everything ready in case he agrees to go with your plan. Remember, he not know Jacob any more, use him to get used to your cover-up business and he will be putty in your hands. Remember, Diego might send people to spy on David since he is new and brainwashed, but I trust you."

I knew he had faith in me, but fuck that entire situation was a total blind side. I had to get Sbu and Jacob on board ASAP.

Phila: "Alright, Ricci, thanks for giving me the heads up."

Pierro: "No problem."

I hung up and dialed Sbu immediately from my study.

Phila: "Sbu, uphi uJacob (where's Jacob)?"

Sbu: "He's right here."

Phila: "We've got a problem. David is on his way here as we speak on Diego's private jet. It is time for plan B."

Whenever we had missions, we always had Plan B and C. You just never know what might go wrong.

Sbu: "Shit. We're on it. Let's waste no further time."

Phila: "Sharp."

Even though we always had a backup plan, the backup could always be a fuck up. I hated resorting to them, but then life has no manual. It was finally time to speed things up.

Julia

I haven't had a peaceful night's sleep ever since Mac showed up and decided he was just not leaving. While I was fucking Buda, he was there, every time I took a piss – he was there! To make matters worse, he just wouldn't stop fucking talking! I decided to trade my car for another one, and guess what?! That fuck was still there! I decided to sell my house and move to another one. Maybe then he would just learn to leave me alone. It was hard not having Diego in my corner any more, so I had decided to come up with a plan myself. I mean, I know the ins and outs of this entire trafficking business, so why not have my own hustle? I decided to meet up with Selina and hatch my next plan, of course she was too stupid to be told what I had in

mind, but she would soon get the hang of it. I decided to go meet her at Cuppaccinno's. While waiting for her, I ordered a glass of wine and tried to ignore Mac. Thankfully, she was right on time.

Selina: (smiling) "Julia. Long time. Keng o kare o lositse weight so (why does it seem as if you have lost weight)?"

Julia: (annoyed) "Selina, I didn't call you here to observe and discuss my weight. Sit down."

Mac: (chuckling) "Still the same rude, old, Julia."

I tried by all means to avoid Mac.

Selina: "Askies (sorry). What's up?"

Julia: "Well, since you decided to get fired by that whore Ziphora, I have a new plan. How would you like to run your own church?"

Selina: (excited) “Heh (huh)?! O ra gore ke be moruti wa kereke ya me (you mean be a pastor of my own church)?!”

Julia: (rolling eyes) “Well, if it sounds better because you said it – then yes.”

Selina: “So, re simolla neng (when do we start)?”

Julia: “Whenever you'd like.”

Selina: “Oh, I can't wait. I mean as long as you don't expect me to preach in a tent, wa bona (you see)?”

Julia: “Me? Do I look like tent material to you? Ska ntseya bjao (don't take me like that.”

Selina: “I didn't mean it like that, man. But then, what do you gain from giving me my own church, Julia? I know you, nothing is for free.”

Mac: "Tell her the truth, Julia. Tell her why you really want her to head her own church."

Julia: (annoyed) "Shut up, Mac!"

Selina: (surprised) "Mac? Are you okay, Julia?"

Julia: "Eish (Oh), I haven't been sleeping so well for the past week. I think Mac is haunting me, you know."

Selina: (chuckling) "That's probably just your conscience playing tricks on you. But then, I'd also haunt you if I were him. Ne o mo dira bhari shem (you made a good fool out of him)."

Julia: (annoyed) "You want me to change my mind and give the church to someone else?"

Selina: "Aowa (no), man, ka tshameka (I'm playing). Don't be so serious."

I couldn't afford any slip ups this time, I mean I would be killing two birds with one stone; getting back at Ziphora for stealing my sons from me. And at the same time, I'd be making a killing by making a comeback into the industry. They don't know me yet. I am Julia Mosue and I am about to make history.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Phila

After having to carefully improvise after Pierro dropped that hideous bomb on me, I just had to go with it. We were in contact with our men who worked at the airport, and word was that David, or shall I say Luis Garcia. So much was going through my mind, but thing was sure; we had to get acquainted with the new David as soon as possible. I had everyone on standby and they had told me that he had just landed with Diego's men. Of course, since he was a "trafficker" he had to sleep at hotels or guest houses. So, as expected Diego had booked him into the famous Aphrodisiac Hotel in Cape Town. It was the perfect fit into the missing piece of the puzzle, since Porsche was one of the owners. Yep, her husband left all his assets to her when he died of cancer. I had to get her to help me, so I wasted no time and dialled her number. Of course, she found humour in everything.

Porsche: "Well, well, well, if it isn't the Mayor of Gauteng calling me. It must be the wrong number."

Phila: (laughing) "How are you doing, Portia Williams?"

Porsche: (chuckling) "The last time someone called me that was at my husband's funeral. I couldn't be better, wena (you), mayor?"

Phila: "I could be better, actually."

Porsche: "Well, I'd feel a lot better had you been calling me on a good note."

Phila: (sigh) "Things have been hectic, Porsche."

Porsche: "I'm kidding. I know, talk to me."

Phila: "Are you in Cape Town?"

Porsche: "Yes, what's up?"

Phila: "I need your help with something. I can't really get into the details, but you'll be receiving a new guest in about an hour or so – Luis, Luis Garcia. I need you to tap his room for me."

Porsche: "Hmm, I won't ask, but I trust you. Let me look him up on my database. Give me a second."

Phila: "Alright."

After a few minutes she responded.

Porsche: "Yes, I see him. I see he was also set to land about an hour ago, and he has booked the Presidential suite; actually he booked the entire floor. Should I be worried?"

I honestly didn't want to tell her to worry, because if shit hit the fan then she might have been entangled with a human trafficking situation.

Phila: "No, nothing to worry about."

Porsche: "Okay, if there's anything else you need from me, just shout. Say hi to Zee, will you?"

Phila: "Bathong (goodness), Porsche. You guys talk everyday."

Porsche: "Yes, but I don't want her to think I am speaking to her husband behind her back."

Phila: (laughing) "Dramatic as always. Thank you, bye."

I hung up and immediately got out of the study to speak to Jacob and Sbu.

Phila: “It is set, the hotel room will be sorted for us. We need to get to Cape Town ASAP. Jacob, are you ready?”

Jacob: “Yes, I just want to confirm that the twins will be headed to Zee's house tomorrow?”

Gog'Khanyi: “Yes, I can reassure you – everything will be set. You will come back, it is not yet time, mfana wami (my boy).”

She hugged Jacob with reassurance, but it must have been so painful knowing that he was going to die soon and even worse that we couldn't do anything about it.

Mam'Florah: “Boys, you have been preparing for this for an entire month. Please, don't forget anything you have learnt in this past month. Here are your necklaces, it is just for extra protection as I have saged and protected them.”

Malome John: “Please, let us pray before you leave us.”

We all gathered together and prayed. I knew it was going to be hard – especially for our wives. I mean, Rachel was pregnant with Sbu's fourth and fifth children. It was not going to be easy, but we had to do it. It became even harder as Mayor because I had to keep a low profile. Luckily, I had scheduled appearances and meetings in Cape Town, so it wouldn't look too suspicious if I suddenly appeared there.

Malome John: “Modimo wa rona (Our God), le badimo ba rona (and our ancestors), we thank you for this fruitful day, we ask that you please protect all of us – more especially these boys as they embark on a life-changing mission. May they be forever protected and guarded and of course dearly blessed by all of you. Please, ensure that they make it out safely and no matter what happens, let your will be done. In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.”

We said our goodbyes to our wives and children, and of course they cried as if it was the last time they would ever see us. It was not an easy thing to do, considering the fact that I had promised Ziyanda that Mamba would never be a part of our lives ever again. And Now, I had revoked that promise because of everything that was happening. We got into my car and Frank drove us to the airport. We were oddly quiet but it was

understandable considering the circumstances. A lot of what if's went through our minds, but one thing was for sure; we weren't backing down. It felt like the longest flight of my life; it actually reminded me of when Kele was kidnapped by Gorilla, we really didn't think straight that time. Eventually, we made it to Cape Town. I couldn't stay at the same Hotel as Jacob did and neither could Sbu, but a few of our men were there for back up and had booked in the same hotel. We had to get Jacob to book into Aphrodisiac Hotel, otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to make a lasting impression on the new David. As soon as Jacob checked in, he wasted no time and got to work. I really had to commend Jacob for going all out for us – I mean yes, he was doing it for his brother, but really, the man had balls.

Jacob

As soon as I got checked in; I couldn't even wait any further. Phila and Sbu were nice enough to lend me a few of their bodyguards. I never pictured life after having my twins like this. To make matters worse, Jeannette was still nowhere to be found. I just hoped that she wouldn't cause trouble for Ziphora, since I had been looking everywhere for her. Getting her to sign her rights over to me would have been ideal

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but it was as if she had gone missing without a trace. Anyway, she was the least of my problems. Before I walked out, I prayed. I had felt so faithless for a very long time in life, but what happened to my brother had given me faith in life yet again – even though I could feel that my time here on earth was nearing its end. I had to check in with my decoy ladies – they were three.

We had hired a few women and most of them young girls – just the target market that Diego was looking for. It baffled me how women and children would just be brought in and out of the country like that without them getting caught. The moment I walked out, the ladies were ready. Their fake names were Valerie, Prudence and Tasha. We had to get the ball rolling. The guards had already positioned themselves all over the hotel, and I had gotten a text from Phila that David was already in his room. My heart was burning to see him again – even though I knew that he would not remember me, but then, I couldn't risk everything we had worked so hard for. I headed down to the Hotel restaurant along with the three girls. Of course they had to dress in the shortest yet most expensive clothes while I had to wear one of the most expensive suits one could ever find. It had always been easy to grab attention – just

walk in smelling and looking like a million dollars, and order a million dollar drink while you're at it. To top it all off, if you walk in with the hottest women, you'll never go wrong. One of the waiters approached us, but I couldn't just order much, I had to wait for David to draw his attention.

Waiter: (smiling) "Good day, sir. May I take your orders?"

Jacob: (smiling) "Good day, miss. We'd love to order. I'll go first. I'd like a sirloin steak with your mash potatoes and grilled vegetables. Please add extra garlic sauce, would you?"

Waiter: "Gladly, sir. And for the ladies?"

Valerie: "I'll have your seafood platter for one. I hear it is an excellent aphrodisiac."

Prudence: (chuckling) "Just like the hotel. I'll have your mussels with garlic bread."

Tasha: “Oh, I'll have your Seafood Pasta with Tagliatelle, please.”

Jacob: “Now, now, ladies. Please, don't embarrass me tonight, okay? We'll have a bottle of your finest wine. A few Margarita's for the ladies as a starter. Keep the table filled, would you?”

I could tell she was impressed. Of course, Portia had class and style as I was told. The hotel was divine – with over the top décor. I couldn't fault it one bit.

Waiter: “Coming right up, sir.”

The girls were playing along while the drinks were flowing. Yes, I was on the job, but it kind of felt like I was living my last few days out, you know. We had our food and even had dessert, and after half of the second bottle was down, David finally made an appearance. It was about damn time. I had to remain sober because I didn't want to make any mistake. It was rather odd, because everyone seemed to recognize him if I could say that. But, I wouldn't say they thought he was the pastor

because he looked entirely different. He had glasses on – David never wore any glasses his entire life – not even when he was drawing his house designs. He had a trimmed beard of which David hated beards so much that he would always go for facials and hair trimmings. He looked a bit more buffed up as if he was working out a lot and surprisingly he had a weird hair cut – a high top much like the usual mexicans we would see on tv. Of course, I could smell his cologne from a mile away – that was the only thing I could recognize about him. He had a plain Tshirt and jeans on and hideous pointy shoes. My goodness, my brother was just not himself, but I had to put all of that aside. I saw the waiters making a fuss all over him, but he dismissed them quickly and rather rudely. I always saw such on tv, but never imagined that I'd ever live to tell the tale. He sat alone, eating one of his favourites – Seared Salmon with furikake.

He always loved eating healthily with a twist. After trying to get his attention for nearly an hour and a half – I realized that I was going nowhere. It was already 4pm by then, and I was a bit bummed, but then I remembered that Rome wasn't built in one day. I took the girls and we walked right past him without him even staring our direction and walked back up to our rooms. I sighed as I sat back in my chair. Phila and Sbu were able to

monitor just about everything as they had bugged nearly the entire hotel with cameras and recording bugs. I stood outside my balcony while admiring the beautiful view of the sea. The last time I was in Cape Town, was when I had proposed to Jeannette. Little did I know that she would turn my entire life upside down. I poured myself a glass of cognac, while reminiscing of the good days I once had with my brother. Only God knew the future, so I would try again later.

Ziphora

I had a peaceful night's sleep right until I had to dream about David once again. Still the same old dream of him asking me to help him while we were oceans apart. It wasn't just the usual dream because for some odd reason, Faith was right by his side, smiling at me. It wasn't one of her friendly smiles, though. I also saw my father-in-law in my dreams. My Ntate Moruti, oh, that man truly loved me like his own. He said to me "Ziphora, ngwanaka (my baby), only time will tell what life has in store for you, but better days will come. Hang in there and remember one thing; I will fight every enemy of yours for as long as you shall live. You are yet to see just how evil people you hold closest to you can be, but your time is coming, my child. Hang in there." I wasn't sure what the dream meant, but

as soon as I got up that morning, I just had a massive smile on my face. I found myself making breakfast just the way David liked it. I made sure to make softer food for Frank as he had agreed to undergo chemo first. It wasn't going to be easy on his body, so luckily David had enforced me to be a clean eater like him. He found me humming and singing in the kitchen.

Frank: (smiling) “Your mother used to love doing that whenever she was making food for us.”

I wish I had experienced those days, but well, such is life.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Well, I wish I had inherited Mama's beautiful singing voice.”

Frank: (laughing) “Unfortunately, you got my coarse voice.”

We both laughed. It felt odd to have him around since I didn't even really know him, but my heart was at ease. Perhaps it was because it was good to have company around since I was left alone.

Ziphora: "Sit, I'm making us breakfast."

Frank: "You really don't have to, Ziphora. I don't deserve your kindness."

Ziphora: (shaking head) "One of these days when you are better, we'll get to talk all about it. For now, I think it is best for you to just sit back and enjoy a good old breakfast."

Frank: (smiling) "Your husband is a very lucky man."

He spoke of David in the present tense. That made my heart melt.

Frank: "Don't worry so much, he will come back to you."

Ziphora: "How do you know?"

Frank: "I just know it. Good men like him don't just get drawn by any woman. I saw the way he looks at you in the eye. Even

if I just saw it on tv. You see, that day when we came to your lobola negotiations, I saw how he was ready to kill for you. I knew by the way he was ready to protect you, that he was the right one for you. God sends us soul mates and some are blessed to meet more than one in life, but it is up to us to figure out what to do with them. You see, happiness is a choice, if you are given a moment of happiness and you choose to play with it, what do you think will happen to you? You'll end up just like me.”

He sounded so sane and I couldn't understand how such a beautiful marriage went south just like that?

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- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Jacob

After a rather boring afternoon, I decided to head down to the Restaurant Bar this time and have a few drinks, while I was deep in thought. By then it was about 7pm and I had already eaten. I decided to go there alone – without the girls. Thankfully, the bouncers were always awake and had been keeping a very low profile. Of course, I had to lie low because David didn't pitch up alone – he also had his own bodyguards who also kept a low profile. But it didn't take me long to notice how they were watching his every move. I got to the bar and ordered myself a bottle of Bisquit cognac, and within a few minutes I heard a familiar voice behind me.

David: “There's a saying that goes; “when a man orders a bottle of alcohol instead of a glass – he's definitely got problems.”

I turned around and saw him. I chuckled while staring at him. It felt a little good to finally have a chat with him – despite the circumstances.

Jacob: (laughing) “Well, that saying isn't incorrect.”

David: (smiling) “Mind if I join you?”

Jacob: “No, not at all.”

I looked around and noticed how these bodyguards of his were literally following him around. They had positioned themselves all over the bar and restaurant. I had spotted about 5 of them. It seemed as if Diego didn't trust any newbie. He took out his hand for a handshake.

David: “Luis, Luis Garcia.”

What an awful name. He didn't even look Mexican at all.

Jacob: (smiling) “Thabo, Thabo Masango.”

Of course, I had to use a different name since I started that mission. They knew my mother, and it wouldn't take them very long to figure out who Mosue was. They didn't know me – only David since my mother had tried to get him into her shady dealings.

David: “Pleased to meet you. I am rather surprised; I was hoping to find you with your beautiful mujeres (women) with you this time.”

David had sounded completely different, but as a Neurologist, it didn't take me completely by surprise. I knew just how much damage hypnotism could do to one's brain. I had also gone to study Medicine in Cuba, so I knew Spanish.

Jacob: (chuckling) “I wore them out – if you know what I mean.”

David: (laughing) “I could never handle more than one woman.”

He caught me by surprise because I had no idea that he actually had a woman back in Mexico.

Jacob: (frowning) “You have a wife?”

David: “Something like that. Maybe you'll meet her someday.”

I couldn't shake that funny feeling I got once he told me that. Something just didn't feel right about this “wife” of his. I mean he got brainwashed not so long ago and all of a sudden he has some sort of wife. I decided not to pry and cause suspicion, but instead we had a great time. I got to know the Luis Garcia, and well, he did have some of David's characteristics like his dry humor, his sensitive side and he loved cooking as well. Yes, hypnotism doesn't completely eliminate the person you once were – hence they suffer from migraines and flashbacks or bad dreams from time to time.

Ziphora

I was about to leave my house after breakfast with Frank when security called me. We were just about to head to the hospital, so I asked myself who wanted to visit me at that time?

Ziphora: "Hello?"

Security: "Good morning, Ma'am. There is someone here to see you. She says her name is Gog'Khanyi."

I had no idea of what she could have been doing at my place that early.

Ziphora: "Oh, let her in. Thank you."

Frank: "Is everything okay?"

Ziphora: "Nothing to worry about, but I seem to have a visitor."

Frank: "Okay, maybe this is God's way of showing me that I shouldn't go for chemo."

Ziphora: "Nice try, but you're still going."

After about three minutes, Gog'Khanyi knocked on my door. It is never rocket science because she would always shout as soon as she reached the door.

Gog'Khanyi: “Ziphora, vula (open), man! These kids are heavy.”

Kids? Which kids? I hurried to the door and as soon as I opened, I saw her with Rethabile and Remofilwe and immediately my brain remembered. Dammit! See why I always make notes?

Gog'Khanyi: “Why are you looking at me like that? Don't tell me you forgot that the babies would come live with you.”

Yep, I completely forgot.

Ziphora: “Eish, a lot has happened, Ma, I totally forgot. It's just that I have to take my father to the hospital.”

Gog'Khanyi: (chuckling) "I'm pulling your leg. I know how forgetful you are and it is honestly okay. Hamba (Go), I'll watch them until you come back."

Ziphora: "Are you sure, Gogo? We might be a while."

Gog'Khanyi: "My child, I was a nurse, so I know how tiresome chemo can be on a person. Go, I'll see you when you come back. Don't worry about me. I'll make myself at home. Is there wine here?"

Ziphora: (chuckling) "There's plenty, just don't touch the old ones. Those are David's favourites."

Gog'Khanyi: "Alright. Frank, we'll meet each other on another day

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yezwa (okay)?"

Frank: "Yebo (yes), Ma."

I chuckled as we walked out because Gog'Khanyi wasn't that old, but the way she commanded respect and didn't tolerate bullshit would make you respect her by force. As soon as we got into the car, I knew Frank was already scared shitless.

Frank: “Ke mang mosadi ona (who is that woman)?”

Ziphora: “That's Gog'Khanyi. She is Ziyanda Zwane's grandmother. The mayor's wife.”

Frank: (worried) “Eh, o mo tsebela kae (how do you know her)? She is quite dangerous along with her family. The stories I have heard.”

Ziphora: “Have you ever seen them do anything that you have heard of?”

He shook his head in shame.

Ziphora: “Sometimes, it is best not to bother with hearsay because it can get you into trouble. Get to know someone first and then make your own judgement. See? Like I did with you – no offence.”

I could see he took some offence as he just kept quiet and stared out the window. I wasn't about to let him trash people I had become friends with. He didn't even know them and I barely even knew him yet I gave him the benefit of the doubt. At times people truly forget what they stand for and just go around believing what they hear. I wasn't trying to be mean, but I lived by the English Proverb, “He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones.” He wasn't exactly perfect either despite whether he meant his actions or not, so he had no right to judge others especially those he didn't know. The car ride to the hospital was awfully quiet, but as soon as we got there, Desiree was ready to receive Frank and they suited him up right away. It was going to take about four hours, so I decided to go have some coffee at the mall and buy a few things that Frank might need. While at it, I was surprised to receive a call from Charisma.

Ziphora: “Hey, sis. What's up?”

Charisma: “Hey, are you around? Keo and I were on our way to your house, but we found Gog'Khanyi and she said you were at the hospital with Frank.”

Ziphora: “Oh, I'm at the mall, having some coffee. He might be in there a while.”

Charisma: “Okay, order us some food. We're starving.”

Keo: “Speak for yourself.”

I chuckled as I hung up. I browsed through my Instagram and reminisced over pictures and videos that David posted of us a few months ago. It was rather bitter sweet, but hope was still alive within me. Before I knew it, my sisters had arrived and thank goodness I had ordered for them otherwise, Charisma was going to skin me alive.

Charisma: “Oh, thank goodness we made it. I don't think I'll be able to drive much longer. This baby is suffocating me.”

Keo: (chuckling) "Speak for yourself, babes. It must be your husband's genes. He is one tall guy."

Charisma: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, anyway, how are you, Zee? Are you coping?"

Ziphora: "I am, hey. I had totally forgotten that Jacob asked me to take the twins for a while. Gog'Khanyi brought them to my house today."

Keo: "Yeah, we were about to ask you about that. How are you going to juggle all of that?"

Ziphora: "Honestly, I don't know. I think maybe I should get him an in-house nurse. He is going to need all the care he can find."

Keo: "And Dineo bona? Why aren't they making any effort?"

Ziphora: “Well, he told me that once his money was finished, his wife and both Dineo and the sister kicked him out of the house – even after they found out he had cancer.”

Charisma: (shocked) “Heh (Huh)?! Are you sure he is even telling you the truth?”

Ziphora: “I don't know him, but I didn't get any of those vibes. I doubt he is lying, and you even saw how they reacted that day at the church, right?”

I had totally forgotten that I never told them about the mysterious text message from the unknown number. Perhaps it was time to come clean.

Ziphora: “By the way, I received a rather odd message while we were having lunch at the Zwane's.”

They both looked at me frowning and were stunned as they read the message.

Keo: (angrily) “Ziphora le wena! Why didn't you tell us?! How do you hide something so vital from us?!”

Ziphora: “Ke sorry (I'm sorry). I didn't want to worry you guys. I mean, we all have so much on our plates.”

Charisma: “Hehe. As for “You want to die for your church”. The nerve. Ga se (isn't it) Julia?”

Ziphora: “I suspected her, but a ke sure (I'm not sure). Julia was not really for text messages. She was going to call me first and leave me a million threats before actually sending such a vague message.”

Keo: “I'll get a PI on it. Next time say something please.”

Ziphora: “I will.”

Charisma: “In other news, Keo and I have a proposal for you.”

Ziphora: “Yes?”

Keo: “We were thinking that the three of us should divide the responsibility of taking care of Frank amongst us. It is not fair on you to take care of him alone.”

Wow, I was humbled. Honestly, I never thought that they would ever suggest such a thing.

Ziphora: “But what about Mama? Won't she be angry at you? What about your husbands?”

Charisma: “It's only fair, Zee. Just because you don't have your husband by your side right now does not mean you should take all the responsibility. We'll manage. Don't worry about a thing.”

I was honestly relieved and happy that they actually decided to come up with that on their own, without me even asking them. My sisters were truly a blessing.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

James 2:19 - “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

Phila

Doing this mission felt like hell, but at least Sbu was keeping tabs on Jacob and David, or shall I say Luis. Meanwhile Pierro had to fire an entire group of incompetent men since they just couldn't tell us when Diego was sending David into the country. That was a huge fuck up, I won't lie. Luckily, we found the mole and he was dealt with. I was honestly tired of this entire cat and mouse game and I prayed every night that it would come to an end. While Sbu was tapping phones and cameras in Porche's hotel, I had to do my job – my real job. I had a meeting with the President, who was booked at the same hotel as I was.

Thankfully, it was also one of Porsche's hotels. That husband of hers really set her up for life. I still miss her being my PA, but well, I couldn't keep a good woman down. I put on one of my best suits, said a prayer and headed down. Of course, the entire restaurant was booked out and only he, along with his team, a

few bodyguards were there. Of course, I had to act like an amateur. I mean, who goes to a meeting with his bodyguards, though? Insane.

President: (smiling) “Phila! How lovely to finally meet you!”

The bastard was short, fat, rather old and of course, he was ugly. He hugged me and literally forced me down since I was way taller than him. He kissed both my cheeks – Italian style. Mexicans also do that, which was rather concerning.

President: “How are you, Camarada (pal)?”

So we're speaking Spanish now? Why did that specific term sound so familiar to me? It rang a faint bell. I didn't want to seem suspicious of him, but he just made me look at him in another light. I felt so uncomfortable. I looked around and saw a woman – a girl rather. She was about 26 if not 25. More or less Ziphora's age. She looked so familiar. I found myself staring at her, but there was just something odd about her.

President: (chuckling) “She's a beaut, isn't she? She is my other, other half. My concubine if I should call her that.”

He was laughing profusely, while spitting as he was talking and he kept patting me on the back. Goodness, I really hated being touched – especially by people I didn't even know. Only Cubans and Mexicans loved the idea of Concubines – and mostly – druglords. Something was most definitely up with this President.

President: “Please, sit. I'll introduce you to her, since you have taken a liking to her. But I must warn you, I am very protective of her, she is the best and finest I have ever come across. Please, don't tell my wife.”

Once again he laughed profusely along with his team.
Annoying.

President: “Baby, come, meet Phila, The new Mayor of Gauteng. Phila, this is Dineo, my beautiful girlfriend. Not only is she beautiful, but she is also a doctor.”

That name really rung a bell. Dineo? A doctor? She looked familiar, but I was going to put a pin on that face sooner or later. I sat down.

Phila: "How are you, Dineo?"

Dineo: (faint smile) "Well, thanks and you, Mr. Mayor?"

Hostile, aren't we?

Phila: "I'm well, thanks. You look so familiar. Do I perhaps know you from somewhere?"

Dineo: "I don't think so. Maybe you saw me on tv or at church when my lovely sister was preaching her usual, fake shit."

And then it hit me.

Phila: "Your sister?"

Dineo: “Yes, Ziphora Mosue is my sister. Well, half-breed sister.”

I was a flabbergasted. What on earth was this girl doing sitting alongside the President? She probably noticed my shock.

Dineo: (chuckling) “I know, a lot of people look at me with the same jealousy you have written on your face right now. Ziphora is not the only one who should get all the luck.”

I chuckled with amazement. Was this chick serious? Me? A whole Mamba, jealous of a 20 something year old petty little doctor? Wow. I chose to just ignore her.

President: “Phila, I'll be having the roasted beef with mash and extra meat. What about you?”

Yep, as big as he was, his meal choice was no surprise to me at all.

Phila: "I'll just have the hake with salad."

President: "Hmm, watching your figure, aren't you?"

Phila: (chuckling) "Something like that."

He poured me some red wine, but I gladly declined and resorted to some whiskey instead. I wasn't about to have him drug me or something. I didn't like drinking from bottles that were already opened.

President: "So, Phila, I would like to speak some business with you
if that's okay."

Phila: "Of course, I mean I did come here for business, didn't I?"

President: "Yes, Dineo, please excuse us."

She didn't seem to pleased.

Dineo: (frowning) "But baby, I thought - "

President: (angrily) "Don't make me repeat myself, puta (bitch)!"

Okay, this man was either in love with Mexican movies, or he was most definitely mixed up with the Mexican cartel. She reluctantly stood up and walked away sulking.

President: "I like being straight forward. I know about the real you, you know, your other life."

Phila: (frowning) "I don't follow."

President: "Come on, Mamba. You and I both know what you do in your spare time. You know, killing people."

Usually people I didn't know who called me that would give me a cold chill down my spine, but that idiot was really a small fish in a big pond, even though he was the President. He was barking up the wrong tree.

Phila: (chuckling) “Mr. President, according to my knowledge, this meeting was for us to discuss the legalities of buying all the hostels in Jo'burg and turning them into safe houses for the people. I mean, your email header stated that, unless I was mistaken?”

President: “Obviously I couldn't be direct about such things in an email. You of all people should know just how dangerous paper trail is. Look, I know you are a powerful man, Mamba. And I have heard a thing or two about you going to that brothel just down the road in Pretoria West. I know you know a thing or two about what happens with those bitches there. I want in.”

Now that most definitely sent chills down my spine.

Phila: (frowning) “Askies (excuse me)? You think I'm a trafficker, Mr. President?”

President: “Oh, no, no, no. Don't put it like that, man. Let's call it pimping rather. I want in. I know Diego Rodriquez is the man for such things. I want to own an empire bigger than him. I want to overrule him and I believe that you and your brother can help me.”

Why the fuck didn't I record this meeting?! I could only hope that Sbu was recording it. I couldn't act totally against it at that time, otherwise I wouldn't make it til the next morning, that was for sure.

Phila: “I see. What exactly do you want to do? I mean, do you even have experience in such things?”

President: “Not really, but Dineo can be the first girl I test it out with.”

Wow, just wow.

Phila: "Isn't she your concubine?"

President: "Yes, but come on, Phila, you of all people should know that family comes first. Putas (bitches) come last. I am willing to pull out all the stops. I hear he makes a killing – up to R1 million a girl – depending on what the clients want. Come on, I am not as well connected as you are and I want in. What do you say?"

My initial plan was to Put Diego out of business and actually kill him, but then I remembered MaMasango and Malome John's words; "You will become President one day. The President will reveal the real him – he is not what he seems." Could this be their way of revealing all that to me? What kind of fucked up world was I living in?

Phila: "Let me sleep on it. Is that okay?"

President: "As long as you don't keep me hanging for too long."

Phila: "Please, excuse me, I need the bathroom."

President: "Coo, hermano (bro)."

That was it! That man was most definitely a friend of Diego's. I couldn't understand if he wanted to trap me or what his deal was, but that was the signal. I quickly went to the male toilets to take a breather. The moment I walked out, I found Dineo practically waiting for me.

Phila: "It's rude to stand outside the opposite gender's toilet, you know."

Dineo: (chuckling) "It's not like you're not used to it."

She blatantly tried to throw herself at me, but I shoved her off me.

Dineo: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, you are so obsessed with that fat wife of yours, but I can give you more."

Phila: “Fat wife? Can't you come up with something far more original than that? Darling, my wife might be “fat” according to you and most probably the rest of South Africa, but she is the rarest gem I'll ever find on this earth. I chose her – meaning I love her more than anything. I'd die for her. Unlike you, who is and will always be second best with the President. You're wasting your young pussy on that old man.”

Dineo: (laughing) “You're just jealous.”

Phila: “Honey, I'm a billionaire, I have more money than that fat fuck of yours. I have no time being jealous over little girls. Do you see why he won't ever leave his wife for you? If I were you, I'd pack my bags before he ships you right along with the girls he is planning on shipping overseas.”

Dineo: (laughing) “Patrick would never do that to me. He loves me too much. Yes, he has tried trafficking a few girls, and I do the work for him – so he would never sell me. I'm too precious.”

She was dumber than I ever thought.

Phila: “Wow, you're clearly even more stupid than I ever thought.”

I was about to walk away, until she said something startling.

Dineo: “Do give my dear sister a message, would you?”

I stopped and looked at her.

Dineo: “Tell her that Faith is now living the life she has always wanted.”

I had no fucking idea what she meant by that, but I wasn't about to tell Ziphora such madness. Luke 6:43 says; “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.” Proverbs 14:30 says; “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.”

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“Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.”

Romans 12:12 - “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. “

One week later...

Jacob

I was rather saddened that even after the oddly fruitful conversation I had with “David”, he never called me back after that. I took the time to catch up on time lost with my baby girls. They had settled into a good routine with Ziphora, one I could never be able to master. She had told me that she and her sisters were taking turns to take care of their dad. I honestly thought that it was a brilliant idea, I mean it would give them time to rehash everything that had happened, and just fix what was broken. I was proud of the strong woman that Ziphora had become; the church had turned out greater than before – even though we had heard that Selina had a new

church of her own just down the road. I wasn't bothered much, because I knew that Ziphora had a calling for that. I felt so guilty not telling Ziphora about what was actually going on. I mean, the least I could do was tell her that her husband was alive and well – even though he was brainwashed by the Mexican drug Cartel. I could never understand these Pablo Escobar wannabe's.

I unfortunately didn't and that never bothered me. I always saw myself in Sbu, to be honest. He enjoyed working with his brother, but behind the scenes. He never really wanted the big piece of the pie, and thankfully Rachel understood that as his wife. Apparently he was married to a very twisted woman, Sharon, the mother of his twins. Then there is Thato, whose mother was Kele, but she died. And then he and Rachel had Vusimuzi, and now they were expecting another set of twins. How I wished that God would bless me with a good woman, but sadly I was about to meet my end and I was grateful for the life I had lived nonetheless. While I was consumed with my thoughts, I received an unexpected call from a number I couldn't recognize.

Jacob: “Thapelo, Hello?”

David: “Thapelo, hi. It's Luis. We met a week ago at the Aphrodisiac.”

I had no idea what he wanted, but him calling me meant that there was a big breakthrough.

Jacob: “Hi, Luis. It's nice to hear from you.”

David: “I could say the same about you. Listen, I'm coming to South Africa in two days, will you be able to meet up with me? I have a great proposal for you.”

I think the fact that it was my brother, I ignored all the red flags.

Jacob: “Sure, you can just text me the time and place and I'll be there.”

David: “Sure. I'll keep in touch. Bye.”

That was very short and to the point. I was happy nonetheless. I had completely forgotten that Sbu had tapped my phone in case such happened. Immediately after I hung up, I received a call from Sbu.

Jacob: "Sho sho, Sbu."

Sbu: (frantic) "What the fuck, Jacob?"

Jacob: "Huh?"

Sbu: "You never gave David your number, and you never even told him that you were a "trafficker", so judging by the way he sounded, do you know what this means?"

Fuck, I didn't even note that.

Jacob: "Shit. I'm fucked."

Sbu: "Let's not panic for now, I'll tell Phila to get everything ready. For now, you just make sure you cover your tracks. And please, don't get sloppy – he is still brainwashed."

Without further ado, he hung up. Fuck, I couldn't exactly call "David" and ask him if he actually meant that we should hook up to talk about which girls we should traffic, now could I? Which means somehow, someone told him about me and Nova's place. Something didn't feel right, everything was just off and I could feel that it was about to go down.

David

My name is Luis Garcia, well – so they say. I don't remember anything about my life from when I was young up until now. I don't even remember anything about the car accident they all claim I had before I woke up. According to them

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I was in a year-long comatose state. Apparently Diego saved me from killing myself, and for that I owe him my life. It feels as if I am living a movie, because I do not remember anything. I hear what they all say to me, I really do, but I can't believe

it. The life that I am living feels foreign – I feel like a battery operated robot. I haven't been myself for a while; I keep getting flashbacks of things I don't remember, and I suffer from massive migraines, so Diego hired a Nero-surgeon to take care of me. Nonetheless, she is a very beautiful woman. She is from South Africa, she was initially hired to take care of me, but I found myself falling for her. I don't even know why, but probably because she understands me and doesn't treat me like some sort of object. I was in my room when she walked in with breakfast on a tray.

Faith: (smiling) “Good morning, Sunshine. Did you have a good sleep?”

David: (sigh) “Yes, but I just can't get rid of the nightmares. I keep dreaming of a man I don't even know. I can't even see his face, but he keeps calling me David. Is that perhaps my second name or something?”

Faith: (laughing) “Nonsense. You are Luis Garcia, or have you forgotten?”

David: (sigh) "I can't seem to believe it. Look, can you get me stronger pills? My head tends to get heavier after midday."

Faith: "I can only give you what Diego instructs me to do."

I held her hand softly, and stared at her deep in the eyes.

David: "Please."

Faith: (sigh) "Okay, but not a word to Diego."

Diego just stormed in without knocking. He always leaves me annoyed. I really needed to talk to him about that.

Diego: "Don't tell Diego what?"

Faith: (nervously) "Oh, uh - "

David: (interrupted) "Don't tell Diego that I am still suffering from serious migraines. It is getting worse, Diego."

Diego: "Luis, you are family. I won't let you suffer like that. Faith can work something out. I have other news, I hope they won't trigger your migraines."

David: (frowning) "What?"

Diego: "Faith, leave us."

As usual, she hurried out and left us alone.

Diego: "I'm afraid Thapelo isn't what you thought he was."

David: (frowning) "I don't understand."

Diego: (sigh) "He is Hashib's son."

I don't know, but whenever I heard that name, I just became angered – totally bewildered.

Diego: “Yes, she sent him to go undercover for her.”

David: (breathing heavily) “So what do I do? Should I kill him?”

Diego: (chuckling) “Nonsense, you go ahead with the deal. You make him introduce you to everyone he knows and as soon as you get all girls and all his contacts – we trick and kill him. But, we have to go for Hashib first. She has crossed line, amigo (my friend).”

David: “I understand. I shall prepare myself for when I leave within two days. Let me go shower.”

Diego: (smiling) “That's my boy.”

Faith

I can't believe it. Diego has been using David to do his dirty dealings all this time while everyone thinks he has gone missing. How dare he?! I mean I wasn't perfect at all, but he was worse. I found myself eavesdropping, completely forgetting about walking away as fast as I could. While David went to shower, Diego was the only one who walked out of the bedroom. As soon as he saw me, he pinned me against the wall with his tight grip around my neck.

Diego: “Were you sent by someone to spy on me, Puta (Bitch)?!”

Faith: “No... I swear. I only accepted the job. I had no idea you had David - “

Diego: (angrily) “How do you know his real name?!”

Faith: “Because... He was married to a friend of mine. I swear, Diego. I would do nothing to upset you. I love David, I mean Luis. I love him.”

Diego: “So, you say you know his so-called wife? What else do you know?”

I had to lie to get myself out of that situation.

Faith: “I know everyone you hate – Julia, Mamba, Cobra. I know them all. I can get you access. Just please – don't kill me.”

Diego: “Faith, I brought you here because you are fit doctor and you are highly recommended by Presidente. Otherwise, I would not have hired you. I'm very specific about who I hire. Now you are falling for my right hand man. I can't afford mistakes. You blow it – I kill it. You understand?!”

Faith: (nodding frantically) “Chrystal. I swear.”

He let me go while I coughed out in pain. I had no idea that it was going to get this hectic. What the fuck did I get myself into? But then, on the other hand, I get to have David – the one thing Ziphora can't have at this point.

“And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

Two days later...

Jacob

I could barely sleep since I had spoken to Sbu two days ago. I kept having a million thoughts in my mind. I knew my death was inevitable, but I still had to go ahead with the mission. It wasn't easy, but I had hoped that it would be worth it. It just had to be. We put everything in place – all our plans in motion. David was going to meet me right here in Pretoria, where I'd take him to Nova's place. He would choose his favourite girl, or he might even take all of them. I just didn't have a very good feeling about it, but the show had to go on. All I could do at that time was pray. Before I left the house, I knelt down and said a heartfelt prayer to my God.

Jacob: "Father God, I humble myself before you. Lord, you know very well that I am no saint, I am not perfect, oh, Lord, but I do have massive faith in you. My love for you overflows like a cup filled with ever lasting water. I know exactly what fate holds for me and I know what I have to do. All I ask is that you protect my brother, for he is not who he thinks he is at the moment. May he get the chance to come back to his wife and finally have a family. May my daughters be raised to be great women and may I always be by their side in spirit. I have made peace with what is to come, but all I ask is that I die a painless death. I pray it in Jesus' mighty name. Amen."

Immediately after my prayer, I received a call from an unknown International number. I knew that it was David.

David: "Thabo, it's Luis. I am on my way as we speak. I will land in approximately 20 minutes. Is everything set?"

Jacob: "Yes, everything is all set."

David: "I'll see you soon."

He cut the call without making any usual chit-chat. I figured that perhaps he was around people, but he wasn't as friendly as he was that day, which made me wonder. I had a very weird feeling that something felt rather offish. On the other hand, Sbu and Phila were waiting on me.

Sbu: (knocking) "Eh, Jay, we're waiting on you."

Jacob: "Sure, sure. I'm coming."

I opened the door and found Sbu waiting.

Sbu: "Be uyenzani is'kathi so (what were you doing for so long)?"

Jacob: "Ah, I was praying."

Sbu: (sadly) "I feel you, brother. Come, asivaye (let's go). Everything will work out just fine."

I just nodded as Phila joined us and we were on our way. Nova was already briefed and she had been ready. She wasn't complaining with the sudden changes of us having to use her brothel as a decoy and the extra money did her good. As soon as we arrived at the gate, she opened for us.

Nova: "You guys took so long!"

She looked rather anxious.

Phila: "We were a little caught up, Nova, sorry about that. What's wrong? Is everything okay?"

Nova: "No, girls just left. They said they no want to do this no more."

Jacob: (frowning) "Which girls are you referring to, Nova?"

Nova: "Valerie, Prudence and the other one."

Phila: "Tasha."

Nova: "Yes, that one."

Shit.

Jacob: "They are supposed to be undercover, Nova. How did you let them go just like that without calling us?"

Nova: "I thought they'd be back. Something feels off, Jacob. I can feel it in my bones. I haven't felt this in long time, but this time – I think someone is going to die."

Sbu tried calling Prudence first, but it went straight to voicemail. He did the same with Valerie and Tasha but both their phones went to voicemail as well. I had a very bad feeling. There was no time to do damage control. Before we even knew it, David had arrived. My phone rang and it was him letting me know that he had followed the location and he was right outside.

Nova: (panicking) “I have very bad feeling, Jacob. You fix this!”

David walked in along with two of his bodyguards and he just looked so weird – so stiff and so unfriendly. The way he looked at me made me realize that he knew something. He was looking around the place almost as if he was inspecting it for faults somehow. We couldn't even pick up much from the bugs we had planted in his room back in Cape Town, other than the fact that he was indeed working for Diego. Diego had told him to send him the pictures of the three girls that caught his eye – of which were Valerie, Prudence and Tasha. It was seemingly odd that they just decided to tell Nova they wanted out without telling us instead. The Bureau also never mentioned anything. I had to get to the bottom of that. While Phila and Sbu made themselves scarce, David wasted no time.

David: “Thabo, let's get down to business. Where are the girls?”

Jacob: “Nova, please go get the girls.”

She nodded nervously and headed upstairs. David didn't say much – except look at me sternly. He looked me right in the eye while Nova was gone. In that little time, I saw a very devious person, a rather dangerous and vicious person – something David never could have been. Two minutes later, Nova came back down with our other decoys.

Nova: (smiling nervously) “Mr. Garcia, here are lovely ladies. Top grade – just for you.”

He took a good look at them – one by one – from head to toe. He didn't seem very impressed.

David: (shaking head) “This is not what I had in mind. I mean, they're not bad, Thabo, but surely you can do better. *Dónde están las tres hermosas mujeres* (Where are the three beautiful women)?”

Jacob: “I'm not sure what you mean, *senor* (sir). I mean, you asked for beautiful *mejures* (women), and that is exactly what I got for you.”

David: (chuckling) “What is wrong with you? Are you pendeja (stupid)? Thabo, you know very well we spoke of the three women. I want them – not these girls. I want women, real mejures (women).”

Jacob: “Well, I'm sorry, but this is the best I can do for now.”

David: “I tell you what, you can come to me. Bring the girls to me – back in Mexico. I would hate to be on Diego's wrong side, Thabo. I'll give you a week. One week. I'll take that as a trip to explore South Africa, but after that if you don't deliver – I'm afraid you'll have to explain to Diego why you lied to us.”

I felt as if that last statement was a double meaning. He actually knew the truth. He knew exactly who I was. I had no words – I was speechless.

David: “Adios Amigo (Goodbye, friend). I'll see you in one week. Nova.”

Nova smiled nervously and we both waited for him to leave the yard completely.

Nova: "Oh, thank God he is gone."

Jacob: "Nova, you said Val and the girls told you that they wanted out. How exactly did they tell you?"

Nova: "They said on phone."

Jacob: "What?!"

As surprised as I was

Sbu and Phila rushed down the stairs.

Sbu: "We have a problem."

Jacob: "What is it?"

Sbu: "It seems as if Valerie, Prudence and Tasha have gone missing."

Phila: "Abducted is more like it."

And there it was. That bad feeling I had before David walked in had overwhelmed me all over again. I didn't feel good about that at all.

Jacob: "Can you trace their phones?"

Sbu: "It is difficult. I'll get Tony to get on it ASAP."

Whatever the outcome was going to be, I had a very bad feeling.

Ziphora

It had been nearly a week since Jacob had brought the twins to come live with me and honestly, I had a great time looking after

them. I actually felt like their mom, you know. We had a really good routine – even with Frank around two weeks in a month. It was my turn to have him home, and honestly, I had grown fond of him already. I hadn't spoken to his wife yet and I really didn't want to. I also hadn't been speaking to my mom as often as I used to and I wasn't too happy about that. Nonetheless, I had a great time playing mom to my beautiful twins. Frank was adjusting to his chemo really well, and by the look of things it seemed as if the cancer was subsiding. I hadn't returned back to work, with good reason, though, but I felt that I needed to get back on that bus as soon as possible. I didn't spend 7 years in Medical School just to let that dream die. While Frank was playing with the twins, I was making lunch. I heard a rather familiarly stern knock on the door. There was only one person who could bypass my security and knock like that. I headed straight to the door and as I was about to reach the door, she opened and walked in.

Ziphora: (surprised) “Mama. What a surprise. O dirang fa (what are you doing here)?”

Susan: “I came to visit, bathong (goodness).”

She just walked right past me and headed straight to the lounge. My biggest fear had finally arrived – the moment my mother, Susan the warrior finally faced her cheating, deadbeat ex- husband after years of not speaking to him. It was about to be a war.

Susan

I had quite a lot of time to think. I had even more time to mourn all those years I had endured from Frank. To be honest, I still loved him, but not as a lover anymore. I had moved on from him a long time ago, but those memories just never fade. Both the good and the bad memories. I walked in and completely ignored Ziphora. She had always been an obedient child and she knew better than to ask me what on earth I was about to do. I saw him playing with the twins, so carefree and so pure. I stood there and just watched him for a while. The thought of him doing that for someone else's children and not ours – the very same children he fathered with me! It took me a very long time to come to terms with the fact that he was never a father period to Ziphora had always eaten at me. He must have saw me staring at him.

Frank: (Brief smile) "Susan."

He looked a lot better than he did a few weeks before. He actually looked like he was at death's door the last time I had seen him. He still looked handsome, but he was still an asshole.

Susan: "Frank, Rra marete (dickhead)."

Frank: (embarrassed) "I deserve that. I honestly do."

Susan: (chuckling) "O nale sebeta shem (you have some audacity shame). So, what's it like?"

Frank: "What's what like?"

Susan: "What is it like pretending to be a father to kids who aren't even yours so many decades after you abandoned your own? Oh, wait, you already have a back-up family with Lydia."

He looked down and I guess he was speechless.

Susan: "O star, (you're a star), hey."

Frank: "Susan, I really didn't want to apologize like this, but - "

Susan: (interrupting) "Oh, no. You never planned to apologize at all. Had you not fallen ill, would you have apologized the way you are apologizing to me right now?! Lydia yena wa mogwete o kae (Where is that bitch Lydia)?! I mean, you left an entire family and went to her. Surely she should be the one nursing you back to health."

Frank: "She wants nothing to do with me, and honestly, I want nothing to do with her."

I felt so much rage creep up on me.

Susan: (angrily) "Do you have any idea how much you have hurt me, frank?! How much you have ruined my life?! My life was literally on a standstill up until Ziphora turned 21. I had to play both father and mother to her because you decided gore nyo

ya Lydia e monate go feta bana ba gao (Lydia's pussy was more interesting than your own children)! I had a lot of time to get over it and believe me – I thought I was over it – I truly did, until you pitched up here! Why o sa kopa Modimo a go tseye once (why didn't you ask God to just take you once and for all)?! You men have it so easy, you know? You run away when shit gets real and then when it hits the fan you come back running as if Life is all about Khumbulekhaya. You don't even realize the extent of the damage you have caused. Had you never fallen ill, had Lydia never deserted your filthy ass, would you have realized the importance of family, the importance of being there for your family?! Gona jwale o omelletse (Right now you're all dried-up). You know no woman will ever want you now, and you decided to become a burden to my children! The ones you deserted!”

I felt my tears burn my cheeks so badly. I honestly couldn't remember the last time I cried like that. It was so painful, but rather relieving to get all of that off my chest. I truly never thought that I'd ever be able to cough it all up again.

Frank: (teary) “Susan, I am so sorry, moratuwa (my love).”

Susan: "Don't you even call me that! I know this isn't what you need in your state, but I needed to do that."

Frank: "I'm really sorry, Su - "

Susan: "I'll go help Ziphora with the food."

I left him sitting there in shock as I proceeded to the kitchen.

Julia Mosue

I finally managed to get Selina her own church. Of course it didn't come cheap and she would have to repay me, but anything to make Ziphora's life hell. I had gone there to inspect the church. I had to wear sunglasses because I hadn't been sleeping so well. I had even bought a new house, but Mac just didn't want to disappear.

Julia: "This is the church I was talking about. This is going to rock that bitch's world like no other."

Selina: "I second that."

Mac: "I told you to be careful and stop what you're doing, Julia. This is your very last warning."

Julia: (angrily) "For fuck sake's, Mac! Leave me the fuck alone!"

Selina: (surprised) "Julia, o shap (are you okay)?"

Mac: "Tell her, Julia. Tell her you're losing your mind. I mean, you're even swearing in the house of the Lord."

Julia: (screaming) "Fuck!"

Selina: (worried) "Julia, are you sure you're okay?"

Julia: "I'll see you some other time."

As I was walking out, Mac was nagging me as usual.

Mac: “Julia, I am warning you. Stop this church madness.”

Julia: “I have made my choice, Mac. Leave me the fuck alone.”

Mac: “Well then, you'll have to live with the consequences.”

I tried to block him out of my mind as much as possible – despite him being right there. I could see him, smell him, feel him. It was just surreal. I tried everything to get rid of him, but the fucker just wouldn't leave. While driving, a truck came out of nowhere and crashed right into my car. It happened so fast and I honestly thought I would pass out, or something, but I was wide awake. I was screaming in agony when all I could feel was agonizing pain in my legs.

Julia: (screaming) “Yooh! Modimo (God)! I am in pain.”

Mac: “This is only the beginning of agony for you, Julia. I warned you, countlessly, but you just didn't listen. You have angered your ancestors, Julia. This is war.”

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.”

Two days later...

Jacob

I hadn't been able to sleep much, ever since Val, Prudence and tasha were actually declared missing. I felt so guilty because that was our slip up. We shouldn't have let that happen. I mean, they were our responsibility from the get-go. I was so worried because the week was nearing its end and I had to go “deliver” them to David and Diego. How was I going to do that when I had no girls to deliver in the first place? I was so restless, but seeing my girls just made me happy. I had decided to resign a month ago, and to my surprise my colleagues were planning a rather heartfelt farewell for me. I never expected it since I hadn't been working with them for that long, but they had grown really close to my heart. I was surely going to miss being part of them – part of the earth rather. While Sbu and Phila were busy trying to track down the girls, I decided to go to work. I found Desiree right outside my office and she greeted

me with a genuine hug as always. She had always been one of the most friendliest staff members around there, unlike Faith. She was too flirty for my liking. I didn't want to tell Ziphora, but it was actually a good idea that she was no longer part of that team. While I had expected something small, they had actually gone all out; with a really nice and big cake, some drinks and great food.

Desiree: “Dr. Mosue, it has been such an honour to work with you. Please, say a few words. You have earned it.”

Desiree was actually one of the few that I had the honour in mentoring. She was a fast learner and I had immense faith in her – despite her being an Oncologist and Faith being the Neurologist. Faith was not that interested in learning – despite her having the brains. At times a bad attitude could ruin your chances at a good job.

Jacob: “Oh, come on. I am not good at speeches, really.”

Desiree: “No one is, but I would really love to record this memory. It is not every day one gets to work with one of the best Neurosurgeons in the country.”

They all let out a chuckle, making me feel rather emotional.

Jacob: “Alright. But honestly, I am so bad at speeches, I couldn't even speak at my own wedding. It is better if you ask me questions, which I'll respond to.”

Desiree: “Very well, then. What will you miss most about this place?”

Jacob: (sadly) “Honestly, I'm going to miss everything about this place; the guards greeting me in the morning before I go up the elevator, Ma Mavis, who always offers me a vetkoek for free, my amazing team of Neurologists, the nurses, and most importantly, the cafeteria food and who can forget the gossip!”

They all laughed.

Desiree: (chuckling) “Well, we all know what you're going to miss about this place, but who are you going to miss the most?”

They all laughed, while I forced the tears back in.

Jacob: “I'll miss you the most, of course, Des.”

They all laughed once again while she took a playful bow. Honestly, I will miss her. She was still new in the field, and reminded me a lot of the person I was when I started working as a Neurologist. She was beaming with hope and pride, while mine was slowly dying. It was supposed to be a good day, but I felt rather disheartened. At times, life could be really unfair, but nonetheless, I could honestly say that I lived a good life. Not a perfect life, but a good one.

Desiree: “What advice could you give some of us who are still newbies?”

That question was innocent, and mostly asked by a lot of interviewers, but if people actually took a good minute and

thought about it, they would realize that it had a deeper meaning.

Jacob: “Honestly, I'd say Live each day as if it is your last. Life is too short to live the same day twice; if you can't save a patient, don't beat yourself up about it. Life is not about saving the world in one go, but all about saving as many as you can – one day at a time. Love one another; even if you feel that you won't manage, but learn to love; love hard and love like it might be the last time you ever love again. True love is indeed hard to find – more especially with this demanding job. Love your job, but also remember that family comes first above all. You're never too old to learn – even if you have way too much experience. Don't be fooled, a newbie could always teach you a thing or two. Stay humble – for you never know what tomorrow holds. And last but not least, love God and always put Him first. He is the reason you are in this position in the first place. Remember that when you die, you don't get a bigger or better grave because of your qualification – it stays right here.”

I most probably said a mouthful, but it came straight from the heart nonetheless. I could see a few of them crying, but I honestly was never good at public speaking – ever. Unlike

David, my brother. They said their goodbyes and enjoyed the meal and drinks and I honestly couldn't bring myself up to be around them knowing that it was actually my very last speech to my very own colleagues. As I was about to walk out of the ward with my box of valuables that I decided to take with me, I heard one of the nurses stop me. Her name was Dimakatso, she was also new like Desiree and she was a darling of note. One could never fault her on anything.

Dimakatso: (smiling) "Doctor, are you leaving so soon already?"

Jacob: "Yes, I have a lot of catching up to do with my daughters."

Dimakatso: "I see. I wanted to ask you if you knew that your mother was brought in two days ago?"

I frowned in shock as I stared at her.

Jacob: "Brought in for what?"

Dimakatso: “She was involved in a car accident. She is in Ward 4, if you'd like to see her. I know you two hadn't been getting along, but I just thought that you'd like to see her.”

She spoke as if she knew what I was going through, but I decided to thank her for the rather unpleasant news as I walked away. I got into the lift since I used to work at Ward 7, as I was contemplating pressing the buttons

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I decided to leave and head straight to the parking lot. Whilst packing my box into the car, something told me to go back and go see the witch. I really wanted to leave right there and then, but then, I would never forgive myself if I didn't face her. I locked the car, and headed straight back into the lift and pressed floor 5 on the lift. I was anxious, understandably. Had it not been for her, my life would not have been such a mess – David would still be David instead of some Russian Mafia robot and I would have most probably been a lot more sane than I was. The closer I got to her ward, the more rage started creeping up on me like a thief in the night. That was the reason why people would say that therapy is important. All those unresolved feelings just came back all at once. A nurse at the Nurse's bay alerted me on which route to take to her ward, and as soon as I found it, I stood right outside, with my heart

literally beating right out of my chest. I took a deep breath – as shaky as I was. I stepped closer and saw her. She looked so helpless, so weak – so unlike Julia Mosua. The mighty bitch. I recalled that one time I fell off my bike. I cried so hard and all she said was, “Jacob, life is hard and it won't get any less harder because you feel pain. Get up and wipe those tears off your face.” As soon as David started riding his bike, he also fell just as hard as I did on that particular day, and she just rushed towards him like he was a newborn. I felt so much pain within me, but I never felt any hatred towards my brother. He was my only sibling and we loved each other. I found the courage to get closer to her. She didn't notice me because she was fighting with the tv channels. Both her legs were high up in cement. They looked as if they were incomplete – rather amputated.

Jacob: (softly) “Ma - Julia.”

She got a bit frightened and I could tell she hadn't had much sleep in most probably a few days. She looked a real mess and a bit disoriented. She took one good look at me and as soon as she realized it was me, she seemed rather disinterested. That familiar feeling of pain crept up on me again as I thought that she would show even the smallest ounce of regret, love and perhaps affection.

Julia: "Oh, it's you. O batla eng (What are you doing here)?"

Jacob: (heartbroken) "I just came to see you."

Julia: "Why?"

Jacob: "What do you mean why?"

Julia: "I mean why? I haven't been a good mother to you all your life, so why have you come to see me? Have you come here to gloat? Well, then, I have no legs any more, Jacob. I won't be able to walk any more if that is what you mean. I am completely, fucking useless now! The mighty Julia has fallen! You can leave now."

She stared right back at her tv, but I could tell that was all an act. Surely no mother could be that cruel to her son. The son she bore right from her womb?!

Jacob: (teary) “Mme (Ma), despite you being in this cruel situation – you still don't see the need to at least pretend to love me?”

She increased the television volume – angering me to the point of no return.

Jacob: (angrily) “At least tell me why! Why do you hate me so much, mother? Is it because I'm just not good enough?! Why?!”

Julia: (teary) “Because!”

She paused but I didn't have that long to live anyway, so she might as well have told me.

Jacob: “Tell me! Tell me, dammit!”

Julia: (shouting) “Because you resemble him! You look like him! You talk like him! For fuck sakes you even smell like him!”

I was left stunned, as I had no words left to breathe out.

Julia: “You know, he used to grin like you whenever I said no to him. My very own father! Can you believe the very first time he touched me was when he gave me a bath when I was just 8 years old?! Fucking 8 years old, Jacob! He moved his hand all the way down to my crotch and fingered me. Imagine that. All he said was, “you're ripe enough now, my baby. I can't wait to feed you my entire body.” Who says that to an 8 year old?!”

I didn't understand why she was even telling me all that shit.

Jaocb: “But, I was still undeserving of your abuse, Mme (mom). Why was David treated differently? Why did you love him so much that you ended up doing exactly the same as what your own father did to you?!”

Julia: (shouting) “Stop it. I won't explain myself to you. I don't have to. Besides, you're alive and well and you have become a doctor. You have kids. Isn't that enough for you?”

That cold response.

Jacob: “You will rot in hell when no one is watching. Everyone will forget about you.”

Julia: “While you're at it, tell your fucking father to leave me alone! He is following me everywhere!”

That most probably explained her erratic behaviour.

Jacob: “Well, in that case, I hope he follows you and tortures you around until the day you die. I hope you actually die a slow, painful death. May God have mercy on you because I most certainly don't.”

With that said, I left the mighty Julia that had fallen to a pit and couldn't get herself out of it. No one could save her – not even God. She clearly hadn't become remorseful. That was too painful for me to bear – that entire conversation, but I was just glad that I could manage to face her. I knew then that my conscience was clear; I had done everything in my power to be

a good son to a mother who didn't even want me – a mother who compared me to her molester father. It was the most painful conversation I had ever had with anyone in my entire life, but it had to be done.

Ziphora

It had been two days since my mother had spoken to Frank ever since he came back into my life. She was hurt, to be honest, but she confronted him. I think the mere fact that she had confronted him after so long had taken its toll on her heart, but it had to be done. After her intense conversation with Frank, she went back to her old self. She seemed so free and she was okay with him. She managed to have a decent conversation with him – but not too deep to get to the good old days. Healing is a lifetime journey. It takes immense time and effort, and only once you feel that you are ready to accept help, that is when it will happen. Until then, you'd be held captive in the past and in your mind. She had come up with the idea that we should take the twins out of for a day out; a fancy little picnic rather. Words couldn't explain how grateful I was that my mother was finally back on board and that she was hands on with the twins. Frank was also coming with, so it was really good to actually see how good he was with kids. I decided not

to dwell on the past, but rather on the time I had left with him. I was happy, nonetheless. Whilst they were preparing for the picnic, I decided to drop by the mall to get a few things from Woolies for our picnic. She opted to wait in the car with Frank and the twins, while I quickly rushed over there. I didn't really know what to take, so I decided to take a little bit of everything, and some wine of course. A little bit of alcohol never hurt anyone. While I was in the snack aisle, I heard a very familiar voice.

Voice: "Yes, I'd like two of these please. My fiancee adores roses, I just don't really know which ones she likes better between red and yellow roses."

My heart was beating faster. No, it couldn't be. I slowly decided to turn and check the person I suspected. Indeed, God must have been testing me. Could it really be?

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- “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Ziphora

I found myself so dumbstruck that I couldn't even move. I was staring at him without any words left to say. It felt as if my entire body was failing me. He was speaking to that lady as if he was planning a nice surprise for me. I mean, he was a flower person and my favourite colour was indeed yellow, so perhaps the roses were part of his surprise. I loved that about David. He was different – the good kind of different. I never knew what I'd get with him. He seemed so different, though, I mean he was wearing glasses, his face looked a bit hardened and his beard had grown so much and he had left it unshaven. That was the total opposite of him, but I didn't even dwell on it. I figured it was part of his disguise or his surprise or something. I stared at him with tears flowing in my eyes. He must have noticed my eyes hovering all over him from behind when he turned and oddly, he didn't smile back. He frowned instead. Right there and then, I remembered the verse Isaiah 40:31 - “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount

up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

David: (frowning) “May I help you?”

I chuckled with a tear frankly escaping my eye. I dropped everything I had in my hand and rushed towards him without warning. I had been praying for so long and I had started to slowly lose faith and then that happened! God indeed worked in mysterious ways. I hugged him so tightly and let the rest of my tears flow. I opened the gate and just let the river flow. He didn't seem like the David I knew – he was so cold, so confused and so weird.

David: (frowning) “I'm sorry, miss, but are you okay?”

I broke the hug and stared him right in the eye.

Ziphora: (teary) “It's me, David! Your wife – Ziphora! You can honestly stop with the jokes, now. Oh, my goodness, I'm so glad to see you.”

Oddly, David pulled me away from him and frowned at me. He genuinely looked at me as if I was some ghost.

David: "I'm sorry, do I know you?"

I looked him right in the eye and he looked dead serious. What the fuck? Did he honestly lose his memory?

Ziphora: (surprised) "David, it's me. How come you don't remember me?"

David: "I'm really sorry, Miss, but I think you have me mistaken for the wrong person."

Ziphora: (laughing) "Honestly, David. You can stop with the jokes, now. This is not funny anymore. I know you were buying the roses for me. You know very well my favourite colour is yellow."

And then, he started using a spanish accent.

David: (frowning) “Lo siento señorita (I'm sorry, miss), but I think you might have mistaken me for someone else. The roses I was about to get were for my fiancée. I have no idea what kind of colour she likes, hence I chose two different bunches.”

I looked at him and he was dead serious. And right there and then, the hope I had a few minutes before was shattered like glass splattering right onto the hardened floor. I felt so confused, so embarrassed. People were staring at me, and it kind of looked as if I was crazy and most probably mentally unstable. I mean, it baffled me how they just didn't recognize my David, but he had a pretty good disguise at hand. He smiled at me briefly, leaving an awfully achy feeling in my heart. My heart was torn to shreds in an instant, and sadly, the person who did that had absolutely no idea.

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “Oh, I'm so sorry, I honestly must have mistaken you for my dead husband.”

Yes, I said dead so that people would just stop staring. I felt like such a fool. I didn't even pay for the things I had taken in the basket.

David: "I didn't get your name - "

I left him standing right there without saying a word further. The moment I walked out of that store, I found myself consumed with piquant tears blazing my cheeks. I must have looked so red, most probably like the clown I had turned into. What the fuck had just happened? I couldn't even bring myself to face people

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but then crying in the car was a lot better than crying in between strangers at the mall. I quickly jumped into the car and I just cried. I wailed, actually – completely ignoring the snot that had consumed my congested nostrils. I had a sudden migraine and all I wanted to do was go home. Both my parents were worried sick.

Susan: (worried) "Keng (what is it)?! Who made you cry like this?"

I tried speaking in between my deep sniffs, but my throat felt as if an enormous knot was stuck in my throat. Ever felt so heartbroken that nothing ever made sense? Well, that to me was pretty much my very first heartbreak.

Susan: “Bolela (Speak), Ziphora! Who the fuck did this to you?!”

Ziphora: “I... I... Can we just go home, please.”

Susan: (angered) “Waitse mpya e go dirileng so e tla ntseba pila (You know, the dog that did this to you will get to know me well)!”

Frank: “Susan, tlogela ngwana hle (leave the child). Can't you see she is too distraught to speak?”

Susan: (shouting) “Ai, wena man! You and your two-minute parenting! Suddenly you think you deserve an award for being a sperm donor!”

The twins started crying but my head felt like it was ready to explode. I just couldn't function like a normal being at that point. I was completely lost in my own world.

Susan: (shouting) “Frank, didimatsa bana bao le wena, man (calm those babies down)!”

My mother got right into the driver's seat while I got into the passenger seat. She drove off like a maniac, most probably plotting to murder the person who made me cry so hysterically, while Frank went to the back and the twins calmed down instantly. Truth be told, he was very good with children. They were already so fond of him and on days he wasn't around, it was a lot harder to get them to sleep. Once we got home, I just didn't have the energy to face anyone, I headed straight to my bedroom. I couldn't understand what had just happened, I even started to think that perhaps I was imagining it. I mean, it just didn't make any sense. After about half an hour of crying non-stop, my mother walked in with a cup of soup, another cup of water and some painkillers. She didn't even care that we were right in November summer.

Susan: “Are you ready to tell me what happened>”

My head was pounding so hard, that my eyes were half closed.

Ziphora: (shaking) “Not really. It still doesn't make any sense, Mme (mom).”

Susan: “Explain, my baby.”

Ziphora: “I saw him, Ma. I saw David, right in Woolworths.”

I explained everything that happened in the finest detail possible, and there it was – a tear falling down her face. She was trying so hard to remain strong for me, but seeing me cry like that must have taken her down an emotional rollercoaster.

Susan: (teary) “It wasn't a dream, my baby, and you know it. You know it very well. What I don't understand is why he didn't recognize you. I would have also thought it was a prank, but something just doesn't feel right. All I know is that someone holds the answers to your questions, and better ask Malome

John and Phila and Ziyanda. No one else will tell you the truth, but they ought to.”

Ziphora: “I am so drained, Ma. I just can't do it anymore.”

Susan: “Zee, you can't give up without even trying. Life is not for the faint-hearted. At times, things just don't come easily for some people. All I know is that nothing worth fighting for comes easily.”

Ziphora: “Did you also feel like that with Frank?”

Susan: “Frank is different. He made a choice, a choice to give into his desires and go for another woman. In your situation, you have a lot of loose ends, a lot of unanswered questions and I honestly think that you cannot and shouldn't leave things like this without a fight. Rather leave knowing you did try something instead of just leaving like life is made of smarties.”

Indeed she was right. I had a funny feeling that Ziyanda and Phila held the answers to my questions. The least they could have done was warn me at least. Now, I made a fool out of myself to my own husband who didn't even recognize me. Such is life; unpredictable and oh, so funny.

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Psalm 39:7 - ““And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.”

David

After the rather odd encounter I had with that woman at the mall, I decided to go and meet my fiancée for lunch at a nearby restaurant called Mugg and Bean. I do not recall ever being in this country, but the name really rang a bell. I felt as if I had a serious déjà vu right there. I saw her sitting on her chair, wearing a gorgeous white, short dress. I didn't understand why I loved her or if I actually did love her, but then again, I just felt somewhat close to her. I felt as if she was the only one who understood me in my crazy world. I didn't know what to call my feelings for her, but then again, I just chose to try to love her. I had two bunches of roses in my hands as I had planned from Woolworths. I had no idea, but for some reason it felt as if I really liked that store.

Faith: (smiling) "Hey, Luis. Miss me already?"

David: (chuckling) "How could anyone not miss you?"

Faith: (excited) "Is that for me?"

David: (smiling) "Yes, for the prettiest girl in the world."

Faith: (smiling) "Thank you. I have already ordered a beer and a ravishing meal for you."

I didn't like her always choosing things for me, but then again, I had no recollection of what women wanted nor liked. At times our "relationship" felt somewhat forced, but I mean, even Diego didn't have time for his own wife. I guess that was life in the mafia.

David: "Thanks, but you didn't have to."

Faith: (sulking) "I'm sorry. I know how much you hate it when I do things for you without even asking, but I figured we could kill two birds with one stone."

I just nodded and listened to her chat away. I didn't even know why I proposed, but it just felt like the right thing to do. I mean, we hadn't even slept together by then, but we were going to get married. As she was chatting away like the chatterbox she was, my mind drifted away and I was once again deep in thought about the woman I saw at the store earlier on. She looked really familiar, although I couldn't pin point it.

Faith: "Hello? Earth to Luis."

David: "Oh, I'm sorry. You were saying?"

Faith: (frowning) "Your mind is so far away, you know. I hope Jacob and his filthy gang isn't stressing you."

David: (shaking head) “Actually, my mind is far from thinking about those people. I bumped into someone rather interesting today.”

Faith: (frowning) “Oh? What do you mean?”

David: “I don't really know how to explain it, but she was really distraught, you know. It was as if she had been crying. She rushed into my arms and hugged me saying that she had been waiting for me to come back. She even called me David.”

Faith: (anxious) “Are you sure? It most probably is a groupie or some other chick. I mean your name is Luis, remember?”

David: “Yes, but why does it all seem so real? Like I have met her before?”

Faith: (anxiously) “Oh, I suddenly don't feel so well any more. I think we should rather take the food for takeaways and go eat at the hotel.”

David: (worried) “Are you sure? I mean you were fine just a few minutes ago.”

Faith: “Yes, but I feel so lightheaded all of a sudden. Would you be so kind as to get the bill, please, love?”

I frowned as I stared at her. It felt as if she was lying to me, but then again, women. I had no clue about the kind of beings they were so I respected her wishes. We took the food for takeaways and headed straight to the hotel. She was quiet throughout the entire ride. I just couldn't pin point it, but something felt a bit offish. Once we got into my hotel room, I decided to sit on my bed and browse through my phone. Diego did tell me that people in my line of work were not allowed to have any social media accounts, but what surprised me was that his workers, those who did what I did had social media accounts.

The other day I overheard Marco asking Diego's son to show him how to upload a picture on Instagram. How else were they supposed to hook these girls towards the lavish lifestyle they all craved? I decided to google myself and I was stunned as to what I came across. While I was browsing in shock, Faith came

out of the bathroom dressed in a very sexy lingerie outfit. It was so red and lacey, surprisingly I liked it so much that I even got an erection. My mouth was watering to the point where I had completely forgotten about what I had seen on the Internet after searching for my own name.

Faith: (seductively) "Luis, baby. I know, you've been wanting to wait til marriage, but why wait when you can have me now?"

She was whispering so softly into my ear. I was ready to respond when she quickly shut me up.

David: "I - "

Faith: "Shhh. You talk too much sometimes, you know."

With that said, she just attacked my lips with hers. My goodness, it was too intense. It felt not romantic, but passionate. I couldn't even explain it to myself. My brain was telling me no, but my body was all for it. Within a few seconds, I couldn't help myself as I reacted. I kissed her back, with so

much fire burning inside of me. The desire I had just wanted me right inside of her. I kissed her neck, while listening to her pulsating heartbeat.

Faith: (moaning) “Oh, Luis.. Take me now, please...”

I didn't hesitate, I threw her right on the bed and took off my clothes so fast, I surprised myself. I tore her lingerie open and she really liked it. I actually enjoyed staring at her ripe, fat pussy. I was completely naked, but I couldn't bring myself to insert my penis inside of a woman I hardly knew without a condom – no. I still had to find out who the fuck I really was before I actually decided to plant my own seed in a woman; any woman for that matter. I stopped and stared at her. I could feel my eyes were so small, filled with desire.

David: “Do you have a condom?”

Faith: (annoyed) “What?! You stopped such a good moment because of a bloody condom?!”

Her reaction really surprised me. I mean, for a doctor, she sure was stupid.

David: "Faith, you're a doctor. Do you not use condoms the first time around when you sleep with someone? I mean does your health mean anything to you?"

Faith: (embarrassed) "I didn't mean it like that, Luis. I meant that I am so fucking horny and you're ruining the moment."

David: "I'm sorry, I'd rather have a moment ruined than my entire lifetime."

She really turned me off. I put on my clothes, leaving her stunned.

Faith: (shocked) "What are you doing?"

David: "What does it look like I'm doing? I'm getting dressed."

Faith: "Luis, baby, we were having such a good moment. Please, don't ruin it. Look, I'll go get us some condoms. Just wait right here."

David: (irritably) "Don't bother. I'm really tired. I'm going to take a shower. Close the door on your way out."

Faith: "Can I at least spend the night here with you?"

David: (sternly) "No."

I walked away without even looking back as I headed to the bathroom to take a warm shower. I needed that since I wasn't about to get anything to put my dick back to sleep.

Faith

Something just didn't feel right with David. I mean the one minute he was burning with intense passion and the next, he wanted nothing to do with me. I couldn't understand it. Had he regained his memory I would have realized immediately. I

mean, he didn't have any recollection of Ziphora. I was actually surprised how the hell he bumped into her. It couldn't have been Fate – no ways. Someone was fucking with my plans and it was going to end badly for them. I wanted David and I was going to ensure that I had him for myself. Even if it meant killing for him. I was startled to come across his phone unlocked. He must have forgotten to lock it right after we were about to get busy. I decided to check his last activity. There was nothing new – apart from his plans with Jacob. I chuckled while thinking, shame. Jacob was going to die and he had absolutely no idea. Tough times, man. I had to do what I had to do. While I was scrolling through his phone I was met with something quite disturbing. What the fuck?! What on earth was David doing searching for himself online?! Could it have been that he was actually starting to doubt his life as Luis Garcia?! I had to warn Diego – fast! I got up and wore my robe immediately. I didn't even want to waste time, so I headed down to Diego's study frantically. I knocked twice and entered without hesitation. Of course, that annoyed him

but he knew that I didn't barge in unless it was a matter of urgency. He was talking to Marco and the boys, when he saw me. His facial expression changed to that of annoyance, but I didn't care. I had to get what I wanted.

Diego: (irritably) "Can we help you, Ms. Mazibuko?"

Faith: (anxiously) "Ye – Yes, I am sorry to barge in here, but it is a matter of urgency."

Diego: "Gentlemen, we talk later. A dama tiene un asunto de urgencia (The lady has a matter of urgency)."

They nodded and left.

Diego: "This better be urgent, Doctor."

Faith: (sigh) "Yes, Diego, it is. It seems as if David is starting to doubt his life as Luis Garcia. I found his phone and he was searching himself online, Diego. The man was googling himself."

It seemed as if I didn't even get the attention I needed from Diego. He got up and slowly looked at me. Diego had eyes that looked like that of a snake. I mean, the man was fucking

scary. He walked up to me slowly, and then he suddenly grabbed my neck with full force.

Diego: (angrily) “Are you loco (crazy), Faith?!”

Faith: (scared) “N.. No, Diego, but - “

Diego: (shouting) “You stop my meeting for bullshit! You fucking crazy puta (prostitute)!”

Faith: (scared) “Diego, please. David saw that the actual Luis Garcia died in a car crash – five years ago. He now knows that he is indeed not the real Luis Garcia.”

Diego: “You think I give a fuck, Faith?! Listen, I am business man, okay? I got business to take care of. I hire you to fix David to be what I want him to be. I don't care if you feed him thousand pussies but get shit done! Comprende (Understand)?!”

I nodded in fear.

Diego: “And puta (prostitute), next time you walk in here without knock, I slit your fucking throat. You doctor, fix this shit.”

I nodded with tears threatening my eyes and rushed out of there. Diego was one real piece of shit. I had seen him actually do what he told me he'd do to me, so I didn't want to be on his bad side. I guess I had to take matters into my own hands. He did give me the go ahead, so it was time for me to use my God given gift as a Neurosurgeon and work my magic.

Jacob

After the rather emotional day I had, I asked Ziphora to sleep over at her house. She seemed to have had a really bad day, although she didn't want to talk about it. I also couldn't seem to sleep no matter what I tried. I even tried drinking myself to sleep, but that also didn't help, so I headed down to the kitchen just after midnight to drink a cup of warm milk. My father would always make that for me whenever I couldn't sleep as a child. Surprisingly, I found Ziphora sitting right there, staring at nothing in the dark.

Jacob: (frightened) "Zee, you gave me such a huge fright. Are you okay?"

Ziphora: "Not really. Why are you up?"

Jacob: "I couldn't sleep. Your mother told me you had a very bad day. Want to talk about it?"

Ziphora: (sigh) "I don't even know where to start. You go first. Tell me why you can't sleep and maybe I'll find the right words to tell you about what happened earlier on yesterday."

Jacob: "Alright then. Well, I also don't really have the right words, but have you ever been told that fate awaits you and there is absolutely nothing you could do about it?"

Ziphora: (shaking head) "I don't really follow."

Jacob: "Let's just say that my life is about to take a drastic turn and I can't seem to do anything about it."

Ziphora: "Well, I still don't follow, but what I can tell you is that Faith keeps us all alive. God is no fool and surely He knows why he places us in such difficult situations. I believe that if you actually open your eyes and focus, you would actually see the light at the end of the tunnel."

If only she knew.

Jacob: "You sound so experienced, Zee. Now I see why my father saw you fit to run that church."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "Ntate Moruti, what a great man he was."

Jacob: "A great man, indeed. Now, are you going to tell me what happened?"

Ziphora: (sigh) "I went to Woolworths to get some things for our picnic date with the twins. I mean, I think that perhaps it

didn't happen, you know, but my brain is telling me otherwise. I did see him. I saw him with my very own eyes. I even hugged him, but he just couldn't remember me.”

I suddenly felt a bit shaky.

Jacob: “Who?”

Ziphora: “David. I mean, I saw him, Jacob. I actually saw him. I rushed towards him and he seemed to have been picking roses for his “fiancee”. He looked so different, you know, he had glasses on, he had a bit more muscle and his beard was so unshaven. It was the total opposite of the David that I know, but what can I say? God works in mysterious ways.”

I found myself feeling so dumbstruck; so guilty because I actually knew that she wasn't lying. I felt so horrible because she actually thought that her mind was playing tricks on her. She didn't deserve me hiding that from her.

Jacob: “Well, I don't know what you saw, but I say believe what your gut is telling you. We can only pray that he comes back to us, Zee. I have hope, and so should you. Anyway, I think I'll go back to bed and try to sleep there.”

Ziphora: (nodding) “Well, then. You should also be hopeful about your situation. There is always an outcome.”

Jacob: (smiling) “Good night, Zee.”

Ziphora: “Good night, Jay.”

I immediately retreated to my bedroom with an ache deep in my heart. I lied to that woman. A woman who had been nothing but kind to me. A woman who was prepared to take care of my twins no matter what. What kind of a person was I? I immediately knelt down, lit my candle and prayed.

Jacob: “Modimo wa rona yo a rategang (Our loving God), I thank you so much God for everything you have done for me. God, I thank you for the amazing life that I have lived. If

you could take me now, oh, Lord, I would fully understand. I am not deserving of living a day longer. I have deceived one of the best people in my life and I cannot take it back. Badimo ba ka (My ancestors), please, hear my plea. I know that there is no other outcome to the coming situation, so please, do me a favour and let me not wake up tomorrow. Spare me the agony of actually awaiting my death. Please. Amen.”

As soon as I said Amen, I saw the most beautiful, beaming light right before me. My very own father, standing before me in his beautiful suit – the one we buried him in.

Jacob: (teary) “Papa (father)?”

Mac: (smiling) “Hello, my son.”

Jacob: “It has been so long since you have come to visit me. Please tell me you have come to fetch me.”

Mac: (chuckling) “It is not yet time, my son.”

Jacob: "I am begging you. I cannot stand this anymore."

Mac: (laughing) "Badimo ba bereka ka tsela tse makatsang (The ancestors work in amazing ways), my son. Believe me when I say that you will indeed get a very unexpected outcome from your situation. We shall not be fetching you any time soon."

Jacob: "I don't understand, Papa."

Mac: "Heed my words, we shall not be fetching you any time soon, my son. I'll see you soon. Bye for now."

With that said, he disappeared, leaving me dumbstruck and confused.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

Hebrews 11:6 - “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Ziphora

I couldn't even see which beach it was, but it really looked like the same one we visited back in Turkey; right where we had our wedding. I could still smell the fresh breeze of the beach; the sand was so smooth and felt nothing like the scorchy South African beach sand. While walking, I was amazed to find myself in my own wedding dress. It was rather odd, I just couldn't understand what was happening, but nonetheless, I felt so happy. While taking a stroll on the beach, I heard a very familiar cry.

David: (shouting) “Ziphora! Zee! Help me! Nthuse, moratuwa (help me, my love)!”

I frowned as I battled to see clearly since the sun was blazing hot. He kept shouting and waving and I immediately recognized him.

Ziphora: (frowning) “David?”

David: (shouting) “Please, don't give up on me, my love!”

I was so shocked to see Faith standing right next to him, rubbing her pregnant belly, also dressed in a wedding dress. Oddly, her wedding dress was stained – blood stained on her crotch. She kept trying to pull David towards her direction so that they could walk away, and as much as he did walk away, he didn't seem like he wanted to. I couldn't explain it. I was just so confused. While I was wailing and screaming out to him, I heard a familiar voice.

Mac: (smiling) “Zee, ngwanaka (my child). You have come so far. You are far more capable than you realize.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “I'm so confused, Ntate (father).”

Mac: (smiling) “The answers are right in front of you. At times, dreams are not just dreams – but rather premonitions of what is coming in the near future. The ball is in your court, my child. David is your chosen one, but no one can force you to stay with him.”

He smiled at me, while I saw Adelaide right behind him, with so many people behind them as well. They were all dressed the same – in their tribal attire. I had no idea who the other people were, but I could tell that they were the Mosue ancestors. I knew right there and then that I had the answer staring me right in the eye. I woke up drenched in sweat, and I knew then that it was not just a dream, but a visit from my husband's family – my family. I knew then what I had to do. Someone had the answers, and I knew where to start looking.

Malome John

It had been such an odd night for myself and Florah – pretty much all of us who were in the Zwane household. I failed to understand what was happening – yes, but what confused me the most was how it had happened. Nothing like that had ever happened in our family – ever. While I was trying to sip on my cup of tea in the morning, Florah came rushing downstairs.

MaMasango: (frantically) “John! John! Oh, please tell me. Please tell me you feel it too.”

Malome John: (calmly) “Yes, I do.”

Ma Masango: “Oh, thank goodness! I honestly thought that I was starting to go mad.”

We both laughed while Ziyanda walked down the stairs alongside Gog'Khanyi.

Ziyanda: “What are you two smiling about so early in the morning?”

Ma Masango: (smiling) “Well, for once, we have good news.”

Ziyanda: (frowning) “Yes?”

Ma Masango: “Well, regarding Jacob's situation, at first I had seen it all happen; him dying in that tragic plane crash, burning to death. He had also been visited by those visions, but ever since last night. I had a weird premonition; I would always go to bed seeing that open grave with Jacob's name on it – especially after talking to him. But last night I saw it closing rather rapidly.”

Of course they took a moment and stared at me like I was insane, but a few minutes later, Khanyi started rejoicing and ululating.

Gog'Khanyi: (ululating) “Yoh! (wow)! God is indeed good! How I have been praying for a miracle! That man deserves a miracle coming his way!”

Ma Masango: “It won't be that easy. It will get harder before it gets better.”

Gog'Khanyi: “Hayi fok (Oh, fuck)! The bad can come as long as Jacob gets to live! This calls for a celebration! I'm getting us a bottle of wine.”

Ziyanda: “Gogo (granny), it is literally 8am.”

Gog'Khanyi: “Weh (Oh), Ziyanda! Whenever you buy alcohol nowhere does it state that you have to drink it a certain time. Hayi man!”

They all chuckled, while I finally breathed out a sigh of relief after such a painful few weeks. While we were listening to Khanyi tell us about how good God is, Phila came storming in.

Phila: (frantically) “Good morning, family. I am so sorry for looking like a dead man walking, but I have finally found Valerie, Prudence and Tasha!”

Of course, we were all stunned, but relieved at the same time.

Malome John: “It is about damn time. The ancestors refused to show us. Where are they? Are they safe?”

Phila: “Well, they are hidden in a warehouse in Jo'burg – oddly, it is my old warehouse. And it gets worse.”

Gog'Khanyi: “Speak, son.”

Phila: “The President was involved in their disappearance. He went behind my back and hitched a deal with Diego to take them from us. Luckily Valerie had swallowed her tracker and we managed to find them.”

Malome John: “Well then, what are you waiting for?! Go get them.”

Phila: (nodding) “I'm getting Sbu. All I know is that I have a very bad feeling about this.”

Ma Masango: “Just get them back home safely.”

Jacob

I had a peaceful night's sleep for the first time in months. I woke up feeling so refreshed – even though I had actually slept for about five hours. While I was about to get breakfast after my shower at Ziphora's house, Phila called me.

Jacob: “Sho sho (sure sure).”

Phila: “Jay, I wish I had time to chit chat, but we have a problem. We found the girls, but it seems as if Mr. President hasn't been too good nowadays. He basically sold them to Diego.”

I knew then that it was not such good news.

Jacob: “Dammit! This can't be good. Which means that David might know just who the fuck I am.”

Phila: “He may or may not know, the thing is we can't tell, which is why we need you for this deal. You need to come with us so we can deal with him once and for all.”

I had a funny feeling; I mean I knew that all would need to come to an end, but something told me that we were far from ending it all.

Jacob: “Give me ten minutes. I'll be there.”

He hung up while I quickly went upstairs, I prayed and got dressed properly and headed out.

David

I had such a weird night's sleep. Usually I would suffer from migraines just before I slept and I could hardly remember much of the previous day's dealings – except what my brain

chose. Oddly, I remembered nothing about how Faith got into my bed. We were both naked, but I just didn't remember having any sexual intercourse with her. My dick was painful, but that was it. I had no recollection of ever fucking her. I also never managed to remember any of my dreams, but the previous night I dreamt of the woman I saw in the store yesterday. She was wearing a wedding dress, and was right across me on a beach. I was screaming at her, asking her to help me. I was screaming her name, but as soon as I got up, I had no recollection of her name. I was so frustrated. I tried searching for her on the internet, which was rather funny because I didn't have her name at all. Faith must have been woken up by my frustration.

Faith: “Hao (goodness), baby. Why are you frustrated so early? You want some for the day?”

David: (annoyed) “No, I had a dream. I dreamt of someone yet I can't remember her name.”

Faith: (shocked) “What do you mean? You never remember dreams.”

David: “Yes, but this time I remember it all.”

Faith: (worried) “What or whom did you dream of?”

David: “I dreamt of that woman I told you about; the one I saw in the store yesterday. She was right across me on an ocean and I kept screaming at her to help me. Can you help me sort this out? With hypno therapy or something?”

Faith: (fake smile) “I'd be delighted to, love.”

I smiled and kissed her forehead as I went to take a shower. Some things didn't make sense, but I had faith.

Faith

I was so frustrated when David told me the bullshit he spew on me that morning. I mean, I literally had to revert his brain by hypnotherapy the previous night and I was confident it would work. There was no way that with all the head trauma David suffered – he would be able to do what he was doing then. I

mean, wow. After two whole hours of reprogramming his brain, he tells me he dreamt of Zee?! What the fuck??! There was no way I'd have accepted defeat like that. I didn't want him to bullshit me and leave me hanging. I wanted what was mine and I intended on getting it on a silver platter. Perhaps something wasn't right with his brain any more because there was just absolutely no way he would have remembered it all. I had to think of Plan B before it was just too late.

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- "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Phila

I felt like such an idiot. I had never been played the way Mr. President played me. I felt so frustrated; so weak. I had tried by all means to keep the Black Mamba in check, but fuck it. It was high time I unleashed the beast inside of me. I couldn't wait any longer. I refused to wait for "Luis Garcia". I refused to let us wait for Sunday; I mean that would mean that we would have fallen right into his trap and possibly never return home. I was pondering my mind trying to think of the best solution when Sbu and Jacob found me pacing up and down in my study.

Jacob: "Hey. Why do you look so worried?"

Sbu: "Yeah, I mean come on, mfo (bro). The last time I saw you like this was when we had to rescue Owethu."

Owethu is my daughter; one of the twins that was kidnapped by Diego's son from the mall where we were at. It was pretty obvious that my plan to take Diego down had become personal – I now had a vendetta against him. I couldn't let him just walk away and keep doing what he did to young women. It was bad enough when he had Julia by his side. All those girls were still held captive and we needed a way to get them back home safely. Something felt really offish about that entire operation. I mean, sure, Diego was an idiot, but he was a lot smarter than we had anticipated him to be.

Sbu: “Khuluma mfo (speak, bro).”

Phila: (shaking head) “Something feels really off about this whole thing with Valerie, Prudence and Tasha. I mean, why else would Diego deliberately keep them at MY old warehouse instead of just ship them away? And also, surely the police would have gotten to them first before us. I mean, Valerie had her tracker on unlike the rest of the two. That would mean that they were tracked all along – while we were still looking for them.”

Sbu: "That would mean that Diego had planned this with Mr. President all along; and the trackers explained only one thing."

Jacob: "There is a mole in the Police service."

Phila: "This doesn't surprise me one bit. I mean I had a lot more faith in them since they're hawks, but fuck it. Something just doesn't add up. It feels as if Mr. President is always one step ahead of us. Including Diego."

Sbu: (nodding) "So, someone has been feeding them both information about us; how we do our things and where we could be."

Phila: (nodding) "Yes. I have a really bad feeling about what is to come. Those three girls are set as bait for a big trap for us."

Sbu: "What do you want us to do?"

Phila: "Well, I have a plan, but it would mean putting your life in danger Jacob."

Jacob: “Look, I went along with this plan all along knowing that I am going to die, but now that things have changed, I know that my ancestors got my back. Whatever it is that you need me to do, I'm on it. Let's do it.”

Phila: (nodding) “Okay, you're going to call David and do exactly as I say.”

I only hoped that whatever we were planning would bring us closer to bringing our brother David back. I had found new brothers in Jacob and David, and it was so heartbreaking seeing the situation we were all trapped in. I could only hope and pray that he wasn't the one to die because I could already smell blood.

Ziphora

I fixed myself and Frank some breakfast, while Mama was making food for the twins. It was Friday, so at least I had one more day to prepare for my Sunday service. Mama ensured that she was around whenever Frank was at my place. She was

such good help as he had already managed to walk around and do some activities. I must say, the chemo was really helpful. Only time would tell, though.

Ziphora: "Mama, kea tswa (I'm leaving)."

I wasn't sure about leaving the two of them alone, because my mother could swear at a person for real, but then, she had been taking good care of the twins as well as Frank, so I had no idea how I would protest or even why.

Susan: "Okay, o tsamaye pila (go well)."

Ziphora: "Le tlo ba shap le le one (will you two be okay on your own)?"

Susan: "I don't know about others, but all I know is that I'll be fine with the twins. Go already and stop looking so worried. Megwete ya batho ke e tlwaetse (I'm already used to assholes)."

I looked at Frank with so much worry, but he just smiled at me. I knew then that he was probably used to her sharp words. After 27 years on this earth, I could never get used to her words. It was almost Christmas, as we only had one week left til then and I must say, it really cut deep. December was always a time for family even for my family. I was hoping to spend my first Christmas with my husband, but well, he is somewhere doing who knows what and someone owed me a good explanation. I headed out and decided to change my mind before going into my car. I had intended on driving my beautiful Merc, but then for some odd reason, I headed back quickly into the house.

Susan: (frowning) “O lebetse eng (what did you forget)?”

Ziphora: “Nothing, Mme (ma), I have just decided to drive David's Maserati.”

Susan: “Enjoy it while you can, ngwanaka (my child). At least your husband managed to promise you the world and he gave it to you – unlike some people.”

She gave Frank such a filthy look while he just chuckled silently and winked at me. I was confused as fuck, but I had my own troubles confusing me already, so I had no desire to dig into their newly found love-hate relationship. I headed out and started the car. Man, it still had David's smell. I refused to allow the car wash guys to wash all the cars inside, because I wanted to maintain his smell for as long as I could. I missed him, and my heart ached for his touch, his beautiful smile every single day. Til that day, I still hadn't washed the clothes I wore the other day when I bumped into him or a new version of him. I had been stalking him all over social media, but to no avail. I was quite shocked to see all his social media accounts removed. It sent me into an even deeper depression because that was a confirmation that he was indeed alive. Obviously someone didn't want us finding him, but I would ensure that it would be my duty – even if I died trying. As I greeted the security while driving out, I decided to play one of our favourite songs – Soul Kulture's Gugu. He sang it for me during our Turkish wedding ceremony. I was not really one to observe much while driving, but I saw a really weird car following me. It was all black, a big SUV that didn't even look familiar to me at all. I couldn't even tell who was driving it because he had really dark clothes on as well as really dark and shady sunglasses. I decided to test my theory, so I made a sharp turn to the next street and surprisingly the driver did the same. I stepped on

the accelerator a bit harder in order to drive faster, and he did the same. I was starting to feel my heart pounding abnormally and I was consumed with so much sweat dripping almost on every part of my body. I contemplated who to call, but then I couldn't call my sisters, nor Desiree and most certainly not my mother, so I decided to call the only person I knew who had experienced such.

Ziyanda: "Hey, Zee. Long time, how are you?"

Ziphora: (frantically) "Ziyanda, I was on my way to come and see you. Forgive me for not calling, but I have a really serious situation at hand."

Ziyanda: (worried) "What's up?"

Ziphora: "There is someone following me. I don't know how because I decided to drive David's Maserati today."

Ziyanda: "Okay, where are you now?"

Ziphora: “I've been driving around in circles just after Mall of Africa.”

Ziyanda: “Okay, take a deep breath and listen to me carefully.”

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it was actually hard for me at the time to focus on what she was telling me, while driving and watching the road and having to ignore the person who was following me.

Ziyanda: “Drive through to the mall parking lot, slowly. You need to choose outdoor parking – where a lot of people will be walking around. Once you're in – do not get out of the car until I tell you to.”

Ziphora: “Okay, I'm so scared.”

Ziyanda: “Don't be afraid. Phila and Sbu are on their way there. They're expecting you. In the mean time, give me the

description of the car as well as the registration number thereof.”

Ziphora: (scared) “It's GB 57 WY GP.”

Ziyanda: “Okay, I'm texting it right to Sbu. Don't hang up, I'm making a conference call, okay?”

Ziphora: “Okay.”

I was trying my best to take a few detours so that the guy wouldn't actually start shooting or try to drive me off the road. I've seen it on tv and since I had never been followed before in my entire life, I had no idea what to expect. Suddenly, the guy was tag tailing me – getting so close to me. “This is it, I'm going to die”, I thought to myself. So, there was nothing much I could do except drive on and say a prayer.

Ziphora: “Dear God, I know that I have been very doubtful of you lately. I may not be the most deserving of your mercy and

grace, but all I ask is that you forgive me for all my sins. If today is my last day, please let my death be fast and less painful than what it usually is. If not, please help me endure whatever is to come. I pray in Jesus' Mighty name. Amen.”

Ziyanda must have heard me pray, because she responded immediately afterwards.

Ziyanda: “That was a really great prayer, Zee. Phila is on the other line along with Sbu, stay calm and listen to their instructions, okay?”

Ziphora: “Okay.”

Phila: “Hi, Zee. Listen, everything will be sorted in just a moment. I need you to do me a favour – stay calm. You can drive to the mall, slowly.”

I did as told. After getting my ticket, I drove ahead.

Phila: “Good job, Sbu has hacked all the cameras in this place, so we are able to see you. I need you to act like you are seeking parking space, and then drive back to the basement parking. Don't you worry, he won't attempt to do anything. He knows this entire area is surrounded by surveillance.”

I nodded calmly and did as I was told. The guy was patiently following me, and then I started panicking when I saw him take something from the passenger seat that looked like a gun.

Ziphora: (frantically) “Phila, he seems to have a gun in his hands right now.”

Phila: “Don't you worry, he won't shoot. He wants to agitate you.”

Sbu: “Hold up, mfo (bro), it seems as if there is another car following the guy.”

Phila: “Zoom into his screen. Who is it?”

Sbu: “Whoa! It's Da – Luis. It's Luis Garcia.”

That name rang a bell. Why couldn't I pin point who the fuck that was? I was in fear, my brain was refusing to co-operate.

Ziyanda: “What do I do now?”

Phila: “Drive back to the underground basement right now!”

I didn't hesitate this time. I sped off and parked my car right next to Phila's car, while the guy didn't even see the need to park. He immediately got out of his car, and yes, I was right. He had a gun in his hands. I was so afraid, that I quickly walked out of the car and ran into Phila's arms in tears. Phila pushed me right behind him, while he and Sbu had guns in their hands as well. What the fuck was happening? I mean Ziyanda had told me about Phila and Sbu's dark past but this?? This was just crazy – it felt like a surreal movie. The guy walked out and headed towards us.

Sbu: "Take one more step and I'll blow your fucking head off, Amigo (friend)!"

While the guy was about to speak, I couldn't believe my eyes. The car that was supposedly following him had parked right behind him almost bumping his car from behind. My eyes were most probably deceiving me. There he was – it was as clear as daylight that I wasn't crazy. I did indeed see him.

David: (angrily) "What the fuck do you think you're doing, idiota (idiot)?! Eres estúpido (are you stupid)?!"

David was standing right there with a gun his hands, while the guy right before us remained unbothered. He had his gun positioned in our direction, but it honestly felt like he had his gun aimed right at me. Phila and Sbu were in the way, I guess. There was a woman in the car that David had gotten out of. I couldn't see her clearly, but I could see blonde hair and big sunglasses.

Man: "I came on mission. I must complete it. I got paid for it!"

David: "Do you want to blow my fucking cover, man?! Do you know who is standing right before you?! Those two are Mamba and Cobra!"

Man: (chuckling) "They don't scare me!"

And then, just when my life couldn't get any more interesting, the woman walked out of the car, leaving me dumbstruck.

Faith: "Honey, leave him. We need to go before security call the cops on us."

David: (shaking head) "Let the cops come. I will not allow him to kill an innocent woman."

Faith: (angrily) "How do you even know that she is innocent?! You don't even know her!"

David: "Shut the fuck up, Faith!"

She took off her glasses during her rant. And indeed, it was her.

Ziphora: (shocked) "Faith?!"

She just gave me one disgusted look and completely ignored me.

Sbu: "We need to go."

Phila: (shaking head) "Not before we know why he was following Ziphora."

Man: "I was paid by - "

He didn't finish his sentence when Faith took out a small gun from her purse and shot the man right in the head. Blood spewed out of his brain, leaving me so traumatized. I had never seen a man die right before me. I tried screaming, but my entire body just fell into paralysis.

David: (fuming) “Are you out of your fucking mind?! At times I don't even know why I chose you! Look, Mamba, I had nothing to do with this. I am sure Diego has his own beef with you, but he simply instructed me to get stay away from you. I'm not here for you, I just came on business.”

Phila: “Tell your asshole boss that I'm coming for him. He is messing with my family, my loved ones, including you.”

David: (frowning) “What do you mean including me?”

Sbu: “Ask that crazy puta (bitch) next to you.”

Faith: “Luis, we need to get going right now! Right now!”

David looked at me – with the same helpless look he had been giving me in all the dreams I had been having. I was so numb from all the shock, I didn't hear a thing Phila and Sbu said after David got into his car and sped off.

Phila: "Let's leave the Maserati, we'll get Frank to come and get it. Let's move. Get her in the car, she's in shock."

Sbu: "I'll have to remove ourselves from all the footage."

Phila: "Do something even better, Remove ourselves completely – including Ziphora and David, but keep Faith in it. I want the entire world to see her shooting someone in the mall parking lot."

Sbu: "On it."

Phila: "Ziphora, are you alright?"

I couldn't think straight. My mind was far off. As soon as I saw the blood spatters on Phila's shirt and a few on mine, I vomited profusely once my mind took me back to what had just happened.

- "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Ziphora

I felt so numb; I couldn't speak. It was as if I had no feelings inside of me except those of wretchedness. I felt as if I had been mourning two relationships all at once; my marriage and my friendship with Faith. Nothing made sense; it felt as if the entire world's calamity was wavering upon me. The entire drive to Phila and Ziyanda's house was dreadful. I felt as if everyone around me was lying to me. I felt worse than I did before vomiting. As soon as Phila parked the car, I headed out walking like zombie headed towards the apocalypse. Phila was by my side; he had his hand around my shoulder, trying to comfort me but that just didn't help at all. I had rushed out of the house that morning hoping to get answers to a few questions, but instead; I got more than I actually bargained for. The moment I walked into the house, Gog'Khanyi hugged me; smothered me with profuse affection, and then came Ziyanda. I was rather cold towards her; towards everyone in fact. How could they keep such a thing from me?

Gog'Khanyi: “Oh, mntwanami (my child). Come sit. I have already made you some warm milk. It will calm you down.”

Ziphora: (frowning) “How do you guys know what happened?”

Ziyanda: “It is all over the news, and besides, Phila updated us when he was on his way home.”

I briefly stared at the tv as Ziyanda pointed at it. The headline just didn't make any sense. “South African Neuro-surgeon seen shooting Non-national to death at prominent mall.” None of the footage showed Phila, nor Sbu nor myself. Even David was not seen. What kind of family was this?! Jacob was standing right before me looking guilty as fuck. He couldn't even look me in the eye. Meanwhile Mam'Florah was standing right next to Malome John. They seemed calm as always.

Malome John: “Hello, Zee. How are you?”

That very question. I felt as if all of them were taking me for some kind of fool. “How are you doing?!” Was he kidding me? How condescending.

Ziphora: (angrily) “How am I doing?! How am I doing, Malome (uncle)?! Wow. After all you guys have done to me, all you can ask me is how I am doing?!”

Gog'Khanyi: “Zee, please, calm down. Let's speak about this when you're calm.”

I was boiling with so much rage.

Ziphora: “Calm?! Gogo, don't tell me about calm. Aren't you part of the very same family that hid the truth from me?! You know, life can be so funny. I drove out of my house this morning hoping that you would all explain to me how come I bumped into my own husband two days ago, but he couldn't fucking recognize me! Now I get followed, almost shot at and my supposed best friend rocked up right next to my husband! You all have some explaining to do, and I'm not leaving until you tell me everything!”

They looked at me as if I was deranged, but I felt like ripping all of their heads off. It was a very ungodly way of thinking, but they had been lying to me all along.

Ziyanda: (sigh) “Zee, I'll tell you everything, but before I do, please consider why we hid the truth from you.”

I wasn't even about to listen to that shit. She told me everything; from the night of the accident; to how they found out about David being taken by some Mexican Mafia, to them devising a plan to work with him with the hopes of getting him back home. All of which sounded like pure shit to my ears.

Ziyanda: “That is why Phila and I came to see you that day; hoping that you would agree to do the ritual with us. That way, we would have been able to connect your soul with his. He most likely would have caught on what was – is wrong with him.”

Ziphora: “So, all of you watched me slip away slowly, hoping and praying for my husband's life; you all saw me cry myself to

sleep almost every night, lose weight and mourn a man that is very much alive and you did absolutely nothing?!”

Ziyanda: “Ziphora, it isn't like that - “

Ziphora: “What is it like then, Ziyanda?! How do you even explain Faith being in the picture?!”

Ziyanda: “I don't - “

Malome John: (interrupting) “If I may interrupt. Ziphora, I am not a selfish nor insensitive man, that you already know, but I feel what you are doing right now is being completely unfair towards us all. Firstly, you were going through so much and none of us had the right to burden you with all this news. Secondly, we all had YOU in mind when we were devising this plan. Thirdly, you of all people should know better than to blame someone.”

Ziphora: “Excuse me?”

Malome John: “Weren't you visited by your husband's ancestors almost every single night? Hasn't your father-in-law visited you to let you know that it is about to get messier before it gets better? Haven't you been getting the dream about your husband shouting at you from across the oceans? Didn't Adelaide warn you about what you were going to see? Did she not tell you that you were yet to see that people closest to you were going to hurt you the most? Why on earth haven't you been paying attention to everything?”

I felt so attacked, to be honest. Worst of all by a man of God.

Ziphora: “Out of everyone, you of all people, Malome, are insulting me like this? You're supposed to be on my side.”

Malome John: “Believe me, I am on your side, Ziphora. If I wasn't I wouldn't even have bothered actually being here trying to save my nephew from the situation he is currently in. Life throws us curveballs all the time; for some they are bigger than others and others receive them much harder than most, but you are one of the lucky few. You get to be shown what to do almost every day. You have an amazing soul connection to your husband as well as to his ancestors

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and they have vowed to show you the way and protect you at all times, but you have to do your part, Ziphora. Nothing in this life comes on a silver platter. You think it is easy being me? Try walking a mile in my shoes. You think that Ziyanda woke up one day and became the strong woman she is today? She has been through hell and back, yet she didn't stop praying. You are the chosen one; you are a prophetess in your own right and you were born to lead. Why can't you just tap into your blessings and open your eyes?"

I felt so offended. I really had so much going on in my mind. I looked around at them and all I saw in their faces was just judgment. Nothing else.

Ziphora: (teary) "None of you understand what I have been through – none of you. You have all lied to me – deceived me. You all pretended to love me meanwhile you just didn't. I am so disappointed in you all, for I actually thought that I had found a family in you. You, Jacob, I have no words for you."

I took my bag and headed towards the door.

Phila: (shouting) “Ziphora, no! You could still be in danger. At least let me take you home.”

Ziphora: “No! Leave me alone. I'll call an uber or something and I'll be damned if I see any of you following me. If I die, then it would be my time.”

I walked out leaving them so dumbstruck. I had no idea where to even start, since I seemed to have left my phone in the Maserati.

Ziphora: (frustrated) “Fuck!”

I was too angry to even walk back to the house with a tail in between my legs. There was no way I was going to beg them to take me home, so I stood outside and waited. I just waited, I don't even know what I was waiting for, but I just waited. All those horrible feelings came back to me at once and I just burst into tears as I looked up the sky. My life felt like such a mess. How the fuck was I expected to lead a church when my own life was a horrid movie?

Ziphora: (crying) “Oh, God! Why? Why are you punishing me like this? I saved myself all my life for a man whom I prayed to YOU for and you do me like this? This is not fair. What have I done to deserve such?”

I wailed like a child as my stomach churned, only then I realized that all the breakfast I had had that morning exited my stomach when I vomited in the car. I'd never forget the sight of that man's brains splashing the ground. I heard an unfamiliar voice right before me.

Frank: “Excuse me, ma'am.”

I looked up and saw a man driving my husband's Maserati. He looked familiar, though I couldn't pin point whom he was exactly.

Frank: (smiling) “Hi, I'm Frank, Mr. Zwane's driver.”

Ziphora: “Of course. How could I forget?”

I said that internally rolling my eyes, most probably at the fact that he shared a name with my father.

Frank: "Mr. Zwane has asked me to take you home."

Ziphora: "I'll be fine on my own."

Frank: (shaking head) "No, ma'am. I'm a man of my word. I stick to my job description."

Ziphora: (frowning) "You can't force me, you know."

Frank: (smiling) "I can if I have to."

He said that with such a creepy smile. What the fuck were these people anyway? I decided to just give in and got into the car. Shame, Frank was so nice. He played music for me, and basically forced me to eat after he drove past Burger King Drive thru. I felt a bit better physically after eating, but I had such a

massive headache. I was actually glad that someone was there to drive me home. I just didn't want to face any of the Zwanes nor the Mosue's for that matter. They were all liars and I just didn't want to associate myself with them. We finally made it to my house and Frank was nice enough to just mind his own business. He dropped me off right in the yard and actually parked the car in the garage.

Ziphora: "Thank you so much, Frank. I really appreciate it."

Frank: "Oh, no, don't thank me, ma'am. Thank my boss."

Ziphora: "How will you get home?"

Frank: "The big boss is right outside. He came to fetch me. Don't you worry. Sleep it off, you should feel better by morning. Good bye."

Oddly, I didn't even realize that it was already 2pm. I was so tired and drained. The moment I walked in Mama took one good look at me and ordered me to sit down.

Susan: "I'll make you some soup."

Ziphora: "Ma, it is 26 degrees outside. Since when do normal people drink soup on such a hot day?"

Susan: (frowning) "Hehe! Ziphora Destiny Mosue! Since when do you speak to me o kare wa nya bjana (as if you're taking a shit)?!"

I stepped right into that one.

Ziphora: "Eish, askies (oh, I'm sorry), Mama, but I am really not in the mood for all this right now. Ke opiwa ke hlogo (my head hurts)."

Susan: "It's either you're going to tell me who fucked up your day like this or else ke lata lepanta (I'm fetching a belt). You're not too old for a hiding – married or not!"

I knew she was dead serious, so I started telling her everything. It felt as if I was reliving it all throughout the entire narration. Frank was listening to me attentively, making gasps of astonishment in between, while my mother was as silent as a bat.

Ziphora: “There you have it. Ke tsona tseo (That's all the news). I'm surrounded by liars.”

Susan: “Are you done whining?”

Ziphora: (surprised) “O ra bjang (what do you mean)?”

Susan: “Zee, did Frank not lie to you for years? Did I not lie to you for years? Does that mean that we don't love you?”

I kept quiet.

Susan: “So, wena o mosadi bjanong akere (you're a woman now, aren't you)? You completely ignored everything they have told you, everything they have done for you; all the sacrifices they have made to try and get your husband back home to YOU and decided to do selective listening. You completely ignored

their efforts and just concluded that they're liars. Those two men protected you with all they had today – completely forgetting about their own wives and children. They were prepared to die for you today, Ziphora and all you can say is that you're surrounded by liars? Here you are pining and whining over Faith, a person who showed you long before you got married that she had no interest in being someone you could share a friendship with any more. She is out there living the best life with YOUR husband, while you are angry at the very people who are trying their best to help you. Yes, Malome John was right; you have a tendency of just ignoring everything that is staring you right in the eye and you just curl up in a ball of tears and agony. I can't stress it enough that I didn't birth quitters. You are ignorant and that will come back to bite you one day. You get to communicate with the spirit world and you are complaining? Wow, just wow.”

My mother had actually said a mouthful. I felt so bad; so horrible that I just wanted to cry but knowing her she most probably would have given me a fat slap across the face.

Susan: “Ebile skabe wa lla (don't you even dare cry). Go take a shower; I'll bring you some soup and pain killers. We'll talk later.”

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- “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.”

Jacob

I felt like complete shit after Ziphora's outburst yesterday to be honest. It was never my intention to hurt her like that. I honestly knew that she wouldn't take it well, but at times a man has to do what he has to do – even if it means lying to save a relationship. I had bigger fish to fry, so I had to put my feelings aside and focus on the mission at hand. We had called the President a few days ago – of course, he knew Phila and he was the one who had made a deal to Phila. We still had to figure out who was the actual mole in the society, so we had to set a trap for everyone – even though they thought that we'd be the ones to fall into their trap. It was a very risky plan, but we managed to figure things out. We headed to the warehouse just after midnight and managed to take Valerie, Prudence and Tasha away from there. We of course took them to a safe place, but the President had no idea. Something was just not right with the entire set up, but we went ahead. It was exactly

7am, and Phila had a good plan up his sleeve to finally oust the President.

Phila: "Are you ready?"

Sbu: "Always, Mamba."

Jacob: "Yes."

Sbu: "Make the call."

Phila dialed the President and put him on speaker.

Mr. President: "Ah, Phila, I've been expecting your call, Amigo (friend)."

Phila rolled his eyes in annoyance.

Phila: “Ja, I just called you last night. It wasn't that long ago. Anyway, are you ready?”

Mr. President: “Do you have the girls?”

Phila: “Of course. Meet me at the location I'm sending now. Be careful.”

Mr. President: (chuckling) “How sure am I that you have the girls?”

Phila: “I'll send you proof right now. Hang on a second.”

He nodded to Sbu and he did what he was asked. We had taken a picture of them in the container they were hidden in at the warehouse. To our surprise, we also found about 30 other girls trapped in there right with them. Such cruelty I had always heard of but never witnessed with my own two eyes. This Diego character was indeed inhumane. Of course, The President was in shock, because we could all hear him choke and go silent for a few seconds.

Phila: "Hello? Mr. President? Are you still there?"

Mr. President: (shocked) "Ye.. yes, I'm still here. I mean, I never figured you as a man of your word. I mean, uh, they are indeed gems. Where did you find them?"

Phila: "That is none of your concern. You and I made a deal. Follow the location. I'll meet you in exactly one hour. Don't keep me waiting, I am very strict on punctuality."

Mr. President: "Ye.. Yes, but - "

Phila cut the call before he could even respond. We knew we had him right where we needed him. Chances were that he had already informed his little mole from the force and it was about to go down. I had a registered gun, but I never used it before. My father always took us to the gun range as way of dealing with our anger, so I knew how to shoot at least. Sbu hooked me up with a bullet proof vest and they wore theirs. Mam'Florah and Malome John prayed for us just before we left. We got into one of Sbu's cars for a change and off we

went, with their back up team of bodyguards right behind us. It felt like I was really part of a movie cast, but well, it had to be done.

Mr. President

I thought everything was done accordingly. The plan was simple; get the girls shipped to Diego while Jacob got handed to Luis on a silver platter. Someone fucked up and I refused to be on the receiving end of Diego's wrath. I decided to call him first. He picked up on the first ring.

Diego: "Presidente, I been expecting you, senor (sir)."

Mr. President: (nervously) "Diego, how are you?"

Diego: "Cut the bullshit and speak."

Mr. President: (nervously chuckling) "Of course, of course. We have a slight problem; the girls were taken by Mamba and his

brother. I don't know how, but my guess is someone tipped them off. I suspect someone on our team went rogue, so - “

Diego: (interrupting) “Presidente, do I sound like I give a flying fuck about your problems?!”

Mr. President: (nervously) “I, I don't - “

Diego: “Let me explain in simple terms; I don't give a shit. You came to me with plan, YOU organized it, so YOU fix it!”

Mr. President: “But, I - “

Diego: “All I want is those girls along with the thirty girls you fucking messed with on my doorstep by the early hours of the morning! Comprender, amigo (understand, my friend)?!”

Mr. President: (panicky) “Yes.”

Diego: “Good, now don't call me until the job is done.”

He hung up and I felt such a huge knot in my throat. It felt as if I just couldn't breathe. I started sweating profusely, while my lack of thinking was getting worse.

Dineo: "Is everything okay, baby?"

And there she was, my escape goat out of all this mess.

Mr. President: (nervously) "Everything is just fine. Listen, how about you change into something sexier? We have somewhere we need to be real quick."

Dineo: (excitedly) "Where are we going?"

Mr. President: "You just get into that sexy little red number I bought you last Christmas, okay?"

Dineo: "Okay, babe."

David

I felt myself become nauseated every single time I looked at Faith; ever since she shot one of Diego's men, it has been a shit fest. Her face was splashed all over the news, and with everything going on, Diego won't even hear it. He has asked me to deal with it until we manage to get to Mexico. I had no idea how I was even going to pull off walking right through the airport with one of the country's most wanted killers. I had no plan, I had no idea why the stupid bitch killed him in the first place

but thankfully Diego called.

David: "Diego."

Diego: "Get ready, Jacob has set up meeting with Mr. Presidente."

David: (frowning) "But, how come?"

Diego: "I don't know, but they fucked everything up and now all the girls have been taken away – ALL of them."

Shit, that was not good news at all. That cost him over 500 million.

David: "Okay, what about Faith?"

Diego: "Make sure she doesn't leave that hotel room. I'll get Samora to watch her. She want to join the big boys of the Mafia, then she will have to start acting like man with balls instead of pussy. She organized one of my men to kill that doctor bitch, and then she killed him for no reason. She must pay."

I suddenly felt nauseated. Why on earth would Faith want to kill that woman? Why did I feel such a soft spot for her when I had no idea who she was? I mean I had no idea who I was either.

David: "Do you know why she did that?"

Diego: "Who cares? She's a crazy puta (whore) that's what. She obsessed with you, selling her pussy to you and now, she will pay the price. I own her now. You get over to location I sent you. Be sure to eliminate Jacob at all cost."

I felt so uneasy all of a sudden. I don't know, perhaps I was starting to grow a conscience after everything I had done ever since I landed in Mexico. I had no idea what happened to me, but I had to rely on his information about the supposed person I was. Everything I was told just didn't even ring a bell, but I just had to go with it.

David: "Fine."

He hung up and right there and then, that whore Faith walked out of the kitchen with a plate of food in her hands.

Faith: "Where are you going? I thought we could really have some food and I wanted to apologize."

David: "I have no time for your bullshit right now, Faith. If you want my forgiveness, you'd better start telling me why you hired one of Diego's men to kill that innocent woman. I get the feeling you're hiding a lot from me. I'll be back."

Faith: "Aren't you taking me with you?"

David: "What for? Diego said you need to stay here. You're in deep shit and he is going to make sure you pay for what you have done."

I left her gobsmacked right there and I walked out.

Faith

I couldn't believe my eyes. My plan was working so well and now, David had decided to just drop me at the last minute. I mean okay, so I hired one of Diego's men to tail Ziphora and end her. I didn't expect him to fail so badly at it. I mean what the fuck? I don't believe that Ziphora was actually as highly favoured as she claimed to have been. Why did she always

escape all the bad shit. David was so close to being mine, and I nearly had him. I mean, Dineo organized some muthi for me just yesterday, before all that drama went on. Ziphora won't know what hit her. I didn't hate her, I just hated how blessed she was. I mean, she had all the good things and all the men wanted her, so why did I have to love her? My plate of food had gone to waste, but I decided to put it back in the fridge just in case David came back hungry. I decided to call Dineo just for a back up plan, because you just never know, you know.

Dineo: "Faizozo."

Faith: "Sho, Dinny. Listen, I couldn't give him the food. He left right before I could give it to him."

Dineo: "Ai, le wena o starag, man (you're so slow)."

Faith: "He's a busy man, besides, if it actually worked, why hasn't the President left his wife for you?"

Dineo: (clicking tongue) “O nagana gore o bohlale wena, akere (you think you're clever, don't you)? You can figure it all out yourself, then.”

Faith: “Wait! I'm sorry, okay? I mean, at least hook me up with a back up plan.”

Dineo: (sigh) “Okay, rub some of the muthi on your pussy and put some of it in there. You need to make sure that he does sleep with you, otherwise it just won't work.”

Faith: “That's it? Won't it burn?”

Dineo: “Do you want a cure for cancer or do you want him to be yours?”

Faith: “Okay, I get your point.”

Dineo: “I gotta go.”

She hung up and that was the last of her instructions. Very basic, if you ask me. I was about to go take a shower and do what she said I should when Samora walked into my hotel room without even knocking. I was seriously infuriated when he even had some guy who looked like a dodgy doctor right behind him.

Faith: (annoyed) "Samora, since when do you just barge in here? Didn't your mother teach you manners?"

Samora: "I follow boss's orders. Besides, didn't your mother teach you not to fuck around?"

Faith: (angrily) "Excuse me?"

Samora: "I have no time for this. Doctor, she is all yours."

Doctor: "Okay, but you might have to restrain her so I can start working."

I suddenly felt very fearful.

Faith: (afraid) "Samora, what is going on here?"

Samora: "Don't you worry, by the end of today, you look like whole new person. Perhaps Barbie or Kim Kardashian."

I had no idea what was happening. I tried to scream and fight, but Samora was too big, he held both my arms and restrained me. I saw the doctor take out an entire medical kit and a picture of someone I didn't recognize at all.

Doctor: "What you think of this?"

Samora: "Kim Kardashian and little Barbie in one. I like it. It will suit her. Work your magic, doctor."

What was happening?! I tried to scream, but my voice fell on deaf ears as I was injected with an anaesthetic, and before I knew it I had dozed off right into the dark.

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“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. “

Phila

We had finally arrived at our location; yes, I deliberately sent Mr. President a location to one of my lodges. One of the lodges I bought for Ziyanda. I felt like such a bad husband for tainting it with blood. She really loved it, but then, what choice did I have? I'd have to sell it immediately afterwards. I'd be able to buy her the world. We arrived there early, since I was a very punctual man.

Phila: “Sbuda, is everything set?”

Sbu: “Sure, all the cameras are in place. They're rolling.”

Phila: “Good. Jay, are you okay?”

Jacob: (nervously) "Yes, I am just fine."

We heard the sound of cars driving in high speed towards us.

Phila: "They are here. It is time. Get your weapons ready, gentlemen. You never know when we might need to use them."

They both nodded. Within a few seconds, The President himself walked out. Oddly, he was not alone. I saw David arrive right behind him. I had expected that.

Mr. President: "Gentlemen. How lovely to see you."

That fat fuck was sweating. I could tell just how nervous he was, and I knew then that he had the little mole we were looking for in position somewhere. Luckily, we were always one step ahead. Tony was at home, on standby with all the cameras in position. Jacob, Sbu and I were wearing ear pieces so that we could know when to strike.

Tony: "Bozza (boss), I have found the mole. He is about 15 km away, positioned with his M21."

Well, so the fucker was a sniper, with his M21 Sniper rifle. That didn't shake me one bit. Razor was one of my trusted men. I only took him to the field if need be. He was one of my best shooters, so, he himself was in position.

Phila: "Is Razor in position?"

Tony: "Yes."

Mr. President must have seen me whispering, but I didn't give a fuck.

Mr. President: "Mamba, don't tell me that you have men surrounding us, now. You don't trust me, amigo (friend)?"

Sbu: "Fuck it, how did you become the President? Your entire persona is annoying as fuck, man."

Mr. President: “You are rude, Cobra. Anyway, I did not come here to lecture little boys about mannerisms. Let me cut straight to the chase.”

Phila: “How about I cut straight to it for you. You fooled me, well, you tried to, so I will give you that. You honestly thought I'd never find out you were plotting with Diego behind my back?”

His eyes widened with total shock, while David finally stepped out of the car, also with his gun ready and at hand.

David: “I am sorry to ruin this party, gentlemen, but I also have come for my own business – with Thabo, or shall I say Jacob Mosue?”

Jacob: “You took so long to figure that out?”

David: "Well, actually I have known all along. Let us cut the bullshit, gentlemen. You have something or rather some women that belong to me."

Sbu

Jacob and I actually laughed at that pathetic statement.

Phila: "You actually think that people belong to you? Wow man."

Sbu: "That is some fucked up way of thinking."

Phila: "It must be that big-headed bitch's pussy playing with his mind."

Sbu and I laughed once again, as David became angered.

David: (angered) "You think you have a hold on everyone, don't you, Mamba? Well, I have news for you. You don't scare me."

Phila: "How about you save all that energy for your wife?"

David: "I'm not married, fucker."

Sbu: "Oh, boy. Your actual wife. The one you left here before you became some gangster king pin."

I know, we were most probably bargaining, trying to get through to David, and it seemed to have been working.

David: (puzzled) "What the fuck are you talking about?"

Sbu: "Jay, tell this fucker who he really is."

Jay: "Well - "

Just as Jacob was about to start singing, bullets started flying out of every direction. Jacob was the first one to get behind the car, then I felt my chest area burn while Sbu screamed out in pain and ran behind the car. He was in between Jacob and I. I could barely hear myself think, but I had seen worse. My

car was bombarded with bullets. Shit, Ziyanda is going to kill me, I thought to myself. That was one of her favourite cars.

Sbu: (crying out in pain) “Aah!”

Phila: (worried) “Fuck! You got hit!”

The bullets kept flying. The last time things were this bad was when we went to look for Kele when Gorilla held her hostage.

Sbu: “It's just my arm. Tie it with something.”

Jacob: “No, you need to stay down.”

Sbu: “Jay, we need to be a team. Now, tie my arm so we can make a fucking movie!”

Jacob was surprised, but what was even more surprising was that he wasn't hit at all. He took one of his shoelaces and tied Sbu's injured arm.

Sbu: "Let's get this fucking show on the road!"

We got in motion and started shooting; bullets were flying from the air, and then in opposite directions. Razor was still on top of one of the buildings nearby while Tony was watching us via surveillance.

Razor: "Bozzas (bosses), these people are loading more ammunition. I'm shooting and I can't promise you anything."

Phila: "Whatever happens – don't kill David."

Razor: "On it."

Phila: "Cover me, I'm moving in."

Oddly, I didn't last even one minute when I got shot in my left arm.

Phila: (yelling) "Fuck!"

Jacob: "No, man! Not you too."

Sbu: "How come you aren't getting hit by even one bullet?"

Jacob: (shrugging) "Must be fate."

Right there an idea hit me. I decided to ignore the bullets consuming our car for a few minutes, while I explained my thoughts to the both of them.

Phila: "Jay, remember when Malome John and Mam'Flora said that your fate had changed? I mean it surely means you won't die."

Jacob: "Yes, but that doesn't mean I am immune to bullet holes, you know."

Phila: "Let's find out."

Jacob: "Are you kidding me?!"

Sbu: "Just get up and shoot and let's see if you'll get hit."

After tying my arm as well, he was reluctant about it but he did it anyway. He got up and shot, amazingly, not even one bullet hit him.

Phila: "See?"

Jacob: (surprised) "What the hell just happened?"

David: (angered) "Jacob! You're starting to annoy me! It is bad enough you tricked me and made me think you are someone else, but now you are playing cat and mouse with me! You think you're God? You think you can't get shot at?! I'll show you!"

Just as he got up and started shooting bullets at us non-stop, we figured he had an AK-47 or some kind of rifle on him.

Jacob: "What is that smell?"

Sbu: "Shit, Mamba, that's petrol!"

Phila: "Look, Jacob. You need to cover us. We're injured and if we stay behind this car any longer, we'll burn to death."

Jacob: (nodding) "I got you."

Razor: "Get out of there, guys! The President is down, but it seems as if there is someone in his car."

We had no idea who it was and at that point we were priority. Jacob was shooting at David as if he was some kind of mobster. We heard David cuss at him and we knew then that he was hit. We saw David get into Mr. President's car as he drove off. We weren't too far from our car, and we saw Jacob standing there staring at David in pure defeat.

Phila: "Jacob, get away from there!"

Without any further ado – the car exploded and Jacob was consumed with flames.

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Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. “

Phila

Sbu and I couldn't believe it. Could Malome John and Mam'Flora's vision had been wrong? I mean they told us that he wasn't going to die anymore, and yet he was the one who was burned.

Sbu: “Phila, we're fucked, mfo (bro). How the fuck do we tell our wives we let Jacob die?”

Phila: “I don't think I want to go home right now. Better yet, let's stay here for a week.”

Razor: (laughing) “You two are such pussies, man. Turn around.”

We were in such disbelief. We couldn't believe what we were seeing. Jacob – the one and only Jacob, was walking right through the blazing fire that had just consumed him minutes ago. Oddly, he wasn't burned – no scratch at all. He was smiling at us, and it looked like he had someone dressed in white right behind him, but we couldn't see who it actually was. The last time we saw such was when Ziphora's car had caught fire. I guess the Mosue ancestors were really powerful.

Jacob: (smiling) “Gentlemen. Shall we get you two assistance?”

Sbu: “How did you do that, bro? Are you guys like born under a spell or what?”

Jacob: (laughing) “No, all I know is that my father was with me.”

Phila: “Razor, get us away from here. Call Drake. We'll meet somewhere safe. Call Mam'Flora and Malome John while you're at it. Something tells me the fun has just begun.”

Razor: “On it.”

Sbu: “Jacob, you still have to give me some of your powers, man. I have never been able to walk through any flames.”

We all chuckled, but honestly we were so happy to have him back. I don't think I would have coped if he had died. Razor finally came with our car, and on our way to Drake's workplace, we called Gogo since we couldn't get hold of Mam'Flora nor Malome John.

Gog'Khanyi: “Hold on, let me put you on speaker.”

Mam'Flora: (burping) “Ai, these boys. You dodged a bullet, but it is far from over.”

Sbu: (sigh) “When does it all end, Mam'Flora?”

Mam'Flora: “Do you think that saving the world doesn't open more room for enemies? You are halfway there, boys. Phila, you need to finish this – soon. The entire world will now know what kind of man Mr. President was. Jacob, you're not out of

danger. Diego is hunting you down as we speak – all of you. So, you have to go into hiding. Only for a short while.”

Sbu: “Yoh, aowa (Oh, no), Mam'Flora. I am too exhausted for this. Please, tell my wife that I didn't mean to get shot.”

Mam'Florah: “You can tell her yourself. You can't go to the hospital. Go to Drake's house, he will meet you there. And David, your father is so pleased with you. After your time spent in hiding, you will marry your chosen one.”

With that said, she hung up. At least some good news came out of the drama that occurred that day.

Later that evening...

David

I had finally arrived in Mexico and I had to leave Faith behind. Apparently she was already flown to Diego, so I did what I had to do. I don't know how the fuck everything became so spoiled,

but Diego was pissed. I walked in and found him already in a bad mood. Oddly, Faith was right next to him draped in Bandages almost her entire body. Was she beaten?

Diego: (angrily) “How gracious of you to finally arrive.”

That idiot was too ungrateful.

David: “Diego, you know what I have just been through. I mean, I got shot at for crying out loud.”

Diego: “How the fuck could you let them escape?”

David: “They didn't. The car blew up.”

Diego: “My sourceror just told me that none of them are dead! My girls are gone – all of them! Mamba and Cobra screwed me over along with their new little pet Jacob! They are going to pay! I should have killed his little girl when I had the chance!”

My focus was no longer on Diego and his little rant. I wanted to know what had happened to Faith.

David: "What happened to Faith?"

Diego: "Oh, nothing major. Thanks to the little stunt she pulled, we had to give her an entire makeover, you know, since she is already most wanted in South Africa."

My heart sank, as I was even afraid to ask what they had actually done to her. I mean what the fuck did she even expect to happen? I had completely forgot that I got on the plane with Mr. President's side chick.

Diego: "I see you have finally brought me my new precious gift."

I was stunned and shocked to say the least. What did he mean by that?

David: (frowning) "I don't know what you mean by that."

Diego: "This is Dineo, Mr. President's little, precious side chick. He say if he fail to deliver, she my new prize. Fuck, this puta (bitch) is delicious! Hey, you make me lots of money."

I suddenly regretted putting her on that plane. I had no idea. Honestly, with each day that went by, this job just felt like it just wasn't meant for me.

Dineo: (crying) "Please, I am a doctor. I can help you guys, somehow."

Diego: "Shame, your boyfriend sold you to me, baby. I own you now."

The following day...

Ziphora

My heart was less heavier than it was a day ago. I had a lot of time to reflect on everything that had happened and on what my mother had told me. I mean, sure. I was not perfect, you know, but every human has their flaws. So, I did what I had to do. I got up and took a shower

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I got dressed in one of my favourite dresses for church, and I headed downstairs. My mother had the twins ready and my father was also ready. Wow, man. He really looked so handsome. I could honestly tell why my mother fell for him.

Frank: "Shall we go to church?"

Ziphora: "You're not doing this because you feel sorry for me, do you?"

Susan: "Oh, please, honey. As old as we are? That would be such a waste of time. Now, come. Don't keep us waiting."

I chuckled internally as I locked the door. I got into my car and headed out. I was still a bit shaken from what had happened

and nearly getting shot to death, but well, life had to go on. Upon arrival at church, I noticed a few cars missing. It was weird, though. I found Boitu and decided to ask her.

Ziphora: "Hey, what's with the missing cars?"

Boitu: "Word has it that a few of the ex church wives are recruiting members for Selina's new church."

Well, good riddance to bad rubbish I always say.

Ziphora: "Well, a church isn't defined by the number of members it has, but by the number of true members, right?"

Boitu: "Absolutely."

I headed behind the temple, where I would get dressed every day. It felt so lonely back there without all the members who had started that church in the first place. I felt that so much change needed to occur with that church, but one step at a time I would do it. I prayed alone, since I was the only member

left. Even Jacob wasn't there to hold my hand that day, but I was a big girl. After my prayer, I heard the choir start to sing “Babe Ngiste Ngoba Mine Ngithembele kuwe” (God, please shield me because I trust in You). That song spoke to me; it spoke to me so much because I had finally allowed myself to dig deep within myself and cry whenever I felt like it. All the heartache I had endured within the past year had just been awful. I walked out and saw fewer church members than usual. The church was huge, so it wasn't rocket science to see when people were missing. I also didn't spot Ziphora nor her family, but I honestly didn't blame them. I sang along with the choir and allowed God's glory to overflow within me.

Ziphora: “Thank you, bazalwane (congregation), you may be seated. Today is a very special day, isn't it? For one, you are alive.”

Congregation: “Oh, yes.”

Ziphora: “With each day you wake up – alive and well, it is a sign of God's ever flowing mercy and grace. Amen?”

Congregation: “Amen.”

Ziphora: “Now, a lot of you know that I have been going through quite a lot the past few months, but what I can assure you is that there is someone else going through so much more than you right now; if only you allow yourself to check on people. Ask someone if they are okay, and you would see just how small your problems are. I got married a few months ago as you all know; and I fell pregnant and yet, I lost my baby. I also lost my husband who went missing after that. I felt so alone, I dwelled on a lot of pain and I felt as if the entire world was against me; when I failed to see just who was right before me, looking after me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says; “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” God is always there to ensure that we can lean on him when we are weak. I always say that I am not a Christian – I am a child of Christ! For if we make everything religious, then we scare away those who think that they are not worthy of being Christians. You see, God is a God of love. After losing my husband, I had to regain all the faith I had lost for a while. I started praying again and relying on God. You won't believe what happened to me.”

I could see they were anxious to know. Of course, a lot of the people who were there were most probably there to see how long I would take to trash the church down.

Ziphora: “After praying and learning to have faith again, I ran into someone that looked just like my husband a few days ago.”

People were stunned and started gasping with shock.

Ziphora: “I know, you will think I am losing it or that I am crazy, but let me tell you, so much is happening in this world and we don't even know the answers. I decided to act out of impulse and push the very friends who were there for me away. For the longest time I blamed them, because I thought that they were the cause of it all, but let me tell you something. When Jesus says yes – nobody can say no. Habakkuk 2:3 - “For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.” Everything God plans for us might seem like it takes forever, but believe me it comes when you least expect it. I sure do know that my husband will come back to me – as for when, I do not know. While we are all waiting for God's plan to finally suffice, I ask of you to never lose hope, never to push the

people who care about you away and no matter what, find inner peace. It is one week before Christmas, and you can imagine how I feel, but just imagine how those without family feel, or those who have family but have chosen to stay away from toxicity. Holidays can be the most loneliest times for others, so I challenge you; find one person or one family that you would like to spend this Christmas with. You don't even have to know them, just find someone to spend it with and I can promise you; you will make someone's day. Cherish those who cherish you and pray for those who don't. Life is way too short.”

I felt so relieved even though I felt tears burning my cheeks. I checked my phone while they were singing again, and I stumbled across disturbing news; “Neurosurgeon and Pastor's son Jacob Mosue dies in car accident.”

“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.”

Ziphora

I felt so uneasy right after I read the news, but something within me told me not to panic. I genuinely felt as if it was a hoax or just not true. I refused to believe it. While I had a few thoughts going through my mind, I received a text message from yet an unknown number; “Your church looks rather empty today. Are you still prepared to die for your church?” I suddenly felt a bit uneasy as I looked around trying to spot who it might have come from. I mean, a lot of people were on their phones and a lot of them were staring at me as usual, so it was impossible to spot the culprit. Perhaps I should have taken the first message a lot more seriously. No one that sends you a death threat is sane. Right after that message, I received a message from Ziyanda; “Hi, Ziphora, I know you are still upset with me, but can you please come to my house directly after church? It is rather important. Great sermon by the way, sending you love from behind the tv. Xoxo Ziyanda.” I smiled a little to myself, I was never one to have a lot of friends apart

from Desiree and that bitch Faith, so Ziyanda had really become a good friend to me. Most probably too good since I just ruined my chances of becoming real friends with her on numerous occasions. The church service finally came to a halt and I decided to tell Mama and Papa about Ziyanda's message before we left.

Susan: “Yoh, ke tshwere ke tlala (Oh, I am famished). Let's go home.”

Ziphora: “Mama, Ziyanda asked me to come see them urgently after the church service. It most probably has to do with this.”

I showed her the news and she also thought it was ridiculous. While we were talking, I had a very strong sense that someone was watching me, you know. I looked around and indeed, someone very unfamiliar to me was watching me in the creepiest and most disturbing way possible. I didn't even recognize her at all and quite frankly, she didn't even look like she was from around South Africa, but I could have been wrong. She stared at me in such a way that gave me chills down my spine, even though I ignored her when she disappeared into the crowd. What puzzled me even more was

that as soon as she disappeared, I received a startling message; “Are you still prepared to die for that church?” Okay, now I got worried. I mean, it didn't make sense to just brush it off. That was the second weird message I had received that day, with the word “die” in it. Perhaps it was time to involve Phila and Sbu. My mother, Frank and I got into the car with the twins and drove straight to Ziyanda's house. Throughout the drive my mother and Frank were rather cosy, and quite frankly they had been like that for days. I didn't understand what was happening because I was under the impression that my mother had a partner. But then, I had bigger issues to worry about. Upon arrival, I called Ziyanda.

Ziyanda: “Hey, Ziphora.”

Ziphora: “Hey, I'm outside.”

Ziyanda: “Cool, let me ring you in.”

She let us in and within seconds, we found her waiting for us right outside the door. She was quite happy to see me

although I was too nervous, I felt like absolute shit for the way I had behaved towards her two days earlier.

Ziphora: “I brought Mama and Frank. I hope you don't mind.”

Ziyanda: “Nonsense, family is everything. Come, the twins can go upstairs and play with the rest of the children. It is so good to see you again.”

I smiled faintly as we went in. I had expected to see Jacob, but instead I saw everyone else – except him. Malome John was rather happy to see me. He rushed towards me and gave me a hug, something that didn't happen very often in his line of work.

Malome John: (smiling) “How are you?”

Ziphora: “I've had better days, but I'm getting there, slowly.”

Then he looked at me in that weird way he always looks at me.

Malome John: (smiling) “Whatever happens, hang in there. Always remember, “Be still and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46:10, I knew that he never said such things for fun, he saw something but most probably didn't want to tell me. So, I let him be.

Gog'Khanyi: “Lunch is served, bakithi (my people).”

We sat down and said prayer before we started digging. Phila and Sbu looked like they had just come from a warzone; Phila had an arm sling on while Sbu was limping, so I had no idea what happened to them.

Phila: “Ziphora, I hope you have been okay since the last time we spoke. I personally would like to apologize - “

Ziphora: (interrupting) “ I apologize for interrupting you, but I'd like to say something before you continue.”

Everyone looked at me in suspense, while my mother was casually eating her food. I knew that if I had not said anything – she would have basically disowned me.

Ziphora: “I was wrong – very wrong. From the time you and Ziyanda came to my house to offer your support right after my miscarriage and after David went missing. On Friday, I was the one in the wrong – completely. You guys have been nothing but supportive and I have been behaving like a spoilt brat. Yes, I have been emotional and dealing with a lot, but that should not justify my behaviour towards those that care for me. You guys have tried on numerous occasion to be great friends to me and all I did was not return the favour. Please, find it in your hearts to forgive me.”

Ziyanda: “Ziphora, please. You didn't have to do that under no circumstances. It is hard losing precious people in your life and even harder knowing that your husband is alive but he can't even remember you. Believe me when I say that we just want the best for you and we're doing our best.”

Ziphora: “I truly appreciate that.”

Gog'Khanyi: "Which is why I think it is best to get down to business."

I wondered what that "business" was, so I just paid attention.

Phila: "I am sure you're fully aware of the weird news you saw this morning about Jacob."

I swallowed hard because I had no idea what to expect.

Phila: "Well, to cut a long story short, Jacob is not dead, but we had to fake his death because his life is in danger. You see, your husband, David, is mixed with a lot of dangerous people. Sbu and I are working on getting him back, so that at least he can stop with this human trafficking shit."

Human trafficking? Faking Jacob's death? My heart was beating too fast. I didn't understand.

Ziphora: (worried) "What are you saying?"

Phila: “I am saying that it is time to come clean to you. Diego, the man who kidnapped one of my daughters basically recruited David to get back at me. He thought that taking David would mean taking someone very valuable to me, of which he was right. Now that your dear friend Faith is his bitch, she has been feeding him information about all of us – including you. Jacob had gone undercover in hopes to get David back, but now everything is fucked. Diego knows who he was and he knows about you. Which is why we need to get you all to safety – in hiding, you know. You are not safe here.”

I wasn't registering what he was saying, I mean of course I knew he was right, but why would I just run away instead of putting my faith in the Lord? I didn't think that it was the right time for me to just pack up and leave and go into hiding like a coward.

Ziphora: “I hear you, even though I don't understand, but I am afraid that I can't go into hiding. I mean, my job is still here and my sister is due soon. My father still needs me and besides, this person who keeps sending me these creepy messages has an agenda. Clearly I am a threat to them so I cannot just up and leave.”

Everyone frowned and only then I had realized that they had no idea what I was talking about.

Susan: (frowning) “What weird messages)?”

I showed them the two messages I received that day. Once again, my mother was very unimpressed that I never told her about the messages until we got to eat lunch with Ziyanda and her family. I already felt like such a burden, so I didn't want to stress her out even more.

Tony: “I'll try tracing it as we speak.”

Ziyanda: “I still think that it is a cause for concern.”

Ziphora: “Thank you

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but in all honesty I don't want to go into hiding. I just can't."

Phila: "We totally understand your frustration, but I think it would be best."

Mam'Florah: "Let her be, Phila. I just think you can at least hire some security for her and her family, just until this all blows over."

Phila: "I wasn't trying to force you to do anything. I totally understand and respect your decision, but you have to be very careful. David works for very dangerous men – both physically and spiritually. And now with these sms's you're receiving. I don't have a good feeling about it."

Ziphora: "It's most probably Selina, or someone working for her. Just like the woman who was staring at me right after the church service."

Susan: (annoyed) "Mara (But) Ziphora! Why didn't you tell me right there and then?!"

Ziphora: "I am sorry, Mme (mama), but I didn't want to stress you out."

Sbu: "What did she look like?"

Ziphora: "It is hard to tell, well, a bit short, light in complexion. I'd say she was coloured, but she honestly didn't look like she was from this country at all."

Phila: "Then the sms's couldn't have come from Selina. What's the status, Tony?"

Tony: "I can't trace it, but by the look of things, it seems to have been sent from a tower – in Mexico."

I suddenly felt my stomach churn. Were they right? Was I dealing with more than I could possibly chew?

Sbu: "See? It isn't Selina, perhaps she is working with Diego. This is messed up."

Malome John: "Don't you worry, David will be back to his senses before you even know it. Those witches who have him won't let him go that easily. You, my dear Ziphora, have to pray. Pray until you feel like you can't any more."

Once again, I had no idea what he meant, but I heeded his advice.

Ziphora: "Okay, but what about you guys? Where will you go?"

Ziyanda: "We're going to my father's kingdom. We'll be safe there. My parents were both informed, so we're leaving tonight."

Gog'Khanyi: "Well, someone has to be on the lookout for Ziphora and her family, so I won't be leaving."

Mam'Florah: "That is a wise idea, Khanyi. Apart from security, she needs all the help she can get – more especially with Jeannette already planning to ruin everything."

That was a name I hadn't heard in a very long time.

Ziphora: (frowning) "Jeannette? She went missing, isn't it?"

Mam'Florah: (chuckling) "She has been right under your nose. Did you honestly think she would pass up on an opportunity to score on the death of her husband? She never divorced him, remember?"

How could I forget about that part? As if my life just wasn't filled with enough drama already.

Ziphora: "What about Jacob?"

Sbu: "He's safe."

Malome John: "But we need to let the twins go stay with him for a short while. It's going to get worse before it gets better."

I hated that; it was as if things were always a shit storm for me before they got better. It felt as if I had to struggle for literally everything right after I graduated. Life sure wasn't meant to be easy, but such struggle was simply uncalled for. I guess only time would tell. After handling all the logistics regarding Jacob's fake death, I had to pull myself together. I just had a very unnerving feeling in the pit of my stomach. The last time I felt like that was when I was about to lose my baby. I guess only time would tell. Ecclesiastes 3:1 - "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

David

Things were starting to annoy me so much; more especially anything to do with Diego. The more I spent time there, the more I just didn't feel like myself at all. I kept dreaming of that woman that I saw that day, and she was appearing a lot more clearer in my dreams. I had no idea what Diego had been doing to me, but the more I tried to pray, the more I kept seeing his dark one. I was filled with all this unwanted hatred and evil,

and it just didn't seem like it was me at all. I felt a very strong urge and desire to just divert from all those thoughts, so I decided to do something I hadn't done in all the while that I had been in Mexico. I had taken a walk to one of the book stores nearby and I decided to buy a Bible. I didn't want to go back to Diego's house, because that would just anger me a lot more. I had no idea whom I even was and that made my feelings even worse. I had no idea where to even begin, but I knew that the Bible was something I was somehow fond of, most probably in my past life. I came across the book of Ecclesiastes, and read Ecclesiastes 8:6; "For there is a time and a way for everything, although a man's trouble lies heavily on him." I was indeed troubled, to be honest. I had no idea where to begin searching for that woman that I saw, but I knew that finding her would mean that I would find whom I was. I decided to put the Bible in my bag and head on back before Diego started feeling suspicious. And besides, the migraines were making their infamous comeback, so I had to lie down. Once I had arrived, I found Diego already waiting for me.

Diego: (smiling) "Luis, you have been gone a while, dear friend. I hope you weren't up to no good."

David: “No, not at all. Unless you think worshipping God is being up to no good.”

Diego: (frowning) “Of course not. In this house, we worship God with everything we have. Come, have some dinner.”

David: “Perhaps another time, my head feels like it is about to explode.”

Diego: “Faith is there, she will give you something to soothe it, no?”

I just nodded as I walked right towards my room. Of course, I found her already waiting for me. She looked completely different – rather scary. It would take me a while to get used to her white self. She just looked like something between a horror movie and Pamela Anderson. She didn't even look that happy, but I had no idea why she even subjected herself to such a life.

David: “Oh, you're here.”

Faith: (faint smile) “Yes, Diego said I should come check up on you.”

David: “My migraines are back. Can you give me something for them?”

Faith: “Sure. Lie down.”

Usually whenever she told me to do that, I ended up falling into a very deep sleep. I had no idea why or how she even did that, but the more she did it, the more I failed to even remember much from my past. So, I decided to think about that woman that day. While Faith was doing whatever she was doing to me, I thought of that woman, that beautiful woman and nonetheless, it seemed to have been working.

Faith

I couldn't believe that Diego had done that to me. After everything I had done for him – I mean I basically gave him all the intel he needed to win David and to get to Phila and Sbu. After all that and that is how he thanked me?! He decided to change my entire appearance! How the fuck will my own family even recognize me when I look like some trainwreck

white lady? It was not right at all. I figured that for as long as I was in Mexico, I still had my David. I mean, sure, it was rather unorthodox, and he just didn't remember who he was, but he was right next to me instead of Ziphora, of which I was entirely grateful. That gave me some satisfaction because I had what she couldn't have. He came back from wherever he was saying that he had his usual migraines. I did my best trying to suppress them. What worried me was that he wasn't falling asleep. Usually he would fall asleep within ten minutes, but after an entire half an hour, he was still awake although his eyes were still closed. It was as if he was meditating or something.

Faith: "Luis, are you sleeping?"

David: "Nope, but the migraine has disappeared."

Impossible! I was too shocked to even respond. How? What had changed? While I was still trying to hypnotize him, I saw something I had never even experienced before.

Mac: (angrily) "You will regret the day you messed with my son, Faith."

I found myself dropping everything I had in my hands as I was screaming. Was I going mad?

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“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. “

Faith

I blinked a few times, hoping that he would leave my sight, but he was right there – in the flesh. He was dressed in the exact white suit that he was buried in. That surely couldn't have been real. Perhaps I was still suffering from the side effects of the plastic surgery.

David: (frowning) “What's wrong? What is it?”

Faith: (frightened) “It... It's... Do you see him?”

David: “Who?”

Faith: (pointing) “Him.”

David slowly turned his head and I thought I was crazy, but he was seeing him too. That left me even more agitated. My plans were all going down the drain.

David: "Yes, I see him. Who is he?"

Faith: "I... I don't know."

Mac: "You should ask Julia what happened to her and where she is now, Faith. I am warning you the same way I warned her. Walk away before you too get hurt."

Faith: (worried) "Did you hear him?"

David: "He isn't speaking, but smiling at me. Who is he, Faith?"

Faith: "No one. I need some air, I'll be right back."

I walked out trying to get some air, when I bumped into Dineo. I had totally forgotten about her.

Dineo: “Oh, Faith, thank god I have bumped into you. Please, you have to help me. I don't belong here. I need to get back home.”

Faith: (chuckling) “Since when are you my responsibility, Dineo? You were dating the President the last time I checked.”

Dineo: “Ao? Faith, you are the one who came to me saying you wanted revenge against Ziphora, and now you are the one turning against me?”

Faith: “Kopa o ntlogele (Please, leave me alone), Dineo. I have enough on my plate.”

Dineo: “I regret ever listening to you. Ziphora is highly protected, and believe me when I say that if you don't help me – we'll both go down. I am not going down alone.”

Faith: “Good luck with that because your own parents don't even know where you are. Oh, wait, you disowned your father and your useless mother is all alone at home.”

Dineo: “Please, Faith. I'm desperate.”

Faith: “In case you haven't noticed – so am I.”

I left her standing there as I proceeded to walk outside. This can't be real, man. I was most probably stressed.

David

I saw the man standing before me, who looked like he was spirit. He was just not a person who was alive, otherwise everyone else would have been able to see him. I asked Marco to come and witness what I was seeing, just to be sure that I wasn't going mad.

David: “Marco, can you come here for a second?”

Marco: "What's up?"

David: "Do you see what I see?"

Marco: "What do you see?"

David: "Do you see the man standing right there?"

Marco: "No, Luis. Maybe you need to go mad. Faith's hypnosis is fucking with you."

He left while the man never left my sight. He was even smiling at me. He really looked so genuine, so warm and so loving. I felt like I knew him.

David: "Who are you?"

Mac: (smiling) "You'll remember soon enough, David."

David: (frowning) "My name is not David."

Mac: "By tomorrow you will have gotten most of your memories back, David, my son. Know that I have never left your side – ever. It was a lot harder to get through to you when you were consumed with the dark energies that you were introduced to. Hang in there and pray, for I am always by your side, my son. Your wife is awaiting your return. Don't waste too much time being angry here once you find out who you really are. Your friends will help you overcome all this evil. I love you, son."

Son? With that said he just disappeared. Could that have been the answer I was looking for?

Ziphora

Last night was rather unpleasant, as Frank was restless the entire night. Mama was there with him the entire night – despite me offering my assistance. I was under the impression that he was getting better, but it sure felt as if she was hiding

something from me. With Charisma about to give birth soon, we all thought it would be best that Keo and I be the ones to rotate with my father and since Mama was also now in the picture, she was really hands on. I really appreciated her, and I just didn't understand what their relationship even was, since she was still very hard on him. I wasn't complaining, with the twins also gone, I had some time to think of going back to work. I had rather pleasant dream, though, with my father in law telling me that everything will be okay, for as long as I lean onto him. I was grateful, to be honest. I mean I didn't get such pleasant dreams quite often. It was about 8am and since Mama was up all night with Frank, I thought it would be best to make breakfast. While I was busy making us some food, I heard a rather stern and disturbing knock on my front door. I was irritated, because security never let anyone through without proper identification and without alerting me first. I could hear Security shouting at these women, but they just wouldn't hear of it.

Security: "Ma'am, I'm afraid I will have to call the police if you don't leave."

Woman: "Call them! I don't care! This witch needs to open this door before I break it down!"

That voice sounded quite familiar, so I headed towards the door and opened it in a hurry before that woman really tore my door down. As expected, there she was. She didn't even wait for me to allow her in as she stormed in – with her entire entourage. Just like that very same day when Jacob wanted a divorce from her.

Jeannette: “That took you long enough, witch!”

Security: “I am so sorry

Mrs. Mosue, I tried to stop them, but - “

Ziphora: “It is honestly okay, I'll take it from here.”

Security: “I can call the police if you'd like.”

Ziphora: “No need. I'll sort it out.”

I closed the door and took a deep breath. I was seriously not in the mood to entertain rubbish more especially from people like Jeannette.

Jeannette: “How nice of you to alert me that my husband has died, sister-in-law.”

Ziphora: “Is that my job, or your mother-in-law's job?”

Jeannette: “Don't get too cocky, wena (you). I have come to claim what is mine.”

Ziphora: “So, you have come to claim what is yours in my house?”

Jeannette: “Where else will I go when you have hidden Jacob's house from me? I haven't even seen my twins and I heard through the grapevine that they live with you. Where are they?!”

Ziphora: “Jeannette, you have some nerve. As far as I am concerned, you ran away from them. So, I won't ask you again, what the fuck are you doing in my house?”

Jeannette: “I told you – I have come to get what is mine.”

It didn't take long for my mother to hear all the commotion.

Susan: “What is going on here?! Oh, the gold digger has returned.”

Jeannette: “Call me what you like, but I have come to get what is mine! And we're not leaving here until we do.”

Susan: “Oh? You have come for what's yours in my daughter's house?”

Jeannette: “If that is what it takes then yes, and actually – it isn't her house – it's David's house. David is Jacob's brother, so what's Jacob's belongs to me. We never got divorced.”

Susan: “O sure ka taba ya gao sesi (Are you sure about your story, sis)?”

Jeannette: “Listen, old woman! I don't even know why you're involving yourself - “

She didn't even get to finish her sentence.

Susan: “Ema gona moo, ka boa (Wait right there, I'll be right back).”

While Jeannette was shouting at me with such confidence with her entire entourage, my mother blew a fuse. I could tell that she didn't even sleep a wink, yet she managed to get her gun out of her purse and wasted no time.

Susan: (pointing gun) “Bua gape (say it again).”

Jeannette: “That is most probably a toy gun, sis. I am not afraid of old women like you.”

My mother did the most unbelievable thing; she shot Jeanette right in the shoulder. She fired one shot and hit her right there. Wow, I had no idea she was such a sharp shooter. She got that gun right after Frank left her – for protection. As a woman who worked night shift back in Orange Farm, she had to find some sort of protection. Jeannette's blood started dripping right on my white floor, while her entourage was screaming with some of them running right out. I didn't approve of violence and my mother was anything but violent, but Jeannette had it coming to be honest.

Jeannette: (screaming) “Oh, you shot me! I'll get you arrested!”

Susan: “While you're at it, call the police right here, right now! I'm waiting! How dare you walk into my daughter's house demanding your dead ex husband's things from her! You are trespassing. I am giving you one minute to leave before I put another bullet right through your heart this time!”

Jeannette: "I'll be back!"

Susan: "Fofok (fuck off), Schwarzenegger! Re tswele ka motse (leave this house)!"

She left while cursing and shouting in pain, but my mother was unbothered.

Susan: "Next time, don't even allow them in. Clean up that mess, ke sa ile go robala (I'm going to take a nap). Frank had a horrible night."

People were rather cruel, to be honest. Jeannette couldn't wait to get rid of Jacob but now that he was "dead" she wanted to cash out on his death.

David

I had such a pleasant night's sleep for the first time in ages. I had such great dreams, with the man who visited me – my father. I had no idea if it was a dream or reality, because it felt

like he was right there speaking to me. I recalled the dream as if it had happened a minute before.

Mac: "David, my son. I have been praying for this moment."

David: "Father?"

Mac: "I am so pained and mostly angered at what these people have done to you."

David: "What do you mean? Who am I and how did I get there?"

Mac: "You had a car accident – the night you and your wife went to visit your friend Phila and Sbu."

David: "Those names ring a faint bell, father."

Mac: "Give it time, they will come to you."

David: “Is that woman my wife? The one I bumped into a few days ago?”

Mac: “Yes, she isn't only your wife, but she is your chosen one, David. She was chosen for you by our ancestors.”

David: “How come I remember nothing?”

Mac: “Because Diego ordered a doctor to wipe your entire memory, but no evil is greater than God. You will be back to your normal self, my son. You will remember everything. I wanted to personally come and tell you that whatever happens, do not go rogue. These people are dangerous. Trust in Phila and Sbu, your brother has also risked his own life to save you. You will get out of here. For now, act normal and trust me. I will be by your side – no matter what.”

David: “How will I know that I am doing the right thing?”

Mac: “The same way you have always known. Your heart will tell you. Have Faith in the lord, for you were the chosen Messiah, David. I didn't name you David for nothing.”

Just like that I had a streamline of memories flood back to me. I remembered everything; from what my mother did to me, to what she allowed my uncle to do to my brother. Oh, my father and how he committed suicide. I remembered my wedding day and I remembered everything about her – my wife, Ziphora! Now it all made sense; how she ran towards me that day crying yet I couldn't remember her. I remembered everything Faith did to me. It really pained me that my wife's own best friend could do that to her. My own wife suffered our child's miscarriage alone – without me. I felt like such a failure. I cried, for two hours straight as if I was mourning the loss of my child and my marriage. I had to get her back; I just had to. Ziphora loved me when I didn't even love myself. She believed in me when I felt like I had lost all hope. Now she was dealing with the harsh realities of life and this cruel world without me by her side. Enough was enough, I had been held captive for far too long. “Hang in there, Zee, my wife. I'm back.”

“For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him.”

Ziphora

It had been a rather awful day, with Jeannette and her entire family already spreading rumours like wildfire. Life was so peaceful without her, to be honest. Amongst everything, despite the entire country knowing about Jacob's supposed death, I hadn't heard anything from Julia. I don't know what I even expected because she was as cruel as Satan – if not worse. Ever since Tony tried to track those strange sms's, we hadn't received any leads, apart from them coming from a satellite in Mexico. Even though I had a feeling that it was sent by someone I knew, I could tell that things were getting deeper than I thought.

Despite everything, I was ready to face whatever the world threw at me. I had to plan Jacob's funeral, in a haste. I had to do it even faster since the media was just all over us like a rash. The entire thing spread out of control, when they even got news that my father was seriously ill, with cancer. I had a

feeling that my mother was hiding something from me regarding that, but who was I to push? So, I spent the entire day looking for the perfect casket and the perfect funeral caterers. Phila was of great assistance since Ziyanda, Rachel and the children all left to go into hiding back in Eshowe, where her parents are the rulers in the Kingdom of Nyanini. It must be really nice being of royal blood, but I wasn't ready to burden people with my problems. Jesus never ran from his problems; he faced them head on. I know, I was dealing with a lot of dangerous people, but I had to face the problems head on. I had to try. While driving home, I received a rather unexpected phone call.

Ziphora: "Ziphora Mosue hello?"

Julia: (frantically) "Ziphora, how are you?"

Ziphora: "I'm fine, Mme (ma), how are you?"

Julia: "I've had better days. You haven't come to visit me ever since my accident."

I even had to check my phone screen to see if it wasn't a prank. Was this woman for real?

Julia: "Ziphora, are you still there?"

Ziphora: "Uh, yes. I still am."

Julia: "I know, I haven't been the best mother-in-law to you. I deserve everything that is coming my way, but please, can you help me? I haven't slept a wink in months, imagine how I feel not being able to sleep and seeing Mac by my side every fucking day. Please, help me. Do something – anything. Give me tranquillizers or pray for me. Better yet – tell Mac, no, in fact, beg him to leave me alone. Ziphora, you're my only hope, please. With Jacob gone now, I realize that you're my only hope."

I had no idea what to say. She was crazy to think that I'd actually visit her.

Ziphora: "I have to go, Mme (ma). Keep well."

Julia: “Ziphora, wait, please - “

I hung up and shook my head in disbelief. Julia had some nerve, really. Something must be awfully wrong with the women in her family. As I was about to drive through my gate, of course, I found the media right outside. I had to hoot a few times with them forcefully flashing cameras in my face while trying to get me to open my window to answer their stupid questions. Journalism had turned into sensationalism, in all honesty. Every news platform was all about digging into people's private lives. I wasn't even a celebrity, but they had turned me into one. I finally went in and wasted no time as I parked my car immediately. As I got into the house, I didn't find my mother nor Frank watching tv, but I could hear sounds of someone vomiting instead. I rushed up the stairs in panic, only to find Frank vomiting profusely with my mother comforting him.

Ziphora: (frowning) “Mama, what's happening?”

Susan: (surprised) “Ziphora, o tsene neng ke sa go utlwa (when did you get here without me hearing you)?”

Ziphora: “Ke gona ke tsena (I just got in now).”

Susan: “It's nothing to worry about. He is just having an off day.”

It didn't look like a random off day to me. It seemed as if he had been ill for a while instead of getting better.

Ziphora: “Mama, are you hiding something from me?”

Susan: “Now is not the time, Ziphora. Go sort out dilo tsa lesa (the funeral things). I got this covered. You have enough problems to deal with. Go.”

I knew better than to protest. She was still my mother and since she shot Jeanette earlier that day, she could most likely do anything to me. She looked so pale, as if she hardly slept for days. I closed the door behind me and left them as is. My head was heavy; knowing that Frank was getting worse yet again might have meant imminent death was upon us. I had

just found him and I had gotten to know him, yet he was about to die. Life could really be so unfair. While heading downstairs, I received a phone call from yet an unknown number. I answered it, reluctantly.

Ziphora: “Dr. Ziphora Mosue.”

Jeannette: “Hi, Zee. It's Jeanette.”

Oh, boy. Could life just get any worse?

Ziphora: (sigh) “What do you want, Jeannette?”

Jeannette: “I am done fighting. Look, I know that I imposed myself on you and I am really sorry for that. I was just so stressed that Jacob wanted to divorce me like that and yet, he is now gone.”

Ziphora: “Okay.”

Jeannette: “I know, you are most probably so stressed right now, but can you please send me his ID copy, death certificate and death registry documents? I have to claim his life policies - “

I didn't even listen to the rest of her request and I decided to hang up. Here I was almost convinced that she was seriously sorry only to find that she actually wanted to claim for policies she took in his name – despite how cruel she was to him. She never loved him, yet she wanted to claim for money because she insured his life! Some women are vultures. Within minutes after hanging up on her, she sent me a message. “Just give me the documents so that I can be out of your life!” I had no time for such – not when I had so much on my plate. I decided to switch off my phone for a few hours, since the funeral was going to be held the next day, I needed to gather my strength to lie to the entire country in the house of the Lord. Nothing made sense; but life had no manual, really. Romans 12:12 says; “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

Julia Mosue

I couldn't believe that Ziphora, being the God-fearing woman she was, decided to flatly ignore my request. She was my last hope. I mean, doesn't God say; "Forgive and you shall be forgiven?" It was bad enough that Mac just wouldn't leave my side – no matter what. I had to sell most of my assets

including my house and move into a smaller house in Mamelodi! Imagine that. A classy woman like me having to downgrade like that. To make matters worse, Buda left me – and took some of my money with him! He stole from me after everything I had done for him. Selina on the other hand has forgotten all about me. She just had it in her mind that the new church was hers and hers alone – forgetting that my money built that church. I created her and she decided to turn her back on me just like that! I decided to call her one more time, surprisingly she answered.

Selina: "Julia, how are you, my old friend?"

Julia: "You decided to answer. How gracious of you."

Selina: "I can never turn my back to those in need. I mean, you have just lost your son – your second son. How tragic."

Julia: (annoyed) “Selina, wa ntebala, neh (you forget who I am, hey)?!”

Selina: (chuckling) “Bathong (Goodness), Julia, o nagana gore o tshosetsa mang (who do you think you're scaring)? You have no legs, babes. No money, no husband, no children left. I mean, you're basically trash.”

Julia: “Selina, are you letting all that money get into your head? Diego will use you just the way he used me. He is going to get rid of you.”

Selina: “I am not used goods like you, honey. I didn't rape my son like you did. Now, you do know what the Bible says about reaping what you have sown? Job 4:8; “As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.”

Julia: “You think you're that different from me, Selina? You are now so invested in human trafficking and organ trading. You are recruiting young girls to join your church so that you can sell them. You're no different from me, so don't you dare tell

me about the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:5; “Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.”

Selina: (laughing) “Even in times of distress, you still know your Bible. Look, I can't help you, sweetie. But, I am a woman of God and I shall be sure to pray for you, hey? Don't you worry, I'll be sure to attend your son's funeral for you. I am sure you can't wheel yourself to church. Bye-bye.”

She hung up on me, leaving me even more distressed than I was before I made the call. I had no idea why I even bothered.

Mac: “Julia, the fire you love playing with is slowly burning you. Losing your legs is just the beginning.”

Julia: “Mac, please. Ke utlwile, hle (I have learnt my lesson). Please, nlokolle (set me free). I beg of you.”

Mac: “Acts 2:38 – 39; “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy

Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” You haven't changed one bit, Julia. Remember, I am spirit now, which means I can see right through you, and so can the Lord. You are playing with fire. God is not one to be mocked. Repent and I shall leave you alone. God gives us all chances, repent; cleanse your heart and change your ways, and the Lord shall set you free. Until then, you will suffer the consequences.”

Julia: (angered) “Why can't you just fuck off, Mac?! You have gotten what you wanted, already! You took everything from me!”

Mac: “You still have your soul, Julia. Be careful, for that will also be taken from you.”

David

I had a very unpleasant day, thinking about my wife. Everything came back to me, as I went through my Instagram page. I finally remember everything; Me, David Mosue, Man of the

year and one of the best Architects in South Africa. Those titles don't mean as much as the one of husband to Ziphora Mosue. That was my biggest achievement. I was about to be a father, until Diego took that away from me. I read up on all the articles listed online about the tragic night of that accident. I didn't remember much for months, but it all slowly came back to me. I remember how I tried to wake my wife up, but she was unconscious, and the next thing I knew, I was being dragged out of the car by an unknown number of men. I was tortured, beaten to a pulp. I remember faintly lying on that operating table right here in Diego's house and that was when they tampered with my brain. I remember the "first time" I met Faith as my doctor and how she reversed all my memories and suppressed everything. I'll never forgive her for toying with my mind like that. She actually thought that I would never be able to remember my wife and fall in love with a whore like her?

As I browsed through my Instagram page, tears rolled down my cheeks as I viewed all our videos and photo albums. How can people honestly ruin such a beautiful thing? For what? My marriage with Zee hadn't even crossed the one year mark and already we had such problems. I couldn't even face myself. I was so hurt, but I couldn't even imagine how she felt all those

months without even knowing where I was. She endured the pain of losing our baby all on her own. That was enough to drive a man to the edge. I had to pretend as if all was still well while devising a plan to get the fuck out of here. I decided to call Phila using a private number, since well these Mexicans were good at tracing calls. He hardly answered any unknown numbers, but I was hoping he would answer that time, and luckily he did.

Phila: "Phila Zwane."

David: "P, it's me, David."

Phila: (astounded) "David? Is this not a prank? How do I know that I'm actually talking to you and not your alter ego Luis Garcia?"

David: (chuckling) "Because Luis Garcia wouldn't know that you and I had made a deal about me taking over your company as the CEO, now would he?"

I could hear elation in his voice, as he put me on speaker.

Phila: “Eh, Sbu, this fucker finally regained his memory!”

Sbu: “It's about damn time, mfo (bro)!”

Phila: “What happened? How did you remember?”

David: “I'll tell you when I see you. For now, I need a plan – a good plan. They don't know that I remember now.”

Phila: “Well, that just speeds up our plans. It is time for us to activate Plan C. Welcome back, David, my man. We fucking missed you.”

David: (chuckling) “Same goes. Take good care of my wife until I come back that side.”

Sbu: “She is well taken care of.”

David: “Now, let me hear more about your Plan C.”

Phila: “We'll tell you, but you can't be listening while you're in that fucker's house. Go somewhere and buy a burner, then call me.”

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Ziphora

I had trouble sleeping; despite the fact that I was basically living a lie with this whole fake funeral thing, but I just battled to sleep. Yet again, I dreamt of David; he was smiling at me this time and was a lot closer to me, although Faith was shouting and calling for him this time, rubbing her pregnant belly. Ever since then, I couldn't go back to sleep.

Apart from the repetitive dreams, I was worried sick about my father, and my mother depriving herself of sleep while taking care of him just didn't make things any easier. So, I headed downstairs to the kitchen to make myself a cup of warm milk, just as Jacob once taught me that it is good for insomnia. I added a teaspoon of Turmeric while at it. I used that time to prepare for the dreaded funeral, when I received a message from an unknown number. “I miss sleeping next to you, while holding you in my arms. I miss watching you snore and praying

with you, but most importantly, I miss making breakfast for you every morning and watching you smile. I'm coming for you, and I hope you still love me just as much as I still love you, Dr. Mosue. Xoxo, D.” My heart skipped a hundred beats a minute as I read that message most probably for about five times. Was that even real? There was just no way. I tried calling the number, but it just wasn't going through. I felt so uneasy, I found myself staring through the windows thinking that perhaps someone was spying on me. Oddly, I was thinking that I was losing my mind.

I looked outside my kitchen windows and indeed, it was only Phila's bodyguards who were assigned to me. Of course they low-key follow me everywhere without anyone noticing. How on earth could David have sent me the messages if he had lost his memory? It just didn't make any sense. I believed it would be him because he was the only one who would send me a message with that signature. I was so overwhelmed with emotion, with tears warming my cheeks. Perhaps that was the answer to my prayers; the prayers I had been reciting ever since David had gone missing. With a few days left til Christmas, I was an emotional wreck.

I headed back upstairs to my bedroom and decided to pray before trying to sleep again.

Ziphora: "Father God, I humble myself before you. I know, I am not the most deserving of your love, your grace nor your mercy, but I thank you Lord, for all you have done and given me. Your amazing grace is what keeps me alive and what helps me thrive. I could not have done most of what I have been doing without you. All I ask is that life falls back into place real soon, and that you spare the lives of those I adore. Nonetheless, let your will be done, dear Lord, for you are in control of every situation. I put my life in your hands as always and I ask that you please protect me and all those in my life. Forgive me for all the wrongs I have done, and bless me with goodwill and a good heart. I pray this in Jesus' Mighty name. Amen." I got back into bed and eventually managed to drift off back to sleep.

The morning of the funeral finally arrived. I didn't even have enough time to prepare myself since I had overslept. It hardly happened to me, but that day, I overslept and I wasn't very happy about it. I knew that my entire day would get ruined. My mother even had to wake me up despite her feeling somewhat weary. I even had to switch off my phone last night due to Jeannette's pestilence persistence. Nonetheless, I was ready for

the day. I got dressed in one of my favourite black dresses that David bought for me once and put on his favourite lipstick and headed out. I barely had time for breakfast. Thank goodness this was one those easy funerals to arrange because I couldn't stand the thought of having an all night prayer or night vigil. I headed to the garage and decided to drive one of David's cars for a change, seeing that I was one of the most followed women in the country. I took David's BMW X4 for a change, since he hardly drove it – ever. As expected, a few of the bloody paparazzi were already outside and didn't recognize me one bit. Thankfully, the bodyguards were right behind me in their black SUV's. As I entered the church yard, I immediately saw that everything was proceeding in order, all thanks to Boitu. I honestly needed to appreciate that girl more often. Desiree also made it to the funeral as well, for moral support. My mother and Frank couldn't come with because Frank wasn't well at all. I was a bit anxious seeing that I was rather late, only to find that Gog'Khanyi was also inside the church, directing people on where to go. My goodness, the casket was already inside the church.

Ziphora: “Dumela, Gogo (Hello, Granny).”

Gog'Khanyi: “Hello, Ziphora. How are you, my baby?”

Ziphora: "I'm well, thanks and you?"

Gog'Khanyi: "I'm always great."

Ziphora: "Forgive me for being late. Now you are doing what I was supposed to have done."

Gog'Khani: "Don't be silly, Ziphora. We are practically family. I'm here to assist you. You're not superwoman, you know. You can't be expected to do everything here, besides Boitu has been of great help."

Ziphora: "Thank you. Tell me how I can help?"

Gog'Khanyi: "You can do that by preparing for the sermon. You just need a breather and that is why I'm here."

Gog'Khanyi had always been one of the most helpful women I knew. Apart from my mother, she was one a person could rely on.

Ziphora: (smiling) “Thank you, Gog'Khanyi. It really means so much to me.”

Gog'Khanyi: “You are one of God's favourites, Zee. Good things await you – remember that. Now, go get ready before I change my mind.”

She said that smiling at me, almost as if she was trying to tell me to expect some good news within the coming days, but it might as well have been my imagination. I took Gogo up on her offer and I went ahead and got ready. Surprisingly, I felt so much at ease. I felt so bad about lying to everyone in the house of the Lord, but surely God would understand. Very few people had started to come in, but just as I was done praying after putting on my church garment, I could hear some disruption from within the church. Oh, I just knew it had to be Jeannette with her entourage. I headed out to see what the whole commotion was about. Indeed, Jeannette was the cause of all problems – except for this time, she had brought her entire

family; from distant relative to most probably the most distant relative one could ever find in a family.

Jeannette: (shouting angrily) “I am here to take my husband's body! Where is she?! Where is that bitch?!”

Gog'Khanyi: (irritated) “You have no right barging into the house of the Lord acting like this, Jeannette. You are a disgrace; not only to all women, but to church women. How dare you do such? Have you no shame?”

Jeannette: (shouting angrily) “I am Jacob's wife! I was excluded in all the planning. I deserve to be here, and nonetheless, since well your precious Ziphora decided to do my duty, I have come to take my husband's body and bury him myself!”

I was so peeved, to be honest. How dare she just do as she pleases in my church?

Gog'Khanyi: (chuckling) “Clearly, you don't know me, Ntombazana (girly). You should count your lucky stars that we

are in the House of God, otherwise I would have killed you with my bare hands. Now, I am giving you and your entire herd five minutes, actually make that three to either sit down and shut up or leave. The choice is yours.”

Jeannette: (shouting) “I have come with the police! The sheriffs are right outside.”

Gog'Khani: “Do you think I scare easily? Some lousy sheriffs will just make me crumble? I can make your life a living hell, girl. Try me – I dare you.”

Jeannette's family tried to cause even more commotion

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by forcefully walking towards the casket trying to take it, but thankfully, Tony and the guards were there. I had no idea where the rest of the guards came from, but they were there. Phila and Sbu emerged from outside and I knew then that those two wouldn't take shit from anyone – not even a bitter estranged wife like Jeannette.

Phila: “Jeannette! You dare enter a church – your late Father-in-law's church and cause such drama?!”

Jeannette: (shocked) “Oh, Mayor. I apologize. It really wasn't my intention, I mean, I just came here for what's mine.”

Phila: (angrily) “You did this purposefully, worse in front of people we don't even know and in front of the media. You dare shame your husband's last send off like this?! Perhaps now that your entire family is here, I should allow the Queen Mother of this church to tell the entire family including the world what you did to Jacob.”

I could see Jeanette wanted to piss her pants right there, leaving a few of her relatives confused.

Jeanette: “No, please. I don't think that this is the right atmosphere.”

Sbu: “You decided to talk to our grandmother like that, and now suddenly you don't think that this is the right atmosphere?”

Hey, wena (you)! You have a lot of nerve for someone who abandoned her twin daughters and left her husband to fend for them on his own.”

Man1: (frowning) “Wat sê hy, Jeannette (What is he saying)?”

Jeannette: (worried) “Please, allow me to be part of this and I promise, I won't bother you again.”

Phila: “So says the woman who ran away with some of her husband's money; leaving him with his daughters and now, you came back demanding his documents so that you could claim for life insurance. I will not tolerate such nonsense, understand?”

Jeannette: “Ye.. Yes, Mayor.”

Jeannette and her family sat down, while some of her uncles were still in shock, trying to question what Phila and Sbu were talking about. People were queuing in, along with the nosy media who had already started filming. I was so disappointed in Jeannette, to be honest. I mean, I had heard of a lot of black families doing such things at funerals, but never did I expect to experience it like that; more especially from someone so young.

I got the shock of my life when I saw Selina walk in; alongside the woman who was staring at me like crazy just the other day. She most probably wanted to see all the drama. I bet she even had something planned with Julia. Just as I was about to start, with the choir singing, while Boitu was leading them, I saw Julia wheeling herself into the church; leaving everyone flabbergasted. She was so frail and pale, she had lost so much weight, I was even surprised to see that she could manage rolling those wheels with those thin arms. Her face looked as if she had aged ten years within a space of months. To put it in plain terms, she looked like hell. Her eyes seemed like that of a dead person, as if she just hadn't slept in months as she told me. Wow, a lot of people would always say that ancestors had a way of punishing people dearly, but I had yet to see such until I saw Julia with my very own eyes. No one, not even Selina pushed her further into the church. No one wanted to help her; and I felt really bad. I mean, God says we should forgive and treat people with kindness, no matter what. But, also, it is just not easy to forgive a person like Julia. She made everyone's lives a living hell. The choir quieted down and I could hear people crying in pain. Funerals were never my favourite gigs.

Ziphora: "Good morning, bazalwane (congregation). As we all know, we are here together for a rather sombre occasion. We are not here to worship the lord as always, but we are here to

say goodbye to someone who was a dear member of this church.”

I couldn't believe how shaky I felt at that moment; seeing Julia stare at me. Oddly, I could tell she was suffering and in a lot of pain – yet, she still looked at me with pure disgust and hatred. I could tell that she just wasn't remorseful for all she had done. Either way, I felt that there was some hope for her – there is always hope – for everyone. Even though it was a fake funeral, I felt that I should conduct it in such a way that Jacob would love as if it was his actual funeral.

Ziphora: “I know how typical funerals are run, but however, I feel that today should be a celebration. We should start treating funerals as a celebration of life; instead of a sad occasion. Yes, it is the end of life, but funerals are a rude awakening to all of us; they show us that life does indeed come to an end, but they are also a firm reminder to keep going and to live each day as if it were our last. We need to cherish life and those around us for every day could be the last day you see them. Romans 6:23 says; “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We are all born in sin, yet it is our duty as people to make choices that will benefit us even in death. When we return to God in spirit, life does not stop there. Matthew 10:28 says; “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him

who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Yes, we all know that the circumstances around Jacob's death are rather controversial, but we all know that the God I pray to fights all our battles. No one gets away with evil. Not in life, and most certainly not in spirit. Psalm 73:26 says; “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” We need to know that if we give our hearts, souls to the lord, we shall be set free and be given eternal life. For God can forgive us all – no matter what we do.”

Julia started laughing, but I was unbothered.

Ziphora: “Even people who come across as the most spiritual beings on this earth, carry a lot of burdens. For God says in Matthew 7:15; “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” 2 Peter 2:1 says; “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” You see, a lot of people claim that they know and love God, but only those who truly know and love Him, will repent and be able to love those around them. Life is something else; indeed karma exists. If you live by the sword, you will most likely die by it, but God gives us all second chances and if you still do not see that when the need arises – then you will have to face the consequences.

Ever wondered why a lot of people find God when they are in a comatose state or ill? That is because when we are in dire situations, we tend to listen to God more clearly. Jacob lived a very good life alongside his brother. He never wanted to be in the lime light and always wanted David to take over as the Head Priest of the church instead of him. He was one who didn't want the high life and was okay with having just enough, but sadly he got married to someone who just didn't appreciate the good man he was. Yes, he had a past like all of us do. Yes, he was not perfect, but who is? He was a beloved brother, brother-in-law, father and at some point a very loving husband. All he needed was his mother's love, yet he never received it. Despite it all, he vowed to give the love he never received to his daughters. That is something I commend him for.”

Julia clicked her tongue so loudly as she wheeled herself out of the church. My suspicions were correct indeed – she was nowhere near repenting. As for Jeannette, she most probably wanted to make a point as she walked out with the rest of her entourage, about a hundred of them, but I didn't care. I was there to do something I had to do. My mother would always say; “I'd rather be buried by five people who loved and checked up on me every day, than five hundred people whom I never even knew. We are all going to get the same sized graves.”

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ziphora

The funeral went according to plan – despite all the drama ahead of it. We buried a fake body, I didn't even ask whom it was, but thankfully it was badly burnt so there was no need for an open casket. We headed straight to my house for food and refreshments. I had completely forgotten about organizing that, but Gog'Khanyi seemed to have it all under control. After eating, we had to go to the will hearing, and since Julia was not mentioned anywhere, it had to be just Jeannette, the lawyer and I. It was rather quick, as Jacob cut straight to the chase. He said that I'd get custody of the children and remain their executor – including his. And he left everything to his children and not a single dime to Jeannette. Of course, she was angry and started shouting and vilifying me, but I could not be bothered. A lot of women marry men with the hopes that they'd score big, and not for love. I could never understand how some women think; when men do it they are considered trash. The people ate and understood the conditions of my life;

with my ill father in the house and all the circumstances regarding David going missing, so they wasted no time as they ate and left. There was no time for after tears. I hated that anyway. I explained the entire situation to Keo and Charisma, and explained that there was no need for them to come. Of course, Charisma was about 8 months pregnant, so we all know that in black culture pregnant women and funerals are a no-go. After everyone left, Gog'Khanyi had the caterers packing everything up. She pulled me aside before she left.

Gog'Khanyi: “My baby, be strong. A whirlwind may be coming your way, but you need to hang in there. No pain lasts forever and just know that if ever you need anything; I'm here.”

I was really thankful for her. I thanked her as she left, while Phila and Sbu approached me.

Phila: “Queen Mother, I honestly enjoyed that sermon and Ziyanda asked me to congratulate you on her behalf.”

Sbu: “Yes, I'm not a church person, but man, you did great.”

Ziphora: (laughing) “Since when do you guys call me Queen Mother?”

Phila: “Since you have proven just how strong you are.”

That reminded me that I needed to ask them about the strange sms I received.

Ziphora: “You guys must be in a hurry, but I'd like to show you something before I forget.”

I showed them the SMS and they both laughed, peculiarly.

Ziphora: (amazed) “Why are you laughing?”

Sbu: “Let's just say, you have nothing to worry about. Your prayers will be answered soon, Queen Mother.”

I was left so confused as they kept laughing while they said their goodbyes. I clicked my tongue thinking they must have

taken me for a real joke. Boys can be boys at times. I headed into the house as it was rather late. It was still hot, you know December weather. I expected to find my mother up and running, but surprisingly, she was sleeping right next to Frank in the same bed. I had no idea what was happening between those two, but who was I to interfere. She was helping me a great deal although I was left feeling guilty. I was back at work, so I had a lot to keep me busy as well, so I went over my patient files just to keep busy. Desiree was getting married on New Year's eve, so basically, we had less than three weeks to prepare for her wedding. It was bitter-sweet since we always thought that we'd be the tripod, you know. But such is life, you win some and you lose some. Not everyone will be in your life forever. Some people are there for a season, while some are there for a reason. I finished up and decided to make a quick pasta dinner, before I decided to watch tv. Something told me to catch up on some Korean Series on Netflix, which was something David and I used to do in our spare time just before bed. I really missed him, honestly. Another SMS beeped through unexpectedly. "Your sermon was the best today; I always knew you'd be the perfect fit for our church. I promise to explain everything once I see you. Hang in there, and yes, it is me. Your loving husband. Xoxo, D." I found myself laughing and crying at the same time. How on earth David managed to do that, baffled me. I didn't even waste time calling because if

he could I know that he would have. God is good indeed. My mind happened to wander as I thought of Julia. I really hoped that she would get the help she needed. For a woman who knew God, she sure was testing all His limits. I could only guess that time would tell.

David

I finally felt like I could breathe ever since I came to this Godforsaken place called Mexico. I finally remember it all and my wife will soon be in my arms again, if only everything went according to plan. Diego just needed to trust me enough without having people follow me everywhere. I was so happy that Phila, Sbu and I managed to forge a plan that would get Diego very much interested. I could only hope that the plan worked, but there was only one way to find out. I found Diego having dinner with the rest of the gang and I just had to put on a show yet again.

Diego: (smiling) "Luis, come sit and have some dinner with us."

I smiled and sat down.

Diego: “How you feel now? Dr. faith tell me you not feel good for while. You better?”

David: “Yes, I am which is actually what I wanted to talk to you about.”

Diego: (frowning) “Yes.”

David: “A contact of mine from South Africa gave me some info. I have a plan for some really nice and meaty girls for you. I could have them shipped within a week – if you'd let me go.”

He took a good look at me and my heart was honestly beating too fast as I thought he was going to see right through me.

Diego: “Who is this contact of yours?”

David: “Nova, she runs a brothel in Pretoria.”

I was hoping and praying that he would not recognize the name as Jacob was busy in cahoots with her that time. Oh, my poor brother.

Diego: (smiling) "You did good, Luis. She one of biggest brothel owners in South Africa. When you leave? So that Miguel can come with you."

David: "Diego, I can handle this all by myself."

Diego frowned as he looked at me.

David: (frowning) "You don't trust me enough to do this on my own?"

Diego: "Of course I do. When do you leave?"

David: "First thing tomorrow."

Diego: "Okay then. Tomorrow it is. We get jet ready for you."

I smiled as I ate but I could feel all eyes were on me. I wasn't bothered. It was high time I went back home. I just hoped and prayed the plan worked. After dinner, we had a few drinks, but I hardly drank around Diego and his team anyway, so they didn't suspect a thing when I didn't want any alcohol. I had to behave the same as I did before my memory came back, though they disgusted me beyond. I guessed that God most probably wanted me there, although the situation was less than desirable. I finally went to my bedroom after everything and I found Faith right on my bed, dressed in lingerie. That woman was sickening.

David: (annoyed) “What are you doing on my bed, Faith?”

Faith: (smiling) “Hao (goodness), Luis. I came to see you. Am I suddenly not welcome any more?”

David: (annoyed) “Faith, since when are you and I a couple? I mean come on, you are tiring me out. I need to get some rest, I'm headed to South Africa tomorrow morning.”

Faith: (surprised) “How come I know nothing about this? I'll come with you.”

David: “No need. I'd rather let Dineo come with me instead.”

Faith: (angrily) “Why her?! I've been your doctor ever since you arrived here!”

David: (frowning) “What do you mean ever since I arrived here? According to Diego I have lived here all my life. Is there something you would like to tell me, Faith?”

Faith looked down in regret. I could tell she just blurted it all out by mistake.

Faith: “No, I meant ever since I arrived here. I'm from South Africa, remember? Let me go with you besides I miss my family and friends.”

David: "Last time we spoke you told me that you had no friends and your family was basically non-existent. Were you lying?"

Faith: "N.. No, I wasn't."

David: "Then you have no reason to go back home. Now, please leave my room before you upset me."

She left my room hesitantly, but I wasn't bothered. I locked my room immediately and dozed off to sleep as I thought of my beautiful wife. I'm coming, Zee. I'm coming.

Ziphora

I had a really tough time sleeping because I just had a very strange dream repeating itself. My father-in-law kept telling me to be strong and brave for the storm ahead. I don't even know why I had to be the one to weather the storms in life all the time, but then, I put my life in God's hands. I could hear my mom heading up and down the stairs, so I decided to check out what was happening, only to be met with a horrific sight. I found Frank coughing uncontrollably on the floor.

Ziphora: (worried) "Papa! Papa! Mama! Mama weh!"

Susan: (frantically) "He's not getting better, I think we should take him to the hospital."

Not getting better? What was she hiding from me?

Frank: (out of breath) "No! No hospital."

Susan: "We agreed that if you got worse I'd take you there. No discussions, Frank!"

Ziphora: "Mama, what are you hiding from me? What is going on?"

Susan: "Not now, Ziphora. Help me get him into the car. We need to head to the hospital."

I frowned in annoyance as I helped her get Frank up. He was shivering, weak and really cold. She was most definitely hiding something from me. Could he have been dying? She and Frank got in the back, while I had to drive. The entire drive was so unpleasant, as he was vomiting the entire way to the hospital. Ronza and the other guard were right behind us. They just didn't have time to sleep, but I guess they were pretty used to it. Once we got to the hospital, he was taken straight to the ER and that goodness Desiree was on duty.

Desiree: "Hey, Zee. What happened?"

Ziphora: "I honestly don't know. Ask my mom."

I did that deliberately, since she knew more than she was letting on.

Susan: "He is getting weak, he needs you in there."

Desiree: (nodding) "Stay put. I'll be right back."

I couldn't take it any more. I honestly had to confront her.

Ziphora: "What are you hiding from me, Mama?"

Susan: (looking down) "Wait for Desiree to come back and he will tell you himself."

Ziphora: (teary) "Is the cancer back, Mme (mom)?"

Susan: "Zee, kao kopa (I'm begging you). Don't put me in such a tough spot."

I just nodded and let her be but my worst fears were creeping up on me. I had a very bad feeling from the pit of my stomach. That was never a good feeling and it was always a signal for something bad was coming ahead. We waited for about twenty minutes but it just felt like an entire lifetime. Desiree finally came back.

Ziphora: "How is he?"

Desiree: (sigh) “He is stable – for now. We have admitted him in one of our oncology rooms, but he insists no more treatment.”

I was shocked to hear that.

Ziphora: “I don't understand. What do you mean? I thought he was coming for radiology twice a week.”

Desiree: (frowning) “No, he stopped coming weeks ago. I thought you knew.”

I looked at my mother who looked beyond guilty. What on earth was happening? I headed straight to his ward and found him lying there; he looked so thin, fragile and weak. He had drips connected to him, and a ventilator to help him breathe. Were things that bad that I just didn't notice?

Ziphora: (teary) “Papa? Go etsa gala eng (What's happening)?”

He was so weak yet he managed to smile once I spoke to him. He removed the ventilator and held my hand.

Frank: (breathing slowly) “Zee, my baby. Please, forgive me for not being completely honest with you.”

Ziphora: (crying) “What are you talking about?”

Frank: “I'm... I'm dying. After the chemo, Desiree told me that my cancer was back, and that it had spread to my lungs. I couldn't do that to you – all of you. I didn't want to spend a few more months with you taking care of me. You all have your lives to live. All I want is to die peacefully, now that I have made peace with my daughters. That is all I ask.”

I felt as if I was stabbed with a sharp knife straight through my abdomen. My mother knew about that and she decided to keep it from me. How could she?

Ziphora: (crying) “Papa, you still have to fight. I mean, Charisma is set to give birth soon and what about me? Don't you want to meet my child when I have one?”

Frank: (smiling) “Charisma is going to give birth on Christmas.”

Ziphora: “But she isn't due until January.”

Frank: (smiling) “She is going to give birth on Christmas day. I am going to hold on until then. You are not going to have a child any time soon, but when the time comes, I'll visit you and you will know. You will remember this moment when that time comes. Fear not, Ziphora, my baby. You are yet to experience tough times before you receive your greatest blessing, but I will be right there by your side, along with you husband's ancestors.”

Why was he speaking as he was already a spirit or something?

Ziphora: (crying) “Papa, please. You can't do this to me. I am the only one who didn't get the chance to know you unlike Keo and Charisma! Why o nketsa so (are you doing this to me)?!”

Frank: “Forgive me, my child. Nothing makes me more proud than seeing how perfect you are. Your mother raised you well. Despite everything I did to you, you forgave me. That is the one thing that gives me peace. You are blessed, Ziphora, and believe me, once I am gone, you will be even more blessed. The ancestors have already accepted and forgiven me. I will be gone soon, but not forgotten. Please, don't cry like that, you are breaking my heart. All I ask of you is that you take me home. I want to be surrounded by those who love me. I will be fine until the time comes, please.”

I was crying, wailing like an orphaned child. How could life throw me such a huge curve ball without warning? My father, my own father whom I had found a few months before was now about to be taken away from me. Such cruelty. I was heartbroken, but I decided to respect his wishes. I knew better than to go against a dying person's wishes. They say that a dying person is just as dangerous as an angered one; for they know what we don't know. They have already experienced a piece of the spiritual world, and they hang on until they decide

that their business is finished in the physical world. The ancestors apparently give them a chance to do what they need, before coming back to take them hence a lot of dying people start speaking of the deceased and how they were with their deceased loved ones. We don't see what they see, most probably for good reason. Instead of going back to my house, Frank asked that he be taken to my mother's house. I felt like he was just turning against me or something; as if he was pushing me away. I was a mess and it was only 4am in the morning. Matthew 11:28 says; "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I must have dozed off because I was woken up with a stern knock on the door. I realized that it was 6am, and I didn't even hear my alarm ringing. My head was pounding due to all the crying. I rushed downstairs asking myself who could have been knocking like a maniac so early in the bloody morning. No one managed to go through security unless they were on my list of visitors. I stormed down the stairs in annoyance.

Ziphora: "Ke etla (I'm coming)!"

As I opened the door, I found myself gasping in shock, with my heart skipping a beat.

David: (smiling) “Hello, my wife.”

Ephesians 5:25 – 27 says; “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Ziphora

I couldn't believe it. He was the David I remembered; he smelled so good and his beard was perfectly shaven. He smiled at me and I knew then that it was MY David – not the brainwashed David I met weeks ago at Woolies.

Ziphora: (teary) “David, is this really you?”

David: (smiling) “In the flesh, baby.”

I rushed towards him and even forgot that he had flowers in his hands. I hugged him and I could feel our hearts beating in a synchronized manner; we were one yet again. His warmth

filled my soul and his soft, masculine arms wrapped around my body. I looked him right in the eye, and I could see the tears threatening to fall down. They were filled with so much love; desire; passion; guilt and regret all at once. I could see right through his soul. He still looked the same, but something felt as if it was missing.

David: (teary) "It's me, moratuwa (my love). It is me, your husband. I have missed you so much, Zee. Please, forgive me. Forgive me for everything that has happened to you."

I wasted no time and planted my lips right onto his and he didn't even protest. His soft hands were brushing my back as he always used to. His lips still felt as soft as they were even before he went missing. We broke the kiss despite me feeling over consumed with burning passion for my husband.

David: "Come, let's go in. We have so much to catch up on."

Instead of making hot, passionate love, I found myself wrapped in David's arms in our bed, with him telling me everything that had happened from the moment he went missing. I cried and

gasped and laughed altogether, but what really irked me most was the fact that Faith knew and she didn't have the decency to tell me. She knew and instead, she wanted my husband all to herself. I was put at ease when he told me he never slept with her, although he wanted to at some point. It was rather a huge relief. Perhaps he did and he just didn't remember, but I was just glad to have my David right beside me. I called in at work and told them that I wasn't well, and seeing that the Director of the hospital knew of my situation with Frank, he gave me one week compassionate leave. I felt a bit horrible seeing that I had just returned to work and yet there I was already on leave again. My issues just never seemed to get any better.

David: "Enough about me. Tell me about you. What has been happening in your life?"

I chuckled as I told him about my rather boring life and also told him about his mother. He laughed at me thinking about the fake funeral we had for Jacob a few days before.

David: (smiling) "I bet that is the worst thing you have ever done in your life, Dr. Mosue. You couldn't even hurt a fly."

Ziphora: (chuckling) "I can be a rebel, you know."

David: "Yeah, right. On a serious note, I am very sorry about what happened to you – to us. I am so sorry that I couldn't be here with you when you lost our baby. It was hell for you, I know. It was so painful for me when all my memories came back. I can never forgive myself – despite it not being my fault. I should have told you about my plans with Phila - "

Ziphora: (interrupting) "No, David. I will not let you blame yourself. Please, let us not focus on the past. You are here and we are going to make it. Let us focus on the future, please."

David: "About that, I am here for a week. I need to be discreet about my appearances before Diego notices me being here. I'm also not forgetting the media as well."

That put a bit of a damper in my mood. I honestly thought that it would have been smooth sailing from there onwards, but I guess that was the storm they all warned me about. I was still rather broken hearted about my father's ill health. Perhaps I

was being silly, but I truly felt that I didn't get enough share of my own father.

David: "Come, let me go make you some breakfast before we go see your parents."

Ziphora: "Can't we stay put here instead?"

David: "No, love. I need to see your parents. They can't just hear from you that I am back without them seeing me. It just isn't right."

I loved how chivalrous David was; he just had so much respect for everyone around him.

David: "Besides, I need to get that out of the way before you get to see what I have planned for you."

Ziphora: "What do you have planned for me? I'm starting to hate surprises."

David: (chuckling) “Surprises are part of life, my love. If we don't surprise each other, what beauty would there be in a routine life?”

Well, he had a good point there. He made us breakfast, as usual he went all out with An avocado, Feta and Bacon Omelette, along with baby tomatoes, fried onions and of course, the famous Mimosa. We had so much fun just reminiscing of the good moments we had together, before they all got stolen from us. For once, it felt so good having different kind of company in the house rather than my mom and Frank. It felt so good to have my husband, my life partner beside me, making me breakfast as he always used to. After we were done eating, we washed the dishes together and headed upstairs for a shower. Of course, we showered together just like we used to. It felt absolutely endearing to experience that level of intimacy yet once again. I had forgotten what it felt like to take a shower with the man I loved. He still looked the same, just a little more buffed up, as if he was exercising more than usual. I, on the other hand, I couldn't tell if I had gained or lost some weight due to all the fluctuating stress levels during the previous few months. My David rubbed shower gel on my body, as he gently caressed my breasts in circular motion, while

gently rubbing my breasts. It had been so long since I had seen a penis – let alone his. I could feel my entire body tingle with exciting sensations all the way to my toes. He gently kissed my neck from behind, as he nibbled on my ear. I was moaning with deep pleasure; while his breathing fluctuated with burning desire. Our bodies were intertwined even before we could become one again. His hard penis was poking me from behind, begging for an invitation towards my warm body. I slowly turned around and faced him. It felt so surreal having him right before me. We looked right into each other's eyes.

David: (softly) “I need you, my love. Please, let me make love to you, Zee.”

How could I say no? Besides being so dry for months on end?

Ziphora: (softly) “I'm yours, David. Now, tomorrow and forever.”

He wasted no time as he took me out of the shower. We didn't even have time to switch off the water. He lay me on the bed despite how wet we were and he kissed me, fervently. I was so

amazed that he could still evoke so much passion within me, possibly even more than before. I spread my legs, pleading for him to invite his penis towards my vagina, but as usual, he wanted to please me first. He broke the kiss and headed straight for my neck. My body temperature was fluctuating profusely, leaving me with an unimaginable temperature. I could feel the warmth of David's mouth turn into blazing fire, causing me to go wild.

Ziphora: (moaning) "Oh, David."

Whenever I'd moan, he would go crazy. He went straight for my breasts and gently sucked and nibbled on my nipples. I loved whenever he put my entire breast in his mouth and sucked on it while his tongue would rotate around my entire nipple.

Ziphora: (moaning) "David... I need you, please."

David: (softly) "Almost my love. Hang in there."

I huffed in frustration, but he went down to my navel and kissed me all the way until he got to my vagina. I never got used to him doing that. It took me literally less than five minutes to climax whenever he would go down there.

David: (softly) “I want to please you, Zee. Open your legs for daddy.”

Without hesitation, I did as told. He gently licked my clit, leaving me begging for more. My hands grabbed his head and played with his hair, while he kept sucking me down there. His lips travelled down to the entrance of my vagina and he put his tongue in there. He rotated between my clit and my vaginal entrance, leaving me so excited. He dipped his finger inside of me as he sucked on my clit and I could feel the long awaited warm rush approach me. My breathing changed as it felt like I was hyperventilating.

David: (softly) “Cum for me, baby. Cum for daddy.”

How could I resist those tantalizing pleading requests? I did as told, as I came all over his face. I felt so embarrassed and covered my face. He uncovered my face and stared right into my eyes.

David: "Never feel ashamed of feeling pleased, my love. You know this. Look at me. I love you."

Ziphora: "I love you too."

He slowly entered me and it felt like I was about to die for the first few seconds. David was breathing faster than normal, but I loved it. I loved how he looked me right in the eyes the entire time he made love to me. I felt warm tears flowing down my cheeks and he would kiss them dry. I kept thanking God for bringing him back to me. It was a long haul, but the best was yet to come. I just knew it. After a few minutes, we climaxed together. How I wished that we could spend the entire day doing that over and over, but life awaited us and we had to get going. We got cleaned up and got dressed and headed to my mother's house. David had to put on a bit of disguise so that people wouldn't notice him. The entire time, he kept kissing my hand while driving. My husband was back and I was the

happiest woman in the world. Once we got to my mother's house, I felt so anxious. David most probably felt me tense up and he held my hand for reassurance.

David: "Come, it will be fine."

I nodded as we walked in. My mother was in the kitchen and she dropped the bowl she was holding as soon as she saw me walking in with David.

David: "Dumela, Mme (Hello, Ma)."

Susan: (shocked) "Yoh (Oh)! Modimo (God)! David, ngwanake (my child)! Is that really you?"

David: "Yes, Mme (Ma). It is me."

My mother wasted no time as she rushed towards him and hugged him while crying. I felt so emotional throughout the entire scene.

Susan: (crying) “Oh, Modimo wa Nazareta (God of Nazareth)! You, Father God, Lord of Mercy, Lord of Grace, Jehova Jireh, Our loving God. Our merciful God! You never forget your children! How you have sent your son back to my daughter to wipe away her tears! I can never thank you enough for the mercy you have shown me! Raising three daughters is no joke, but you made it possible! They are all successful and good things await them! Oh, my God! Kea go leboga (I thank you)!”

She kissed David's cheeks and held both our hands.

Susan: (teary) “Modimo o nale lena, bana ba ka (God is with you, my children). Lamentations 3:22 – 23 says; “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Oh, David, I am so pleased that you are back. Please, go see Frank while I clean up here.”

Ziphora: “No, Mama. I'll clean up.”

Susan: “Child, please. I have cleaned up after you and your sisters whenever you were ill, I can surely clean up after your father. Come now, your husband is back. Go see your father.”

I smiled with tears in my eyes and nodded as we went upstairs. We found him lying in bed, looking like he was almost at his end, but he seemed to not be in any sort of pain. I could tell David was hurt by that entire image; he expected a sickly person – not a deathly one.

David: (teary) “Ntate (Father), It is me, David.”

He held Frank's hand and immediately he woke up. The moment he saw David, he smiled so beautifully. It was almost as if he had the look of an angel.

Frank: (smiling) “David, my son. You're back. God is good. How have you been?”

David was trying so hard not to cry, but his attempts failed him.

David: (teary) "I'd rather talk about you."

Frank: (laughing) "Bathong (Goodness), I am a dying man. Not just that, but I am a happy dying man. David, o seke wa llela motho wa go swana le nna (don't you dare cry for someone like me). I've made my choices; some good ones and some very bad ones, but God has favoured me enough to make it all up to my family. You see, my other two daughters want nothing to do with me; they even blocked me everywhere of which I put them in my prayers daily. I don't want to leave this world full of regrets, because that would mean I'd curse them. I have lived my life, my son. I will die happy knowing that my daughter found love in an honourable man like you. You are one of a kind, David Mosue, and I pray that God may bless you with all your heart's desires. I can see right through your heart, but rest assured that God is not angry at you for anything. You have done right by my daughter and despite me running from my responsibility years ago, you have done nothing but treat me with respect. For that, I thank you."

David was sobbing as if it was his own father dying.

Frank: "Come now, don't be so sad. You can do me a favour and have a drink with me."

Susan: (frowning) "O batla bojwala o swa, wena Frank Mokoena (You want alcohol while you're dying, Frank Mokoena)?!"

Frank: "The nice part about being a dying man is that you get to do whatever you want. You promised me, Susan. You said you'd do anything to make the pain go away."

Susan: "Hey, wena (you)! I pumped you up with morphine! That is enough."

Frank: "A few drinks with my son-in-law won't kill, man. Please, kao kopa (I'm begging you)."

Susan: (clicking tongue) "Waitse keng (You know what)?! I curse the day I met you wena!"

She said that walking away, while Frank was chuckling.

Frank: (laughing) “Ska wara (Don't worry). Re so (we are like this). She is using this as an opportunity to let go of all the hurt I caused her over the years. Deep down, she is a good person. Come, please put me on my wheelchair so that we can go drink on the patio. I want you to tell me all about your time in Mexico.”

He said that as if David had gone for some trip. I couldn't help but laugh while David did the same. I mean, wow, dying people have a very dry sense of humor. I think that was one of the things that my father had longed for; a care-free meal with my husband and I, just to bond and make me feel at ease. He knew that he just couldn't erase the errors of the past, but he did what he could to give me the best few months with him. For that, I would always thank him. Very few people got the chance to make things right with their absent fathers. At times it is not about what he didn't do for you, but about what he taught you in the short space of time you got to know him. I got to learn that we even had a few similarities, and that was enough to make me smile knowing that I got to experience the love of a father for a while.

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Phila

This thing with Diego had been dragging for too long. It really made me so anxious and I just wanted to get everything over and done with already. With the weak minded President gone, I had a chance to change the country, but I was going to start with cleaning up Diego's entire operation. All our plans were delayed because of what they had done to David, but Mamba and Cobra always had a Plan C. With David back in South Africa, it was time to kick start our plans, and it just had to work this time. So, we started with our main woman, Nova.

Phila: “Malome John, are you ready to go?”

Malome John: “Yes, I was just praying. We may leave.”

We proceeded to the car and left. The house just felt so empty without my wife and children. Once we arrived at Nova's brothel, she seemed rather intense.

Malome John: "Nova, how are you?"

Nova: "Not so good, John. I think your prayers have finally been answered. It is high time I stopped doing this. I can make a living in many more ways and empower these women in a different manner."

Well, that was good news, but on our side, it put a damper in our plans.

Malome John: "Well, remember what I said to you? When the time is right, you will know. I have brought the boys to come and speak to you. Please, hear them out."

Phila: "Nova, I am sure you know very well what I am capable of. I can make your dreams come true if you just help us out this once. It is high time we take Diego down, but we can't do

that without your help. Don't worry, you won't need to use any of the girls. We just need to use your premises to lure them here. But there is a catch.”

Nova: “What is it?”

Phila: “We might damage the place. Bullets might fly and this is the only way we can get rid of these people – for now.”

Nova: “It's okay. Do as you wish. I have enough of this life. God spoke to me, you know. He say, 'Nova, lead the life I intended for you and I shall show you miracles.' I no want to live this life no more. John, your dreams have come true.”

It was really nice to see Nova find God, but it was awfully funny and we just had to laugh.

Malome John: (chuckling) “It's okay, Nova. We hear you. Listen, we need to take you and the girls to a safe house, just until all this is sorted out. We're working on something

that will shut them down, permanently. I am very glad that you have finally heard God's message. It has been long overdue.”

Nova: (anxious) “I can't wait to get out of here. When do we leave?”

Phila: “I can organize my men to take you and the girls away today.”

Nova: “I already pack. Please, I cannot bear one more minute in this place.”

It is always amazing to see how people find God even in the most unconventional ways. That brothel was part of Nova's life for years, and just by seeing the unbelievable, the almighty God, she couldn't bear the sight of it for another second. God is truly amazing – He always has been and always will be. I remember when my life was a real mess, when I was away from Ziyanda. I was constantly angry; with constant and persistent anger, comes the devil in many forms. He will most definitely encourage you to do things that go against God's plan, in order to derail you from your life's purpose. I am not proud of what I

have done in life; I killed a lot of people, but I changed my ways and asked God to forgive me. The day I decided to start praying with Selina and asking God to preserve Ziyanda for me, was the day that I got delivered. I felt as if an entire new energy had filled my soul; my entire way of thinking had changed immensely when God became the centre of my world. That was exactly what Nova had experienced and it was too beautiful. We wasted no time further as we moved them away; to Eshowe, where they would stay with Zee and the rest of the family for a while, just until all that was over.

Phila: "Sbu, let's head back to my office to start with the paperwork. It is high time we got rid of all the evil in our country. I think we should start with all the high figures, in Parliament. Did you manage to hack Mr. President's computer?"

Sbu: "I asked Tony to do it for me, but I think he should be done right now."

Phila: "Well, then, asihambe, mfo (let's go, bro)."

Sbu: "After you, Mamba."

David

I was very happy to finally be home with my wife again. It had been a pleasant morning and I just couldn't keep my hands off her. Spending the morning with her parents, made me feel really blessed. I needed to do that – for her. I needed her to have those memories of her father having a decent meal with us before the inevitable happened. It was quite a shame that she never really got to be in his company all those years and bitches like Dineo benefited from having such a wonderful father around. She and her lousy sister along with their whoring mother decided to turn their backs on him. He was dying, but I loved that he wasn't in pain any more and that he had accepted it all. I needed to make time to see my brother within the week, but it was my wife's time. She had no idea I had a great surprise planned for her. We were in the car and she thought I was driving back home, but I took a different direction.

Ziphora: (frowning) "Where are we going?"

David: "There is someone I would like you to see. I am still unsure about what to do with her, but I think you could be able to guide me towards the right direction."

Ziphora: (frowning) "Her?"

David: (chuckling) "Don't stress, my wife. I'm not taking you to meet my side chick, if that's what is worrying you."

Ziphora: "You'd better not be lying."

I smiled as I kept kissing her hand. Her warmth was still there and I loved that her scent was still the same. I was truly blessed. We finally reached our destination at the Hotel I was staying at.

Ziphora: (frowning) "A hotel
D?"

David: "Come."

I opened the door for her and we went in hand in hand. Of course, I had to disguise myself wearing a cap and sunglasses so that I wouldn't have been noticeable. Of course, they might have thought that Zee might have moved on after me, but I wasn't bothered. I'd deal with anyone who tried to tarnish my wife's name like that. I had still booked under Luis Garcia, so we headed right in without any formalities. I could tell Zee was anxious; she really disliked surprises, but I honestly didn't blame her. A lot of shit happened of which ruined our surprises. We got into the lift and headed straight to floor 7. Upon arrival just outside my Hotel room, I stopped before opening the door.

David: "Before I open this door, I need you to know that this was one of the people who were behind my disappearance. She planned everything along with your friend Faith. Whatever you decide to do after hearing her out, I fully accept."

She just nodded reluctantly. I was a little afraid of what she might have thought about me right after seeing what I had

done to her. I just couldn't help it, but I was ready to accept my fate.

Ziphora

I was really anxious when David told me that we were going to meet someone. I didn't even have time to be shocked when he told me right before walking in that the woman was one of the people who were scheming alongside Faith. They actually planned my husband's disappearance? What the fuck is wrong with people, though? My heart was beating even faster as he was approaching the door. When he finally opened the door, my heart sank in disbelief when I saw her tied to that chair. I was truly perplexed.

Ziphora: (worried) "What is going on, David?"

Her mouth was gagged and she looked bruised, as if she had been beaten quite a bit. My David couldn't possibly have beaten a woman like that.

David: (apprehensive) "I will let her explain to you."

Ziphora: "Did you do this? Did you beat her up like this?"

David: "I will answer you once she tells you everything."

He walked towards her and removed the gag from her mouth. She looked like she had been crying uncontrollably. I took a good look at her and my heart broke into a million pieces; not really because of the pain she was in, but because she would actually do such a thing to me – without even actually knowing me.

Ziphora: (teary) "Dineo, what are you doing here? Why are you in that chair?"

Dineo: (crying) "I'm so sorry, Zee. I really am sorry. I didn't mean to do it."

David: (firmly) "I told you not to waste my wife's time. The only reason I didn't kill you was that you could redeem yourself. I'm not as forgiving as she is, trust me. Don't waste our time."

I looked at David and he was dead serious. I mean, I hadn't really seen him actually beat someone up. It was quite alarming to see him so angered yet so calm.

Dineo: "I apologize. I am here to tell you everything you need to know, Zee. I was dating Mr. President; for about two years before he died."

So Dineo, my half-sister was the President's side chick? Wow.

Dineo: "I was drawn to a life of fame, money and vanity. I honestly didn't want to hurt you, Ziphora. I mean, we share a father. Faith told me how she was so jealous of you and that you had a good and rich man while she didn't even have a man any more, so she asked me to hook her up, you know. She got this job to work overseas, and only once she got there that was when she realized that she would be working for Diego. He hired her to basically keep David on a leash, to hypnotize him

and to make sure that he remembers absolutely nothing about his past life. She was thrilled, but she didn't like the fact that David was not interested in her at all, so she asked me to get her some muthi. That time David was here and she killed one of Diego's men, she managed to get the muthi from me, but it just didn't work. David didn't even consume it. She has been complaining that she has been seeing your father-in-law and he has been telling her to stop whatever she is doing before she gets what is coming to her, just like Julia did. I am so sorry, all I wanted was to be Mr. President's wife, but instead he sold me to Diego. I have been a sex slave ever since I arrived in Mexico and if it wasn't for David, I'd probably be on my way to China or something in some rotten container. Please, find it in your heart to forgive me, Ziphora. I promise you, I'll be gone. You won't hear from me ever again.”

What Dineo was telling me was truly shocking, but it just didn't move me. I mean, sure, it was a really sad story but I didn't see any remorse in her eyes. I didn't really know Dineo personally, even from campus but people who knew her would say that she was something like a Chameleon; camouflaging was really not difficult for her. I somehow felt as if I would regret my choice that day, but I decided to do what any Godly woman would do.

Ziphora: "Okay."

David: (shocked) "Are you sure you want me to just let her go like that, Zee?"

Ziphora: "Well, I mean I am giving her a chance to redeem herself and actually live a life. And, I am giving her a chance to get to say goodbye to her father."

Dineo: (frowning) "Goodbye?"

Ziphora: "Oh, I forgot you disowned your own father. Frank is dying; he has a few days to live."

Dineo cried uncontrollably much to my disbelief. I kept asking myself if she was even serious, really. I mean, that couldn't possibly be the same Dineo that walked into my church a few months before then, trying to make a scene in front of my entire congregation and the media.

Dineo: (crying) "Please, please forgive me. I promise you, I'll never do such a stupid thing ever again. I promise you, I'll stay out of your way from now on."

Ziphora: "You can let her go, David."

David: "Are you sure? What if she does something worse to you? I mean, she could still contact Diego and his team."

Ziphora: "Let's leave it to God."

David was really apprehensive about the idea, but he let me be. I should have listened to my gut feeling that day. I should have let her suffer a little more and think about her life, but instead I chose to be the good person I had always been. Most good people have been fucked over because of that trait. Proverbs 27:12 says; "The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it."

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Ziphora

I decided to let Fate deal with Dineo when David let her go. We let her walk all the way home from the Hotel, just as a lesson. She swore not to tell anyone about anything, or else Diego would find her. That was yet still to be seen.

Ziphora: “Where to from here?”

David: “I'm taking you to get pampered. You had better get ready for an awesome night.”

I just smiled as we listened to one of our favourite songs, Ubuhle bakho by Ami Faku. David was a soulful person at most and I would always ponder my mind as to why he hardly sang for me when he had such a beautiful voice. We arrived after about an hour and a half at a lodge just outside Hartebeespoort

Dam. Apparently it was also one of Ziyanda's lodges gifted to her by her husband. She was truly blessed. My mother would always say that with blessings one should always make room for enemies; because not everyone prefers seeing you prosper. I was puzzled seeing that the lodge was practically empty, with only very few staff members. Nonetheless, it was absolutely beautiful. The atmosphere and décor was exactly Ziyanda's style. It had a lot of red shades around; which was her favourite colour.

Ziphora: “Dave, the place is empty. Are you sure we are at the right place?”

David: (laughing) “Don't you trust me to book out the entire lodge for you, my Zee?”

Ziphora: “Bathong (Goodness), why would you do such a thing? I mean besides the obvious, but why?”

David: “Because you deserve to have all the attention. All eyes must be on the most beautiful woman in the world today – no exceptions.”

I blushed as he said that, but man. He really shouldn't have done that. The staff greeted us and I was asked to follow them to the spa area, but David wasn't following me.

Ziphora: (frowning) “Why aren't you coming with?”

David: (smiling) “Do you honestly think that I'd bring you to a lodge just to get a pamper session? I'll see you later, Mma (Mrs) Mosue. David loves you.”

He blew me a kiss and winked at me leaving me smiling to myself. I kept telling him just how much I hated surprises, but well, I found him like that and he just wasn't ready to quit being romantic. So, I followed the staff and put my phone on flight mode to avoid any disturbances. I couldn't believe that I never actually took the time out of my schedule to go to a spa – despite what had been happening. I got some facials done, and my skin felt like it could breathe again. I got all the massages one could think of; from Swedish to hot stone and I even spent a few minutes in their jacuzzi. I was served lovely champagne and fruits and it was the very first time I managed to relax after a long time. I decided to switch off flight mode and check on my

phone. I received a message from Ziyanda, "I hope my staff treats you well. It is about damn time you got laid. Love, Ziyanda." I laughed all alone as I read that message about three more times. After my Jacuzzi session, I had to get my nails done.

I had no idea why, but David was obviously behind it all. From my nails, I had to get my make-up and hair done. I only realized then that I had spent about five hours at the spa, already. Talk about a real pamper session. After my make-up was done, I looked like an entirely different person. I almost didn't even recognize myself. I had no idea what I'd even wear, but of course, being married to a man who adored surprising me, I knew he had too many tricks up his sleeve. I was led to our room, and I found the most amazing yellow dress on the bed, accompanied by the most dazzling diamond necklace and earring set, with gorgeous leather and mash Christian Louboutin stilettos. Of course, there was a beautiful note on top of the dress, with one lilly flower next to it. "I can't wait to revive our marriage, I'll see you soon. P.S. It is my duty to make you fall in love with surprises all over again. Xoxo, D." I trust David to buy me a designer silk one shoulder Valentino dress. It must have cost a fortune, and I still had no idea what it was with rich men and Italian brands. After getting dressed, I stared

at myself in the mirror for a while and I found myself so tearful. I literally had to forcefully stop myself from crying because I could never pull off such good make-up. I didn't want to look messy meeting my husband for a surprise dinner after so long. I took a picture of myself, just in case. Memories never die. Right after that, I heard a stern knock on my door. It was about 6pm. It was one of the staff members telling me that dinner was ready. I left my phone behind, as I didn't want any disturbances. I had waited so long to have my husband right there with me. I followed the lady and my mind drifted to the dining hall, but nope, she led me right outside the lodge. As I stood right at the entrance, I saw amazing string lights hanging almost everywhere. I could see beautiful yellow roses alongside a long, yellow carpet. Really, David? A yellow carpet? I asked myself where he even found the time to buy so many roses. I was trembling with excitement and disbelief. And then, I heard a guitar playing a little far from me. I could see him faintly, as he was standing right before the lake. He played me his own rendition of Soul Kulture's Gugu, our favourite song. I guess it was my queue to start walking. He had better be recording this, I thought to myself. I wanted to relive that moment for years to come. I walked slowly towards him and with every step I took, I could see him much clearer. He was wearing a black Italian suit, with a yellow shirt. Hmm, talk about matching the theme. I

could see a chef and waitron right behind him with a big, round table. He was singing to me

my David. He was finally back. It was so bitter-sweet considering how much time was lost. When I approached him he smiled and kissed me.

Ziphora: (smiling tearfully) "What is all this, David?"

David: "This is all for you, my love. I can never get back the time that we lost, but we could always make up for it. I vow to protect you even more than I should have that night. I let my guard down, and I swear, I won't ever do that again. I promise to love you as I did say in our vows. You are a rare gem, Zee, and I thank you for never giving up on me. You didn't even know when I'd come back yet you waited for me. This life is truly not for the faint hearted, but you make everything seem so easy. It was so easy to fall in love with you and with each day that goes by, my heart grows even fonder of you. I cannot make up for what we lost, for the baby we lost, but I promise you, it will be my life-long duty to give you all your heart's desires. Ziphora Mosue, I love you so much."

Yep, my make-up was halfway smashed by then.

Ziphora: (crying) “David, do you always have to make me cry?”

David: (chuckling) “Crying is good for you, my cry baby. Come, sit. Let's eat.”

We had the most pleasant dinner, watching the lake and the sun go down. It was just the two of us with the Sun bidding us goodbye for the day. We had completely forgotten about the world and all our troubles as we just focused on the two of us. We were the only two that mattered at that point. Love opens the doors for all the other feelings when it is natural and pure. David loved me so much that I knew he would die for me. I couldn't wait to begin a new chapter together; without Julia, without Diego; without Faith and Dineo and without all the drama.

Diego

I was slowly becoming even more pissed. This was just not happening. David fooled me! How could I have let that happen?!

Diego: (fuming) "Faith! Get in here!"

Faith: (frightened) "Yes, Diego?"

Diego: (angered) "What the fuck is this?!"

I showed her my phone; along with the picture I received.

Faith: (panicky) "I... I don't know anything about this, Diego. I swear."

Diego: (angrily) "Bullshit! That crazy puta amiga (whore friend) of yours sent me this! She was supposed to go with David to make sure he does not lose it! You knew about this, didn't you? You knew he gained back his memory long before this!"

Faith: (scared) "I swear, Diego. I had no idea."

Diego: “You know what she say to me?! She say if I no send her R1 million she tell the whole world about me and my operation! Who does she think she is?! You better warn her, as your friend, Faith! I don't take easily to people who fuck with me! If you do, you no live to regret it – you die! You warn her – you tell her to run! Tell her to start packing and run as fast as she can before I find her, because if I do – she will most definitely be sold this time!”

Faith

I couldn't believe just how stupid Dineo was! She actually threatened Diego like that? What actually broke me even more than all that was the fact that David was seen with Ziphora. He actually got his memory back and didn't even tell me. He was taking me for a ride all along. I wasted no time and dialled Dineo's number right away. The stupid bitch picked up after I felt like hanging up.

Dineo: “What do you want?”

Faith: “Dineo Mokoena, so gracious of you to answer my call.”

Dineo: "What do you want, Faith?"

Faith: "Diego asked me to warn you. He asked me to tell you to run as fast as you can because if he catches you he will sell you this time."

Dineo: (laughing) "Oh, really?"

That bitch was even dumber than I thought.

Faith: "Dineo, these people are dangerous, really dangerous. They know anyone and everyone. You shouldn't have done that."

Dineo: "I'm back home with my family, which is something I can't say about you. I'm home safe, so he can't touch me. I'm under the witness protection program. I'll be a lot safer than you."

Faith: (laughing) “You actually think that the witness protection program will help you? I mean, surely you should know better, after dating the President, who was involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking, right? What makes you think that those people you trust so badly aren't working with Diego?”

She kept quiet for a while and I just knew that she hadn't thought this entire thing through.

Faith: “See what I mean? You lack brains, sis.”

Dineo: “You are just trying to scare me since I told Ziphora everything about you.”

Faith: “You met Ziphora? And you think that David will let you go after finding out about this? You have made a lot of enemies, girl. I hope you will be able to endure the punishment that awaits you.”

Dineo: “Well, only God can punish me.”

And just like that, she hung up. I sighed in frustration. Honestly, I was a bit jealous that she was back there. She got to see her family whereas I was looking like the female Michael Jackson and still stuck in Mexico. All I wanted was to go home. I seriously was starting to regret my life choices. I thought of warning Ziphora, but why would I even do that? She deserved everything coming her way. As I was about to lie down, fear struck me as I saw Ntate Moruti Mac right before me. I even tried blinking a few times, but I wasn't dreaming. He was there.

Mac: (angrily) "I warned you, Faith. I warned you to change your ways. I gave you a choice and you still took the easy way out. You still chose the devil over God."

Faith: "This isn't real. I must be highly stressed."

Mac: "I guess you will have to bear the consequences. I told you, my daughter-in-law is highly blessed. You cannot steal her happiness; you will never be her."

Faith: "This can't be fucking real!"

Mac: “Proverbs 1:24 – 33 says; “Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.”

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

Ziphora

David and I had a great night. After our dinner, we most probably went to bed around midnight, beyond drunk and of course, we were craving one another. We just couldn't keep our hands off each other. All I could say was that I was grateful it was only us in the lodge because I was screaming through the roof. My body was aching so badly the following morning and I just didn't want to get up, but of course, marrying a gym fanatic, he was up right before me and had even ordered us breakfast in bed.

David: “Good morning, sunshine.”

Ziphora: “Yoh (Oh), no man! David, where do you get all this energy?”

David: (laughing) “As a doctor, you're supposed to know that exercise gives you energy. Come, sit up straight. I ordered us some breakfast.”

Ziphora: “You went out jogging?”

David: (smiling) “Yes, and I will still fight to get you to do that with me.”

Ziphora: “One day. If only you hadn't worked me out like you did last night.”

David: “Is that a complaint? Don't act like you didn't like it. All those moves you pulled...”

Ziphora: (embarrassed) “Okay, I get the message.”

David: “Let me see if perhaps I made the news.”

It was as if he was prophesying because as soon as he switched on the tv, he was indeed all over the news. Not just him, I was also on the news as well. Yoh, don't journalists ever rest.

Reporter: "It is alleged that Dr. Ziphora Mosue, wife of David Mosue knew about his whereabouts all along. It is also said that Mr. David Mosue, is back in town. Apparently he is one of the master minds behind South Africa's largest human trafficking trade. We even have a witness to confirm all this in studio. Ms. Dineo Mokoena, who also happens to be Dr. Mosue's half sister. Ms. Mokoena, thank you for taking the time to meet us here today. As I understand, you have also put your life in paramount jeopardy just to be here.

Dineo: "Ye.. Yes."

Reporter: "Please note that your efforts are indeed recognized and that your voice will be heard. Believe me, your efforts won't go unnoticed."

Dineo was right beside her ill-mannered mother, Lydia.

Reporter: "Please, tell us what happened to you. According to your statement, you were kidnapped by Mr. Mosue, am I correct?"

Dineo: (nervously) "Ye.. Yes. I was kidnapped by David, while he was with his friends Phila Zwane and Sbusiso Zwane, also known as Mamba and Cobra. Before I knew it, I was shipped to Mexico, and sold as a sex slave to the infamous Human and Drug Trafficker, Diego Rodriguez."

She was crying, which absolutely baffled me.

Dineo: (crying) "I was a sex slave for days. Can you believe it? So many prominent men sell young girls like me to men like Diego. I am so lucky to even make it back alive."

Reporter: "Please, tell us what Mr. Mosue did to you. How did you even make it back?"

Dineo: "Well, he was also one of the men who would have sex with me on end, and so, he offered to come back with me as his

concubine. But then, he asked me to tell his wife lies as to why he had tied me to a chair and beat me to a pulp. I have medical records to prove it all. David Mosue is a rapist, a criminal and his so called Godly wife is nothing but a toy. She knows everything.”

Reporter: “Well, a lot of people claim that you are lying and that you are jealous of your half-sister. Is that true?”

Lydia: (angrily) “That's absurd!”

Reporter: “Is it true that you were the late Mr. President's mistress?”

Dineo: (shaky) “N.. No! That is all lies.”

Reporter: “You do know that you are under oath, Ms. Mokoena and that these are serious allegations. Would you be able to testify in court?”

Lydia: “Of course, she would!”

Ziphora: (angrily) "That bitch."

David: "Fuck! I told you about her."

Reporter: "Well, we actually have the late Mr. President's wife right here in studio."

Dineo: (nervously) "I think my job here is done."

Reporter: "But - "

The reporter never finished her sentence when all we heard was gunshots and we could see nothing but smoke caused my teargas.

Ziphora: (worried) "What just happened?"

David: "My guess is that Diego found out. We have to go. Get dressed."

I wasted no time as I anxiously got up. I just put on my dress and grabbed my jewellery and phone and headed out with David. I had no idea how David, Phila and Sbu were going to sort it out, but my guess was that they would most probably find a way. We got into the car and David called Phila immediately.

David: "P, it's me."

Phila: "I was just about to call you. We got a massive hit. Tony managed to hack Mr. President's computer. We have more than enough evidence to proceed with conviction against Diego and a whole lot of parliament members."

David: "I take it you haven't seen the news."

Phila: (frowning) "What's up?"

David: "Tune in. I'll stay on the line."

Phila: "Sbuda, check the news."

Sbu: "On it."

After about two minutes, they were infuriated.

Phila: "What the fuck?!"

Sbu: "This is bad. It is actually fucked up."

David: "My guess is Diego knows; he knows that I have my memory back and he sent people for Dineo."

Phila: "Are you on the road?"

David: "Yes, we're on our way to your house. I can't stay here with my wife. I don't want a repeat of last time."

Sbu: "Stay on the line. No one is following you. So, you're safe."

I was starting to panic. Could my life have possibly turned into a movie? I mean just last time I endured a few minutes of gunshots and threats and I didn't think I could possibly survive it all over again. My father was ill and it was literally five days before Christmas. I suddenly had a bad feeling about all that was happening.

We finally made it to Phila's house, with David driving like a raging maniac. I mean, sure. He just had to and I totally understood, but with fear in my mind and consuming my entire body, I felt nauseated the entire way.

David: "Are you okay? I'm sorry for driving like that, but I just can't risk another attack."

Ziphora: "It's okay, I'm just a bit nauseated."

David: "Come, let's get you some water."

He opened my door and took my hand in his as we walked towards the house. Phila and Sbu were waiting upon us, with Malome John, Mam'Flora and Gog'Khanyi in the kitchen.

Phila: “Are you guys okay?”

David: “Yes, what happened to Dineo? Any news?”

Sbu: “Well, there was a report from another reporter straight after the entire incident confirming that the reporter was shot on the shoulder, while Lydia was unconscious but not hurt.

Dineo yena

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she went missing all over again.”

David: (sighing) “What now?”

Phila: “It is time to take out the big guns.”

David: "I get that, but I can't have my wife here."

Ziphora: "I'm not going anywhere."

David: "Ziphora, stop being stubborn, please. These people are dangerous. They have connections everywhere. You cannot possibly want to stay here after seeing all that on national tv."

Ziphora: "David, my father is dying. He might just make it to Christmas. I can't leave."

David: (frustrated) "Just think about it."

Ziphora: (nodding) "Let me go get some water."

I went to the kitchen and greeted Malome John, Gog'Khanyi and Mam'Flora.

Mam'Flora: "Have some water, dear. You look flustered."

Gog'Khanyi: "Are you okay?"

I felt so uneasy, and being such a cry baby all I could do at that point was cry. I think it was a bit of an after shock, seeing that things were headed south.

Gog'Khanyi: "Oh, my baby. It is okay. Khala (cry), let it all out."

Mam'Flora: "Here, drink some water."

I drank the water with shaky hands.

Malome John: "It's going to be okay, Zee. I think you need to listen to your husband and go be with Ziyanda and the rest of the wives. It is not a good idea for you to be here."

Ziphora: (crying) "What about my family? My father?"

Malome John: “We can bring them along with you. You are just not safe here. Do you want to die or better yet lose your husband again? For good this time?”

I shook my head.

Malome John: “Let me talk to them. I'll manage to convince them.”

I nodded and just then, a strange SMS resurfaced on my phone yet again. “I warned you, I asked you if you were prepared to die for your little church. Brace yourself, Ziphora Mosue, the worst is yet to come. You shall DIE!!!”

I felt as if my chest was about to close in, and that I couldn't breathe properly.

Malome John: “She's having a panic attack.”

David, Phila and Sbu rushed towards us.

David: "What's happening? Zee, are you okay?"

Gog'Khanyi: "Her phone beeped and she suddenly started hyperventilating."

David grabbed my phone and read the message. Soon after, he became livid.

David: (angrily) "Who the fuck dares to threaten my wife like this?!"

Malome John: "There is no time. You need to go warn the rest of her family right now. You need to move as in yesterday."

David: "Will we be okay, Malome?"

Malome John: "In due time, David. Once the storm is over, blessings will pour in. Hang in there and protect your wife."

We wasted no time despite me being in panic mode, and went straight to my mother's house. I felt so horrible for having my drama influence everyone's lives. My sisters had no idea about Frank being so gravely ill, yet they had to face the music just like that. I was asked to call them for an emergency meeting to my mother's house. They both had no idea that David was back. Once I arrived at Mama's house, they soon arrived afterwards. We were a tripod of fast drivers, unfortunately. Once Keo and Charisma walked in, Charisma nearly fainted.

Charisma: (shocked) "So, it is true? David is back?"

Keo: "Zee, what is going on? I Don't have a good feeling about this."

Malome John: "Please, I need you all to calm down. There is no easier way to say all this, so I am just going to go ahead and say it. Yes, David is back, but it is complicated. We don't have time to explain everything. He was kidnapped by Diego Rodriquez, the infamous Human and Drug trafficker who has almost everyone on his payroll. You are all in danger now that Dineo said all she did on live tv. So, I am here along with the rest of them, to ask you to pack your bags and come with us."

Charisma: "No! Where are we even going?"

Malome John: "We're going to a safe place."

Phila: "I'll be taking you to my wife's family in Eshowe, the royal kingdom. It is safe there."

Keo: "What about Papa?"

Ziphora: "About that, Papa is dying."

Charisma: "What are you even saying?"

Ziphora: "His cancer is back and it has spread. There is really not enough time to explain everything, guys, but we need to go."

Charisma: (sweaty) "I think I am going to faint."

Susan: “Charisma, you might be pregnant, but my goodness, you are still dramatic. If you value your lives, then you will listen to Malome John. Bona mo (look here), your father might just make it till Christmas, but we have to move. You don't even have to pack anything – you all have more than enough money to buy whatever you need. Keo, you just need to get your daughter and husband. Charisma, call that husband of yours, ge a sa dumele (if he doesn't agree), ra mo shiya (we're leaving him).”

Charisma: “I just don't get it.”

Susan: “Well, make time to get it. David was kidnapped during a staged hijacking and your sister lost her baby during that entire ordeal in case you forgot. So, unless you all want to die, be my guest, but nna le Frank (Frank and I), are leaving.”

Charisma and Keo knew better than to argue with Mama. They were both on the phone with their husbands, who were shouting in disbelief. Just when I thought that things couldn't get any worse, the worst happened. There was a stern knock on the door.

Susan: "Ziphora, please open the door."

I went ahead and got the shock of my life. Two police officers were standing right outside my door.

Ziphora: (worried) "May I help you?"

Policeman 1: "Good day, Ma'am. We are looking for David Mosue."

I frowned as I had a very uneasy feeling. David heard what they were saying and wasted no time.

David: "Ke nna oo (That is me). Le batla eng (what do you want)?"

Policeman 2: "Die man o bosula, monna (this man is so rude)."

Policeman 1: "David Mosue, you are under arrest for faking your own death, defeating the ends of justice, human trafficking and attempt to do grievous bodily harm."

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“It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.”

Ziphora

I felt as if my entire head was spinning.

David: (frowning) “Are you sure about that?”

Phila: “Wait, how did you even know that he was here?”

Policeman 2: (chuckling) “Waitse lena banna nyana ba di tshelete (you know, you lousy men with money), la tena (you're annoying).”

Policeman 1: “You can ask whatever you want to ask at the station.”

Phila: “You didn't answer my question. Who are you even? You didn't announce yourselves. So, how the fuck would we know that you are indeed cops?”

Policeman 2: (laughing) “Shabalala, die (this) man thinks we're living a movie, jo (bro).”

Policeman 1: “My apologies. I am Detective Shabalala and this is my partner, Constable Mmako.”

Sbu: “Nah (No), how about we follow you guys to the police station in our car. In this day and age, we don't trust anything and anyone.”

Policeman 2: (annoyed) “You think you own everything and everyone, neh (hey)? Eh, monna (hey, man). We call the shots, here.”

Sbu: “Hey, wena (you). You came to David's mother-in-law's house instead of actually looking for him at his own house. Doesn't that seem dodgy? Don't fucking tell us about

who calls the shots. It is either you accept our request or you come back with your entire station's team. Ska re bora wena (don't bore us).”

Policeman 1: “Mmako, le wena (no man). Ema nyana (wait a minute). Okay, you guys can follow us.”

Policeman 2: “This is not how we do things, Shabalala.”

Policeman 1: “Nke o thole (just shut up).”

Ziphora: (hysterical) “What's happening, David?”

David: “Don't worry, I'll sort it all out. Please, get your family into the kombi and leave. I'll meet you there, okay?”

I nodded even though I was distraught. David kissed me and told me he loved me as he walked out with Phila and Sbu right behind the two policemen. Something didn't feel right. I mean, Phila and Sbu were also mentioned by Dineo yet they were not getting arrested as well. Not that I wanted them to also get

locked up, but something just didn't feel right. Dineo fucked me over – big time. She put my entire family in jeopardy, all for who knows what. I let my guard down; I decided to give her the benefit of the doubt which was a terrible mistake. That just reminded me of how Joseph was betrayed by his brothers in the Book of Genesis. I felt like complete shit.

Susan: “We have to go. Ziphora, my baby, pull yourself together. We have no time to cry and wonder. Your father needs us all. I didn't raise weak-minded daughters, I raised strong queens. Now, come on.”

I wiped my tears and nodded. We all got up and assisted my mother by getting Frank into the Viano. By then, Razor and the other guards were there with us. We had to take a detour and pick up Gog'Khanyi and Mam'Flora as well. My heart just wasn't there, I was thinking about David the entire time. Keo's husband came along with their daughter

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while Charisma's husband didn't want to come until my mother forced him to. We were fully packed in the van and ready to go. My heart wasn't at ease – even after we prayed. As Razor kept driving, I grew increasingly weary. I just didn't have a good

feeling about any of it. After about half an hour of driving, we were on the highway, and then suddenly there was a massive road block. It was odd, but road blocks were a thing in our country. When it was our turn to be inspected, I just didn't have a good feeling at all. I had changed into one of my mother's outfits, a simple Jean and Tshirt because I was dressed in my evening gown since that morning. I never had time to go to my house.

Metro cop: "Hello, family. This is cosy. Where are you headed?"

Razor: "To a hospital nearby."

Metrocop: "Okay, license and registration, please."

His accent didn't even seem familiar either, which made me even more anxious.

Metrocop: "You don't mind my partner checking the van, do you?"

Razor: "What exactly are you looking for?"

Metrocop: "Standard procedure."

Razor: "Fine."

The other Metrocop opened the van and just when I thought he was going to peruse through the van, he pointed the gun right at me. I had no idea why I even sat in the front back seat. Once again, my anxiety shot through the roof, while my family started screaming. Razor tried to take out his gun along with the other guard, but the other metrocops also came forward and pointed their guns at them.

Metrocop: "Just behave. We don't anyone else, just her."

Metrocop 2: "You, come with us."

I started panicking. My legs failed me; I could barely move.

Metrocop 2: "If you don't move, we'll have to shoot you."

Charisma: (shouting) "Yoh, Modimo (Oh, God)!"

Malome John: "It's okay, go with them, Ziphora. We'll find you. They won't harm you, but if you don't go with them, they will shoot us all."

I had no idea what was in store for me, but I just managed to get up and leave with them. I couldn't even look back, but I knew my mother was about to have a heart attack. Surprisingly, the man was not rough with me like I would always see in the movies.

Metrocop: "Pleasure doing business with you. Diego says hi."

Just like that, I heard the last screams from my mother and my sisters as I was being dragged to an unfamiliar car. They put me in the back seat and they all had guns. They drove off in high speed and all I could do was say a prayer.

Phila

Everything was a real mess. All that was happening – more especially the arrest felt to me as if it was just staged. I thought that we'd be out of there by then and despite me sending in my lawyer to represent David, but they wouldn't let him go. I grew increasingly anxious of the entire situation, more importantly, we left women with Razor and another guard – alone. Sbu's phone rang and my worst fears were confirmed.

Sbu: “Mamba, I got bad news. Razor just called. Ziphora was taken.”

Phila: (angered) “How the fuck did that happen?!”

Sbu: “Diego sent some bogus mother fuckers to act as Metro police and stage a road block.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Phila

Everything was a shitty mess and the shit-storm had just begun. I knew Ziphora should have just left with Ziyanda and the rest of the family. I mean, Diego seemed to have eyes everywhere – even more reason to shut down his fucking operation. He was now messing with the wrong people; a man who messes with your family, does not deserve to live.

Sbu: “So what now, Mfo (bro)?”

Phila: “We need to let David know. He is not going to like this, but I think we can salvage. Get Tony on the line and ask Razor to keep you posted. Let Tony trace their number plate or hack cameras – something.”

Sbu: “On it.”

I took a deep breath before walking into the interrogation room. David was left alone while Shabalala and Mmako had gone to take a smoke. The incompetence of the police service in this country is just appalling.

David: "Any news, P? Is my wife okay?"

Phila: (sigh) "I'm afraid I have some bad news."

David: (worried) "Tell me."

Phila: "Razor just called Sbu. Apparently three metro police stopped them during a road block on the high way and took Ziphora with them."

I knew that feeling very well. That feeling of hopelessness, regret and feeling like a pathetic failure.

David: (shocked) “What?! How did that happen?! I need to get out of here! I swear, this is all Dineo's doing! If I get my hands on her - “

Phila: “Calm down. Perhaps we can get you out of here.”

Shabalala and Mmako made their way back to the interrogation room, along with the lawyer I had hired for David.

Phila: “Are we done here, gentlemen?”

Shabalala: “I'm afraid not, Mr. Mayor. You see, we have footage and incriminating evidence of David Mosue physically capturing and torturing young girls. Girls who had gone missing. I mean, they were even found and are in the witness protection programme.”

I couldn't believe my ears. They even showed me one of the tapes and David looked so speechless. Diego was a motherfucker.

Phila: “Look, this man was kidnapped and brainwashed by those people. Surely the lawyer showed you the footage.”

Shabalala: “This means nothing, I'm afraid you are going to spend the night if not a few of them in one of our cells, Mr. Mosue.”

I was deeply disappointed that my lawyer couldn't even do anything. I mean, it all seemed just too perfectly planned.

Phila: (frowning) “I see what is going on here. You two are on Diego's payroll, aren't you?”

Mmako: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, die boykies ba re nyatsa, Shabi (These little boys are undermining us).”

Phila: “You do know that I am in the running to become the next President, don't you? You do know that I hate corruption with every fibre in my being, don't you?”

Shabalala: (nervously) “Bona (Look), Mr. Mayor, I mean I am just following orders. I don't even know this Diego you speak of.”

Phila: “Okay, be like that. Take this as your last chance to redeem yourself. Anyone who plays a role in hurting our family members, will most probably not live to tell the tale. If you do live, please, do ask Sharon Zwane, my brother's ex wife. She will tell you what Mamba and Cobra do to those who fuck with them.”

Mmako: “Wa re gaetsha, sani (are you threatening us, boy)?”

Phila: “Anyone who has any experience with me will know that I don't do threats, I make promises that I keep. D, I will sort this out. Hang in there, wait for your bail hearing and I promise you, I'll bring her back. I'll get you out of here. Rest assured.”

David: (nodding) “Thank you, I owe you.”

Phila: “We're family. I'll be back soon.”

I walked out with a deep ache in my heart. Leaving David there knowing I could do nothing for him was just not right. That showed me that Diego had way too many people on his payroll, but he had to be stopped. I had dealt with worse people than him. Sure, he was a serious challenge, but I was sure that I would get to finish him off before he did any damage.

Sbu: “Mfo (Bro), Tony says that the registration number leads to a car that was once stolen – five years ago. The three cops aren't even cops; no one under those descriptions are employed by the government. Razor tried tailing them, but he lost them.”

That was incredibly frustrating.

Phila: (sigh) “What about the rest of the family?”

Sbu: “They are in Eshowe as we speak. They made it safely.”

Phila: “You know what this means, right?”

Sbu: (nodding) “Yes.”

Phila: “Call Pierro. It is time to prepare for war.”

Ziphora

I couldn't believe what had happened to me. The entire time I was in the car, it felt as if my life was about to end. I silently prayed, called upon my ancestors but it felt as if no one was hearing me. The men in the car were four in total. They all had guns on them and I was right in the middle of the other two in the back seat. I had nowhere to run – they made sure of it. They were even conversing in Spanish so that I couldn't hear what they were saying. I didn't even have the strength to cry, I was just glad at least that they weren't swearing at me or hurting me. They didn't even seem as if they were South African at all. We were driving for about three hours. It felt as if I was most definitely being taken to somewhere very far, I mean we were already out of Jo'burg. We stopped at a petrol station and I thought that it would be my chance, but none of them were willing to get out of the car. Only the driver went out.

Driver: "Don't get any ideas, pretty face. Do you need something?"

That was the moment tears made their appearance on my face and to make matters worse, the other three laughed at me as if I were pathetic.

Passenger 1: "Get her something sweet to drink. She will need it. It seems as if she's in shock."

Passenger 2: (laughing) "Don't worry, baby girl. Diego will take good care of you."

Passenger 3: "If you weren't already taken by him, I'd take you just for myself."

I swallowed hard; you know when you are in so much pain emotionally, that swallowing saliva feels like it would rip your entire throat out of your neck. I thought of asking for the rest room, that perhaps it would be my chance to escape.

Ziphora: (shakily) "I... I need the toilet."

Passenger 2: (laughing) "There is no way we're letting you out of our sight."

Ziphora: "But.. It is an emergency."

Passenger 1: "You can piss right there in the seat. You'll be fine."

While the Driver took his damn time, I heard the news playing on the radio.

Radio Reporter: "In breaking news; one of South Africa's most prominent Architects and Man of the year Mr. David Mosue has been arrested today on numerous charges including faking his own death, defeating the ends of justice, and most shockingly – human and drug trafficking. It is alleged that there is substantive proof against him as well as footage of him committing these horrible crimes. It has also been brought to

our attention that the Agape Church of Christ Pastor's wife, Dr. Ziphora Mosue, has gone missing. She was apparently kidnapped by two if not three men disguised as Metro police officers. The men are of an unknown nationality. Pictures of Dr. Mosue are circulating all over social media so if you do see her, please do not hesitate to contact the SAPS.”

I felt as if there was sudden hope, but the kidnappers decided on something else.

Passenger 1: “Change of plans put her in the boot.”

My heart was beating uncontrollably.

Passenger 3: “Come on, she is fine right here. The boot seems rather uncomfortable.”

Passenger 1: “Do you want to get paid for this gig? Because if someone recognizes her then we won't get paid. Remember that.”

It felt as if the third man who was seated on my right was a bit lenient, but of course, he couldn't argue with those guys. I mean they were all in it for the money if not something else. The driver came back and the jokes had slowly dissappeared.

Driver: "I just saw the news. She needs to go into the boot."

Passenger 2: "Later, man. You cannot just put a woman in the boot at a petrol station, are you insane?"

Driver: (nervously) "Oh, right. Let's move."

Passenger 2: "Any funny things, we won't hesitate to shoot you, pretty lady."

I felt so defeated. The driver drove a little further for about fifteen minutes until he came across some bushes. He parked the car there, as Passenger 3 opened the door and offered to put me in the boot.

Passenger 3: "I'll put her in there."

Driver: "Don't forget to strap her hands."

Passenger 3: "Sure."

Passenger 1: "On second thoughts, let me do it myself. I get the feeling you're catching feelings for our hostage."

Passenger 3 just ignored them as Passenger 1 tied my hands together using cable ties. He wanted to make sure that I didn't escape, I guess.

Passenger 1: "Now you can throw her in there. Don't worry, pretty face, it won't be long now. We're almost there."

It was no use crying, but instead I just prayed. I prayed for my safety and for my family's safety as well. I hoped that I would be there in time to say goodbye to my father, while I also prayed for David's release and safe return back into my arms. That was the worst situation I had ever been a part of. I cursed

the day Dineo came into our lives. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so lenient on her, but what was done was done. I had learnt the hard way that I needed to watch my back. First it was Faith and I failed to pay attention to the signs. She had the audacity to turn against me when I didn't even wrong her in any way and she formed a team with my half sister, just to make my life a living hell. A lot of people are so unaware that we live amongst real-life lucifers. Passenger 3 put me in the boot, but he looked at me with sorrow. I couldn't tell if he was being genuine or not. I could hear the driver start the car as he drove off again. Surely there would be road blocks or something where we were headed, I mean I was a well-known face. I had to try something – even if it meant my death. So, I remembered something I read a few months prior; that if you were caught in a situation where you were kidnapped and put in the boot of a car, you needed to stay calm by all means and carefully try to push one of the back lights of the car out. That way, you could easily wave your hand out of the light box and someone would notice odd activity in the boot and possibly alert authorities. Since my hands were tied together, I tried using my foot to push the light out and it worked. Thankfully, they were even playing loud music, so they could barely hear me. My hands were tied together, so I couldn't do much, but making sure that my foot stuck out of the light was progress enough for me. I was sure that someone would see me. After about fifteen

minutes, I was starting to lose hope, until I heard police sirens. I exhaled in relief. I could hear that there were about two of the policemen and their voices sounded a bit familiar though.

Policeman1: "Gentlemen."

Policeman 2: "How's it?"

Driver: "Is everything okay, officers?"

Policeman1: "Just doing our jobs. You four seem to be getting sloppy."

Passenger 1: "Cut the bullshit, Shabalala. Why did you follow us half way to Cape Town?"

Wait, Shabalala? That rung such a faint bell.

Policeman2: “Because, we have received numerous tip offs that there was someone in your boot. What have I told you about sloppy work?”

I could hear the kidnappers swearing and saying things in their language. It sounded as if they were getting out of the car. I pulled my foot leg back into the boot and I knew right there and then that I was busted.

Driver: “Shit!”

The boot was opened and I could see them raging. I was hoping the cops would save me but it was the very same cops that came to my mother's house to arrest David! Tears flowed down my face as I was dumbfounded.

Mmako: “Eish (Oh), maybe we should stay out of this, Shabi. I mean, she is well-known.”

While the two were debating amongst one another, Passenger 1 pulled me right out of the boot without warning like a raging

maniac and slapped me so hard across my face, I felt as if my ears were ringing.

Mmako: (shocked) “Hayi wena (No, man)!”

Passenger 3: (livid) “We're not supposed to touch her, Marco!”

At least I got a name, but I was helplessly infuriated. I mean no one had ever slapped me before – no one!

Driver: “Perhaps she should have thought of that before pulling that stupid stunt!”

Before I knew it, he gave me a few more slaps that left me half dazed and gave me a busted lip and a bleeding nose. I could tell that Passenger 3 really wasn't into the entire violence thing, as he grabbed the driver and pulled him away from me as I dropped to the dusty ground. Mmako seemed so unsure of why he was even doing what he was doing. Corruption was the root of all evil in the justice system.

Mmako: “Look, man, maybe we should head back.”

Shabalala: “Wena (you), Mmako? You're always shit-talking everything and everyone and tonight you have cold feet? Fuck no, I want my cut and the only way to get it is if that idiot rots in prison and this bitch gets delivered. Come, we need to escort them before serious cops find them.”

Mmako reluctantly followed Shabalala in their police car, and immediately started the sirens. I was shoved right back into the boot by the merciless driver.

Driver: (angrily) “Try that again – I dare you and I'll do worse to you than I already did.”

He slammed the door shut and I just cried. Just then, I heard a familiar voice.

Mac: “Your breakthrough is coming, Ziphora. Did you honestly think as highly favoured as you are that you could die in such a situation? Hang in there. There is a reason for everything.”

David

I felt as if I was seriously losing my mind. How could all that happen? I knew I shouldn't have left Ziphora alone. Now, it seemed as if all my sins were catching up with me. I didn't choose to go to Mexico or get kidnapped, but all those people at the police station just didn't seem to believe me at all. It left me so frustrated when Sbu told me that Ziphora was kidnapped. I should have honestly seen it coming. Just a few days ahead of Christmas and this happened?! I needed to find a way. I couldn't lose my wife like that – I refused. There was no way I was going to take that lying down like a loser. I promised Ziphora that I'd protect her when we got married and that is exactly what I was going to do. I knelt down and started praying.

David: “Modimo le Badimo ba ka (Dear God and my ancestors), all I ask is that my wife is protected and brought home safely to me. I don't even care what happens to me, all I want is her safety to be guaranteed. Amen.”

As I immediately opened my eyes, my father was standing right before me, smiling as usual.

David: (teary) "Papa (father)."

Mac: "Ska lla (Don't cry), my son. I didn't raise any quitters, believe me when I say this too shall pass. You are destined for bigger things; both you and your brother. The person you least expect will be the one to save you from all this mess.

Remember my words, son. Hang in there. Proverbs 3:5 says; "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. "

“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

Ziphora

I must have dozed off in the boot; not even thinking of water, exhaustion or hunger. Ntate Mac visiting me gave me hope, but that doesn't mean I wasn't traumatized or even afraid. I heard them stop after what felt like a lifetime drive, but once again, I heard a very familiar voice. This time, it was a female voice.

Voice: “It took you long enough.”

Driver: “Open the gate. You never told us this bitch could pull funny stunts. We were nearly caught.”

Voice: “What did she do?”

Driver: "She kicked out the back light and people noticed her foot hanging out the car."

Voice: (laughing) "Ag, she is just like her useless mother-in-law. Come in."

No, that voice; that laughter. It couldn't be. They opened the boot and I was even more scared than I was before. I kept thinking the unthinkable. Of course, the driver was still angry at me for that stunt, so he roughly pulled me into the house. I couldn't recognize the house at all, but it was most definitely far from Pretoria. He pulled me into the car and placed me on one of the chairs in the dining area. And there she was, my worst fear had been confirmed.

Selina: (smiling) "Hello, Ziphora. How have you been, Mma Moruti (Pastor)?"

I was beyond shocked, I could hardly speak.

Selina: (frowning) "Who did this to her, man? Do you want Diego to be angry at me?"

Passenger 3: "It was Marco."

Selina: "You see now, Marco. It's no wonder you have no wife, you can't possibly treat a woman this way. Untie her."

He cut the cable ties as instructed, while I looked at Mam'Selina in such disbelief. The house was so huge, it was a mansion. I failed to understand what she was doing in there. How on earth did she mix herself with such people? Greed indeed has no limits.

Selina: (smiling) "Oh, come on. Don't look at me like that. You're judging me, aren't you? Boys, go get yourselves some food. I need to talk to our guest of honour."

The four kidnappers proceeded to the kitchen including the two corrupt policemen. We live in a filthy world indeed.

Selina: “Zee, you're not mad at me, are you? I mean, you practically did the same thing to me when you chased me out of your church. What did you say again? Didn't you say that I didn't belong in the House of God? You chased me out like a dog – despite me being a member of that church even long before you were born! But I don't blame you – it must be a family thing, hey?”

Wow, Selina was really an evil woman. She honestly decided to do such to me because I kicked her out of my church? What was I supposed to do?

Ziphora: “So, you concocted a plan with the world's famous trafficker all because I removed you from the Church Wives?”

Selina: “You know, things were great before you came along. Julia had the church in the palm of her hands. It is such a pity she had to be overruled by a whore like you. I mean, she was such a handful herself, but she was much easier to manage. You see, you took something from me – a place of belonging. When I was at the Agape Church of Christ, I actually felt as if I was doing a difference, but you shoved me out of there and you actually did me a huge favour.”

Ziphora: “You have your own church now, Selina. Why on earth did you do this to me?”

Selina: (chuckling) “Thanks to your mother-in-law, Julia. She built that church for me – from the ground up and like you, I chased her out of it as well. I figured I could deal with Diego myself instead of being a substitute for her. I mean, come on, Zee, not all of us get the privilege to marry rich men like you. Surely you understand my sentiments. You should have just stayed where you come from.”

I was truly hurt. Women are the most vile creatures on earth.

Ziphora: Psalm 16:11 says; “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Selina: (laughing) “You can't lecture me about the Bible, dear. I was born way before you were. You know, Churches were just fine until the likes of you came along. We were fine with keeping everyone on a leash, with the word of God, but you

just had to include everyone else. You had to include all these gays, lesbians and the entire LGBTQI what what community. You had to include whore mongers and all unclean people who are undeserving of the Kingdom of God in our churches! You ruined it all – face the truth, Ziphora! For someone with such a beautiful Bible name, you are surely undeserving.”

Ziphora: “How can you stand before me and declare that you love God when you are so hateful?”

Selina: “Because only God knows my heart. Anyway, you weren't brought here to discuss your transgressions against me.”

Ziphora: “Why am I here then?”

Selina: “You will find out soon enough. For now, you are my prisoner, you can't leave this place until Diego comes. You will be living large, like you're used to. So don't you worry about a thing. Camilla here will attend to all your needs and take care of you.”

The so called Camilla appeared and it was the very same woman who had been stalking me if I should call it that. The very same woman who had been staring at me a few times during my church services. Wow.

Selina: "Oh, you must be recognizing her right now. Yes, I sent her to spy on you and because you're a little fool, you just didn't take note of anything at all. I sent you threatening messages and you didn't attend to them either."

She laughed at me like I was a pile of shit as she walked away. Something within me told me to relax, for God had my back. She wasn't going to get away with anything. I mean, look at what happened to Julia. She lost her legs due to her greed and still, she has not changed yet.

Camilla: "Come, go get cleaned up."

I got up and my body felt so painful. The boot wasn't meant for any human luggage. She took me upstairs to a very beautiful bedroom decorated in pure white. At least they weren't going

to make me live like a slave locked up in the basement or something. I tried to look around to see where we were, but I couldn't recognize anything. All I could see was high walls and even higher houses; Tuscan Town house style.

Camilla: "This is going to be your bedroom from now on. I'll come check on you once you are done."

Ziphora: "But I have nothing to wear."

Camilla: "There are clothes in the closet."

She was so young yet so cold. I got the feeling that perhaps she was held against her will. No young woman would have willingly exposed herself to such a life. I highly doubted that. I took off my clothes and got into the shower. My body was aching and my beaten and bruised face was aching even more. I missed my David, but I had to remain strong and faithful that he would come back to me.

Phila

Sbu and I wasted no time as we managed to get everyone in our corner – and recruited all our guards. The situation was bad – perhaps even worse when we had to go for Gorilla. Tony was working non-stop to ensure that we could hack everything on Diego's side. For the first time since that Diego shit-storm started, we finally received a breakthrough.

Tony: “Bozza (Boss), I'm in.”

Phila: “Good, it is about damn time. What's the status?”

Tony: “Well, all I see is Diego and his men having some dinner there. Nothing hectic.”

Sbu: “Breach all his security – change all their passwords and pass codes. It is high time we hit him right from within.”

Tony: “On it.”

While Tony was working on it, Pierro called.

Phila: "Pierro, you're on speaker."

Pierro: "Mamba, my men have managed to go in. We cut deal with Mexican President. It turns out Diego had more enemies than we realized."

That sounded like music to my ears.

Phila: "That's fucking awesome. When are you going in?"

Pierro: "Right now, with the Mexican police and a few of the army men. I hope you are ready for the war that is about to erupt."

Sbu: "We were born ready, Pierro. Do your magic."

Pierro: "Okay, I have my men on camera, do you guys have signal there?"

Phila: "Yes."

Pierro: "Okay."

We could see Pierro's men being loaded off their private jet and driving alongside the Mexican police. It felt like we were watching a movie. The last time we did something like this was when we were going after Gorilla in Brazil. That man made us work. It felt so personal; that I honestly was praying that he would die right there. From the moment they were about to approach the gate along with the chopper. The drama occurred.

Policeman1: "Police! Open up!"

As expected, Diego's men started opening fire the moment they heard the word "police". We had already studied his entire compound and the fucker had about thirty security men surrounding his entire compound. For a man who had been fucking with people's lives, he sure was afraid to die. Gunshots and teargas were flying everywhere and the increasing smoke

made it nearly impossible for everyone to see what was happening. So, we waited. The gunfire went on for about fifteen minutes before they went into the house. It seemed as if with each step they took closer, they had to break down another line of security. By the time they had gone into the house, a lot of men were down. It was risky of course, but that was enough to keep him behind bars for a very long time.

Pierro: "My men are in."

Sbu: "Any sign of that fucker, Tony?"

Tony: (shaking head) "No. Let me quickly rewind the cameras."

We gave him a few minutes to do that.

Tony: "Fuck

he ran to the basement with two of his men right when the gunfire started."

Sbu: "Can you see where he went?"

Pierro: "That basement has an entire tunnel leading to an undisclosed location."

Well, it seemed as if Diego tried to be the next Pablo Escobar.

Pierro: "Don't worry, few of his men were taken into custody. For now, expect his call. He might be coming to your country."

Phila: "Thank you so much, Pierro. I owe you one."

Pierro: "Don't thank me, Mamba. Family sticks with family. I'll stay in touch."

He hung up and we breathed a sigh of relief.

Sbu: "I'll get the drinks. I get the feeling we're about to have a long night."

Just then, we heard a stern knock on my door. I checked the time and it was about 11pm.

Sbu: "Who is it?"

Tony: "It's Jacob."

I rushed to the door along with Sbu and indeed it was Jacob. He had the twins alongside Dimakatso.

Phila: (surprised) "Jacob. What are you doing here?"

Jacob: "I could have come sooner, but I didn't want to risk it. I came to help you solve this mess. Why didn't you tell me? I had to hear from Dimakatso who was watching the news."

Phila: "You're supposed to be recovering."

Jacob: "It was just minor smoke inhalation. Can she put the kids to sleep in one of the bedrooms?"

Phila: "Of course, forgive my manners. How are you, Dimakatso?"

Dimakatso: (smiling) "I'm well, sir, how are you?"

Phila: (chuckling) "Please, call me Phila."

Sbu: "Come, I'll show you the bedroom."

Sbu took one twin while Dimakatso had the other as they headed upstairs.

Phila: "Did anyone see you? It is dangerous being here. You can't risk like that especially with the twins and a woman."

Jacob: "I know, I'm sorry, but I can't just sit in hiding like a coward while my brother rots in jail and his wife is who knows where. I just had to do something."

Phila: "Fine, but she has to go to Eshowe ASAP with the kids. We can't have her here."

Jacob: "That is if she will agree."

Phila: "She is like Ziyanda, she has no choice."

Jacob: "How is my brother?"

Phila: "He is a mess, but he is a man – a strong man. So, he will be okay."

Sbu: "Mfo (Bro), Tony is calling us to the study."

Phila: "Brace yourself, it seems as if we won't get much sleep these coming days."

Sbu: "What's up?"

Tony: "We have an incoming call right from Diego's compound."

Phila: "I don't get it, the police searched the entire house."

Sbu: "We all know they can be incompetent. Answer it."

Phila: "Hello?"

Faith: (distraught) "Please... Help me."

Phila: "Who is it, Tony?"

Faith: "It's me, Faith. Please, get me out of here."

Phila: “Why are you calling me? How do you even know my number?”

Faith: “It is not hard to track down the Mayor of Gauteng's number. Look, I need you to help me, please.”

Phila: “Who is with you right now? Where is Diego?”

Faith: “They all disappeared. I'm the only one left in the house. I made sure of it.”

I looked at Tony waiting for a signal to confirm what she was saying and he nodded.

Phila: “Why should I help you? You're the reason we are in this mess in the first place.”

Faith: “I can help you find Diego, and all his men – all the girls he is still trafficking. I can help you with all of that – in exchange for my freedom. Get me back to South Africa, but I need all charges against me dropped.”

Phila: "Okay. One wrong move and you're out."

Faith: "I won't mess this up; I have to do this – for myself and my baby."

Phila: "You should know by now that I don't trust bitches. Wear some dark clothes; a car will be there to pick you up in five. Don't fuck this up."

I hung up and I was conflicted immediately.

Sbu: "Do you trust her?"

Phila: "I don't know, man."

Jacob: "I get the feeling she is up to something, but she is the closest link we have to finding everything we need, so let's wait and see."

The next day...

Susan

Everything had been such a mess. I could barely sleep and barely cope. My baby was missing – she was taken right before my eyes. I could feel that she was in safe hands, but how sure could we be? Things were getting worse as Frank's condition was seriously deteriorating. I think it had to do with the fact that Ziphora was missing. An ill person could never afford to become depressed. Charisma was refusing to eat until we forced her, while her annoying husband kept bitching and moaning every chance he got. After I gave Frank his daily dose of morphine, I went to check on Charisma. Keo was also doing her best, but she had her own self and her own child and husband to take care of. Charisma was in bed, crying uncontrollably.

Susan: “Charisma, ngwanaka (my baby). I have brought you some food.”

Of course, that irritating, spoilt husband of hers Daniel, was right next to her. He gave me a filthy look as I entered the bedroom. Hehe, he was playing a dangerous game.

Charisma: (teary) “Mama, a ka tshwara ke tlala (I'm not hungry).”

Susan: “I won't tell you again. If you don't eat willingly, I will have to get all the people in this house to pin you onto the bed so that you can eat. Akere wena ga wa tshwara ke tlala (you are not hungry, right)? So, at least feed my grandchild.”

Daniel: (annoyed) “You know, none of this would have happened if you didn't force us to come here. My business is suffering in my absence.”

Susan: (frowning) “Askies (excuse me)?”

Charisma: “Okay mama, ke tla ja (I'll eat).”

I knew very well she was avoiding a tongue-lashing from my side.

Daniel: “O nkutlwile (You heard me).”

I felt myself boil from the pit of my stomach. Was that man for real?

Susan: “Daniel, are you sure you are talking to me? Susan Mokoena, your wife's mother like that?”

Daniel: “I'm just saying – it is your fault that - “

Susan: (interrupting) “You know, if I were your mother, I'd be filled with deep-seethed disappointment. They named you Daniel most probably because they thought you'd be a good leader, a humble and obedient man just like Daniel in the Bible. Well, for someone who married my daughter, I gave you good faith – despite your trashy mother abusing my daughter for years, calling her barren and every wrong name in the world. She took it like a man, now that she is expecting your

precious bundle of joy, you feel the need to disrespect me at a time like this?! My other daughter is missing; our lives are in shambles right now and o mpotsa mogwete (you're telling me bullshit) about your suffering business!"

Charisma: "Mama, he didn't mean it - "

Susan: "Wena ema pele (you, wait a minute). Daniel, I will just hope that you said what you said and you addressed me as you did out of stress. I'll just say that. I hope that when I come back here to fetch those dishes that you will have a change of heart, because you should know I don't take well to disrespect. Don't make me regret marrying my daughter off to the likes of you. Wena (you), that dish had better be empty by the time I come back."

I walked out trying to remain calm, but my feelings just got the best of me. I stormed out of the house and just kept walking until I found a quiet spot amongst the garden. I had no more strength left within me, but being a mother will force you to gather the small droplet of strength buried beneath the surface of your soul and keep caring for others. I just cried incessantly, as I just let it all out. The father of my children was dying; I was upset because they would never get to experience what Lydia did with her children. I felt as if my own children were robbed of that experience. He will never get to see his grandchildren grow up and they will never get to have someone called a

grandfather. My daughter was taken by dangerous men and I had no idea what they were doing to her. I didn't want to have a black Christmas, I just wanted her back safe and sound and only God knew where she was.

Susan: (praying) "Oh, God, please, protect my child. I have done everything by the book to the best of my ability. I have trusted you all my life and I have raised my daughters to put you first nonetheless. Why do I have to endure so much heartache at a time like this? Why do I have to suffer? Take me instead, lord. Why my children? Lena ba ga Mosue (you, the Mosue family), you took my child to be with yours, but it has been whirlwind after whirlwind. Why won't you give my Ziphora a break? She also deserves happiness just like any other child. Why?! Why?!"

My mother and I never really got along, but at times she was one sensible woman. She would tell me that one should never bottle things up and that if you ever felt the need to cry or scream, just do it. I felt better, even though it felt as if I was cursing God and the Mosue ancestors, but my goodness, I just needed to do that. I felt a little better after spending some few minutes just basking in the air right underneath that tree. Sometimes silence is the loudest answer you need.

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“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Phila

We had waited and waited for Diego's call, and just when we were about to give up, the motherfucker called.

Tony: “Bozza (Boss), we're getting a call from Mexico.”

Phila: “It must be that fucker. Hello?”

Diego: “Mamba, you piece of shit. You thought you could send people to raid me and I wouldn't find out?”

Phila: “It is not like I hid anything from you, Diego. You called me just to tell me the obvious?”

Diego: "I called to tell you that I'm coming for you. I am coming for everything you have got."

Phila: "I'll be waiting, my friend. Believe me, I will be waiting."

Diego: "You have no idea what you have done."

Phila: "Come to me, papi. Almost your entire crew is gone. I have mounting evidence against you. You thought you could ruin David's life like that and get away with it? Not on my watch."

Diego: "No one messes with Rodriquez and gets away with it."

Phila: "I'm a man of action, not too many words, Diego. Take some pointers. If you want me, you know where to find me."

He hung up but that was progressive.

Tony: “Bozza (Boss), I have just received confirmation that Faith has made it to the country.”

Phila: “Did you sort out all footage and all charges against her?”

Tony: “Done. It is not like we needed to, though.”

Phila: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

Tony: “You'll see.”

We waited anxiously for her to arrive and after about an hour, she arrived at the house. It was too dangerous to send Dimakatso and the twins away, so we let them remain at the house for the time being. Razor entered the house and we were all startled.

Sbu: (shocked) “Razor, what the fuck is this?”

Jacob: “Is this some kind of joke?”

Razor: "No, boss. It is the woman you were looking for."

Phila: "Hey wena (you). What happened to you? Why are you white all of a sudden?"

Faith: (teary) "It's a long story."

Sbu: "We have time, MJ."

Phila: "Sbu."

Sbu: "Askies (Sorry)."

Faith: (sigh) "Diego did this to me."

Phila: "Why? What did you do to him?"

Faith: “Nothing. He said I was interfering and I was making David lose his mind because I had fallen for him and then, he said he did this to me just to teach me a lesson.”

Sbu: (laughing) “I must hand it to him. It is kind of funny.”

Phila: “You're here now, so how are you going to help us?”

Faith: “Well, I know where he hid the girls – the rest of the missing girls. I can lead you to them. Others were shipped off to other countries and of course, the justice system of this country is as shitty as it gets.”

Phila: “Hold on a second, do you know these two cops?”

I showed her a picture of the cops that arrested David.

Faith: (nodding) “Yes, that is Shabalala and Mmako. They were a recent addition to Diego's payroll. He is dangerous, he has judges, prosecutors, teachers, ministers just about everyone on

his payroll. It might be hard for you to get a clean man of the law.”

Jacob: “Why are you helping us?”

Faith: “Because... I'm pregnant.”

Jacob: “And?”

Faith: “It is David's child.”

Okay, that was not the bombshell we were expecting. I didn't believe her, though.

Jacob: “How sure are you?”

Faith: (hesitant) “I am very sure.”

Jacob: “You hesitated.”

Faith: "Because you're all making me anxious."

Jacob: "If I find that you have impure intentions in this entire thing, I will skin you alive myself."

Faith: (nodding) "Okay."

Phila: "Well, then. You'd better start talking and revealing all the details you can about everyone. David has a bail hearing today, so you'd better make this count."

David

I felt entirely hopeless. It felt as if my entire life was about to go down the drain. I had no recollection of actually doing those things to those girls before, but once I finished praying, I started having terrible flashbacks of everything I had done. I beat them up so badly, that some nearly died. I kidnapped, lied to and forced girls into prostitution all for Diego. I couldn't believe that I had done such things to other human beings. That

was not what my father taught me. I had become a monster – Luis Garcia, the world's best recruiter. I felt like I was losing my mind. I had an incredibly awful feeling of darkness cloud me the entire time. I was sweating whenever I tried to sleep, I kept hearing Diego's voice playing in my head like a broken record. I felt as if I was losing my mind. Phila had hired his lawyer. Stacy Mavuso, one of the best sharks in the business. Even though she couldn't let me go home the day before, she was still the best of the best. She came to see me unexpectedly.

Stacy: “Good morning, David. How are you today?”

David: (sigh) “I've had better days.”

Stacy: (smiling) “Go freshen up. I have brought you a suit and some fresh new underwear.”

David: “Where am I going?”

Stacy: “To court.”

David: "That won't help

I will most probably be sent to prison."

Stacy: (chuckling) "David, you should know one thing about me. When I smile, it means I have a trick or two up my sleeve. Believe me when I say that you are going home today."

I just shrugged my shoulders and did as she told me. The entire time I felt so lethargic, my eyes were so swollen with dark circles underneath. I looked like a horrible piece of shit. I walked out and followed Stacy.

Stacy: "I'll meet you at court."

She was smiling, but I wasn't bothered. I was cuffed by other officers, so I assumed those two idiots who arrested me the day before were off. I got into the back of the van and off I went to court. I had no desire to even speak or have my hopes up. I kept thinking of my Ziphora the entire time. We arrived at court and I was taken to the waiting cells. While I was there, I heard a familiar voice.

Phila: (smiling) "Wow, you look like shit."

David: "P, any news on Zee?"

Phila: (shaking head) "No, but she will be found. I brought you some food."

David: "What is the point of eating?"

Phila: "Well, because you have so much to live for. Do you want Zee to come back to a skeleton?"

David: (chuckling) "No."

Phila: "Eat up. I'll see you after your hearing."

I ate a little bit, as much as I could of that sandwich and drank a bit of the juice. I was called to make my way on the stand. Upon

arrival in court, I looked around and saw my brother right next to Sbu and Phila. Jacob was smiling at me, I let out a tear. I hadn't seen him in so long and I had already felt so guilty of him sacrificing so much of his life for me. I briefly smiled back. He gave me hope. Stacy looked at me and winked. I had no idea what she was planning.

Policeman: "All rise for Judge De Beer."

We all stood up and waited for the judge to sit down first.

Policeman: "You may be seated."

The Prosecutor looked so overconfident; I guess she already assumed I was guilty until proven innocent.

Prosecutor: "The state vs. David Mosue, my lord. He is being charged with multiple charges, including faking his own death, human and drug trafficking and of course, attempt to do grievous bodily harm."

Judge: "How do you plead?"

David: "Not guilty, my lord."

Judge: "So, this is a bail hearing, I presume?"

Prosecutor: "Yes, but the prosecution argues that - "

Stacy: (interrupting) "Well, actually, my lord. The defence would like to believe that Mr. David Mosue was wrongfully accused of all those doings. As you can see in Exhibit 2A, you will find all the corroborating evidence that he was indeed kidnapped and not in the right state of mind to do any of those things. It seems as if it was indeed fake evidence produced to the state, my lord."

Judge: (sigh) "Ag, Ms. Mavuso, your client has already been charged, this is supposed to be a bail hearing. Nothing more."

Stacy: "At least look at the evidence, my lord."

She gave him a devious smile. I was in pure awe when the Judge looked as if he had seen a ghost. Suddenly, he had a change of heart.

Judge: (shakily) “Uh, uhm, yes, it seems as if you are right, Ms. Mavuso. The client was indeed wrongfully charged.”

Prosecutor: (shocked) “But, my lord, I - “

Judge: (interrupting) “The case is to be thrown out of court immediately. Mr. David Mosue, you are free to go. All charges will be dropped against you, and I sincerely apologize for all the incompetence of the people who were in charge of this case. I do hope that you won't sue the state, but if you do, I'll totally understand.”

The prosecution was left in deep seethed shock, while the rest of the people in court were gasping in shock. Some were cursing while some were clapping their hands. The judge really looked spooked, while Stacy smiled at me. I looked back and I saw Phila, Sbu and Jacob all smile at me too. I had no idea what had just happened, but I had never seen a judge be that nice to an accused. Romans 10:17 - “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

- "He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

David

I had no idea what Phila, Sbu and my brother did, but whatever it was, they really saved me. We got into the car and drove home. I didn't even want to go anywhere else, but my house, but I just couldn't due to this entire Diego thing. I had to go to Phila's house, for safety.

David: "I can't thank you enough for what you did for me, guys."

Phila: "You don't have to thank us, family sticks with family."

David: "I am just curious, though. What did you do to that judge?"

Sbu: (laughing) "Let's just say we showed him a list of all his sins along with concrete proof."

Phila: "He has been embezzling funds almost everywhere, and indulging in sex with all kinds of prostitutes – including males. So, that would of course damage his career and most importantly, his marriage."

David: "Does that mean I am off the hook, though?"

Phila: "Yes, don't you worry. I am going back for each and every one of them once I become President."

We chuckled and entered the gate. Upon arrival at the house, I saw someone I had hoped to never see again and my mood instantly changed.

David: (angrily) "What is she doing here?"

Jacob: "She is the one who actually gave us all that evidence, David. She says she is here to help."

Faith: (nervously) "Hi, David."

I immediately saw red. I wasn't functioning as I normally would. The next thing I knew, my bare hands were on her throat. I wanted to kill her, something within me screamed fire and I just wanted to kill her right on the spot. I could not even hear everyone around me warning me and begging me to stop, until Jacob pulled me away from her.

Sbu: (shocked) "Whoa! Did you see that? Your eyes were totally black."

Phila: "That is not good."

Sbu: "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

Phila: (nodding) "I'll make the call."

Faith: (choking) "I'm sorry, David. I didn't mean to. But, the baby is yours."

David: (angrily) "What baby?! We never even slept together."

Faith: "We did... It happened only once."

David: (angrily) "You lying whore!"

Jacob: "Faith, go upstairs or something before he actually kills you! David! Look at me."

Jacob slapped me around but I felt such overwhelming rage burning right through my entire body.

Jacob: (frowning) "What is going on, brother? You are not one to get angered easily."

David: "I don't know, I just feel so angry. I feel like killing her."

Phila: "I just got off the phone with Malome John. He says that you just need to be cleansed. Whatever Diego and them put inside of you needs to come out before you actually kill someone. It's okay, we know you are not a killer, David. We will help you. Razor just quickly went out to buy the necessary things."

David: (nodding) "What if she is really pregnant with my child?"

Jacob: "We'll cross that bridge when we get there."

David: "What is the status regarding my wife?"

Phila: "We'll find her. Just hang on a bit longer."

Tony: "Bozza (Boss), I have just received intel. Diego has sent tons of men to the country."

Phila: "Where are they?"

Tony: "They are headed towards the South of Jo'burg."

Phila: "Draw them towards our old warehouse. Better yet, bring them to Nova's guest house. Find a way to tamper with their desired location or something."

Tony: (nodding) "On it."

Phila: "Sbuda, let's hit the road."

Jacob: "Wait, I'm coming with."

Phila: (shaking head) "You need to stay here with him and make sure he doesn't go anywhere near her. Once Razor comes back, he will give you the instructions regarding the cleansing."

Jacob: "Okay."

Faith

I had no idea what else to do. Ntate Moruti Mac has been bothering me ever since he made his appearance while I was in Mexico. I get it, I deserved everything that was coming to me. I felt like shit once I heard Diego brag about how he had Dineo killed and how he had her buried beneath the sea bottom. It sent chills down my spine. I feared for my life ever since and I had been begging Ntate Moruti to help me get home. He promised to let go of me if I did the right thing, but I obviously couldn't just leave everything as is. I was pregnant and I had to do right by my child.

Mac: "I see you still haven't changed your ways, Faith."

Faith: (frightened) "I have, Ntate Moruti, I swear."

Mac: "Tell the truth, before it blows up in your face and you actually lose everything."

Faith: (shakily) "I have, I swear."

Mac: "I wasn't born yesterday, you know that. I am giving you one last chance. Redeem yourself or face the consequences."

Phila

Sbu was driving like the maniac he was while the rest of the guards were right behind us. I swore to Ziyanda that I would never kill again, but I had to end that madness – I just had to. We finally approached Nova's guest house and the idiots actually thought that they were going to stay there. It is always easier to kill people on your own turf, rather than theirs. We knew all the pass codes so we just entered. The idiots were indulging in alcohol while we managed to enter unnoticed, until one of them noticed us.

Man: "Who the fuck are you?"

Sbu: "We're your worst nightmare, Amigos."

Phila: “We obviously know that Diego isn't here, so where is he?”

Man: (chuckling) “Like we would tell you.”

Sbu: “Last chance, fat fuck. Where is he?”

Phila: “We're giving you a chance to walk away from all of this. You can even live a life – away from all the madness that comes with Diego.”

Man: “Bullshit.”

It always takes one person; just one mother fucking idiot. One gunshot went off and just like that the shooting spree started. The other guards went around the house and started shooting all the other men that were hidden upstairs. We were shooting one another for about fifteen minutes. I didn't miss that life at all and if I weren't doing it for a good cause, my wife would have divorced me a long time ago.

Sbu: "Fuck, this is messy."

Phila: "Let's check if there is anyone else."

We walked around the house and no one was left. Unfortunately, all the men from Diego's corner were dead.

Phila: "All clear. Let's go. We'll let the cops take care of this."

Sbu: "Where to now?"

Phila: "It is time to pay Judge De Beer a friendly visit."

We were tired and worn out, but we had to do what he just signed up for. The world is always full of evil, and very few people willing to risk their lives to stop the evil one day at a time. We took the bullet proofs off and headed straight to the location Tony sent us. Of course, he lived in a lavish estate with cameras all around.

Sbu: "Hello, Judge, please, let us in."

Judge: "What do you want?"

Sbu: "Hao (Goodness), you are being quite rude to the men who could end you."

Just like that, he opened the gate. My brother was the total opposite of me. He was playful but straight to the point. We went in and wasted no time. We even found him with a robe on drinking whiskey. He was most probably upset about what happened earlier in court.

Judge: "What do you want?"

Phila: "It is nice to see you again, Judge."

Judge: "I wish I could say the same for you. I must say, you did me dirty. I had no idea the Gauteng Mayor was so spiteful."

Phila: "Let's cut the bullshit, De Beer. We know you like dipping your hands in some illegal pie. So, I want you to help us. We scratched your back, now it is time to scratch ours. We want an interdict – ban Diego Rodriguez and any of his family from South Africa. A warrant of arrest must be issued and he must be sought after like the criminal he is."

Sbu: "Yes, Escobar style."

Judge: "I can't do that."

Phila: "You can and you will."

Judge: "And if I don't want to?"

Phila: "You seriously think you're in a position to bargain right now?"

Judge De Beer just shrugged his shoulders, testing us.

Sbu: "Be my guest then. Marissa! Mrs. De Beer!! We know you're upstairs! Please come downstairs, we have some news for you!"

Judge: "What the fuck are you doing?"

Sbu: "Marissa!"

Within seconds the wife came down.

Marissa: "Hello?"

Sbu: (smiling) "Marissa, my skat (darling), kom gou hier (please come here)."

Marissa: "Ken ons mekaar (Do we know each other)?"

Judge: (worried) "Okay, fine. You've made your point. I'll do it. It will go out first thing tomorrow morning."

Phila: (shaking head) "I can't wait that long. Tonight."

Judge: "Fine."

The poor wife was looking at us like she had seen a ghost.

Sbu: (smiling) "We'll let your husband tell you. Ag, man. He has been a bit of a bad boy. Take him for a vacation or something, will you? Totsiens (bye bye)!"

We left the house, smiling and laughing at Sbu's stunt. What a crazy guy.

Three days later...

Ziphora

It had been such a horribly dreadful few days. Selina was now upset because an interdict had gone out for Diego and his entire operation. It left her so frustrated, most probably because he couldn't come get me like he had promised her to. It was a huge relief for me simply because I had no idea what he had in mind. In other news, Dineo was found dead and her body thrown at the bottom of the sea somewhere halfway across the world. Her mother must have been devastated, but I could only imagine what my father was feeling at that point. Desiree must also have been hysterical since her wedding was approaching and I was missing. Her matron of honour was missing and I felt so bad. It wouldn't be fair for her to drop her wedding just for me. I grew increasingly anxious because it was Christmas eve and I needed to get out of there. I wanted to be around my family. With each day that passed, my father was getting closer to reaching his end. I couldn't let that pass me. I had to do something even though I had no idea where they were. Somehow, I felt as if a breakthrough would reach me that day. Camilla made her way to my room to give me breakfast as usual, as I wasn't even allowed to leave the bedroom.

Ziphora: “Camilla, I never got to thank you for everything you have done for me. You have truly been nothing but kind to me.”

Camilla: “Stop, please. Whatever you are trying won't work.”

Ziphora: “Look, you might not believe me, but I can get you out of here.”

Camilla: (laughing) “You wish.”

Ziphora: “What is a good girl like you doing in a place like this? Are they forcing you to do this? I mean you could be anything you want and judging by your level of care, you most probably wanted to be a nurse, right? Where are your parents?”

Camilla: “I see what you're trying to do and it is not working! I am perfectly fine. You don't know me, and if you could help me, why haven't you helped yourself? How come you haven't been found yet?”

Ziphora: “I have money – a lot of it. If you don't believe me, lend me your phone and I'll show you.”

Camilla looked a little tempted but she was reluctant.

Ziphora: “I won't do anything to you, I mean I am all the way upstairs and you could scream for help. They will kill me if I try anything, right? Come on, let me show you.”

She gave me her phone and I knew then that I had to offer her a good deal. I logged onto my Internet banking, because I knew then that if Phila and his team were smart, they would immediately track it.

Ziphora: “See?”

She was so shocked to see that kind of money in my bank account.

Camilla: (shocked) “Who are you and what exactly do you do for a living?”

Ziphora: “I am a woman of God, and I know you are too. I have noticed that Rosary around your neck. You must be Catholic. I can help you get out of here if you help me too.”

Camilla: (contemplating) “How much can you give me?”

Ziphora: “How much do you want to start a new life? How about a million? Two million?”

Camilla: “Look, I am only here because my mother is ill. I am doing this to help her and you have no idea how guilty I feel every single day. Not a day goes by of me not thinking about what they want to do to you. I have seen a few of your sermons, and my goodness, every time you pray and speak in your church, I can always feel the holy spirit run through my veins. You were chosen for this, Ziphora.”

I knew then that I had won her over.

Ziphora: "Then help me help you. We can help each other."

Camilla: (shaking head) "They'll find me. You cannot protect me against them."

Ziphora: "My husband is a powerful man. He can help you. I give you my word."

Camilla: "How do I know you won't turn your back on me once we are out there?"

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It had been a dreadful few days. At least David was cleansed and he managed to sleep well, which was not what I could say for Faith. She kept having nightmares, keeping us all up almost every night. We had enough problems of our own, so we sent her to the hide out I was at. She would manage to survive on her own, and besides, we didn't need such negative vibes around us. The interdict seemed to have pushed Diego straight into hiding. Phila was cleaning up the country, as a result, quite a lot of policemen and high profile people got arrested on charges of fraud and corruption. People were cheering him on and there was a huge demand for him to become President. While I was deep in thought, I received a strange and unexpected phone call.

Jacob: "Hello?"

Julia: "Son, it's me."

I had to look at my phone screen to actually check if I wasn't dreaming.

Jacob: "Julia? O batla eng (what do you want)?"

Julia: "I just want to talk. I know, you don't want to see me, but I have something that could make all of this go away."

Jacob: "Julia, I really don't have time for this. Your message was received loud and clear. You never loved me, so stay in your lane."

I was about to hang up.

Julia: "I know who took Ziphora. I have all the evidence you need against Diego that could put him behind bars - forever. I also know where he is."

“He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

David

I had no idea what Phila, Sbu and my brother did, but whatever it was, they really saved me. We got into the car and drove home. I didn't even want to go anywhere else, but my house, but I just couldn't due to this entire Diego thing. I had to go to Phila's house, for safety.

David: “I can't thank you enough for what you did for me, guys.”

Phila: “You don't have to thank us, family sticks with family.”

David: “I am just curious, though. What did you do to that judge?”

Sbu: (laughing) "Let's just say we showed him a list of all his sins along with concrete proof."

Phila: "He has been embezzling funds almost everywhere, and indulging in sex with all kinds of prostitutes – including males. So, that would of course damage his career and most importantly, his marriage."

David: "Does that mean I am off the hook, though?"

Phila: "Yes, don't you worry. I am going back for each and every one of them once I become President."

We chuckled and entered the gate. Upon arrival at the house, I saw someone I had hoped to never see again and my mood instantly changed.

David: (angrily) "What is she doing here?"

Jacob: "She is the one who actually gave us all that evidence, David. She says she is here to help."

Faith: (nervously) "Hi, David."

I immediately saw red. I wasn't functioning as I normally would. The next thing I knew, my bare hands were on her throat. I wanted to kill her, something within me screamed fire and I just wanted to kill her right on the spot. I could not even hear everyone around me warning me and begging me to stop, until Jacob pulled me away from her.

Sbu: (shocked) "Whoa! Did you see that? Your eyes were totally black."

Phila: "That is not good."

Sbu: "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

Phila: (nodding) "I'll make the call."

Faith: (choking) "I'm sorry, David. I didn't mean to. But, the baby is yours."

David: (angrily) "What baby?! We never even slept together."

Faith: "We did... It happened only once."

David: (angrily) "You lying whore!"

Jacob: "Faith, go upstairs or something before he actually kills you! David! Look at me."

Jacob slapped me around but I felt such overwhelming rage burning right through my entire body.

Jacob: (frowning) "What is going on, brother? You are not one to get angered easily."

David: "I don't know, I just feel so angry. I feel like killing her."

Phila: "I just got off the phone with Malome John. He says that you just need to be cleansed. Whatever Diego and them put inside of you needs to come out before you actually kill someone. It's okay, we know you are not a killer, David. We will help you. Razor just quickly went out to buy the necessary things."

David: (nodding) "What if she is really pregnant with my child?"

Jacob: "We'll cross that bridge when we get there."

David: "What is the status regarding my wife?"

Phila: "We'll find her. Just hang on a bit longer."

Tony: "Bozza (Boss), I have just received intel. Diego has sent tons of men to the country."

Phila: "Where are they?"

Tony: "They are headed towards the South of Jo'burg."

Phila: "Draw them towards our old warehouse. Better yet, bring them to Nova's guest house. Find a way to tamper with their desired location or something."

Tony: (nodding) "On it."

Phila: "Sbuda, let's hit the road."

Jacob: "Wait, I'm coming with."

Phila: (shaking head) "You need to stay here with him and make sure he doesn't go anywhere near her. Once Razor comes back, he will give you the instructions regarding the cleansing."

Jacob: "Okay."

Faith

I had no idea what else to do. Ntate Moruti Mac has been bothering me ever since he made his appearance while I was in Mexico. I get it, I deserved everything that was coming to me. I felt like shit once I heard Diego brag about how he had Dineo killed and how he had her buried beneath the sea bottom. It sent chills down my spine. I feared for my life ever since and I had been begging Ntate Moruti to help me get home. He promised to let go of me if I did the right thing, but I obviously couldn't just leave everything as is. I was pregnant and I had to do right by my child.

Mac: "I see you still haven't changed your ways, Faith."

Faith: (frightened) "I have, Ntate Moruti, I swear."

Mac: "Tell the truth, before it blows up in your face and you actually lose everything."

Faith: (shakily) "I have, I swear."

Mac: "I wasn't born yesterday, you know that. I am giving you one last chance. Redeem yourself or face the consequences."

Phila

Sbu was driving like the maniac he was while the rest of the guards were right behind us. I swore to Ziyanda that I would never kill again, but I had to end that madness – I just had to. We finally approached Nova's guest house and the idiots actually thought that they were going to stay there. It is always easier to kill people on your own turf, rather than theirs. We knew all the pass codes so we just entered. The idiots were indulging in alcohol while we managed to enter unnoticed, until one of them noticed us.

Man: "Who the fuck are you?"

Sbu: "We're your worst nightmare, Amigos."

Phila: “We obviously know that Diego isn't here, so where is he?”

Man: (chuckling) “Like we would tell you.”

Sbu: “Last chance, fat fuck. Where is he?”

Phila: “We're giving you a chance to walk away from all of this. You can even live a life – away from all the madness that comes with Diego.”

Man: “Bullshit.”

It always takes one person; just one mother fucking idiot. One gunshot went off and just like that the shooting spree started. The other guards went around the house and started shooting all the other men that were hidden upstairs. We were shooting one another for about fifteen minutes. I didn't miss that life at all and if I weren't doing it for a good cause, my wife would have divorced me a long time ago.

Sbu: "Fuck, this is messy."

Phila: "Let's check if there is anyone else."

We walked around the house and no one was left. Unfortunately, all the men from Diego's corner were dead.

Phila: "All clear. Let's go. We'll let the cops take care of this."

Sbu: "Where to now?"

Phila: "It is time to pay Judge De Beer a friendly visit."

We were tired and worn out, but we had to do what he just signed up for. The world is always full of evil, and very few people willing to risk their lives to stop the evil one day at a time. We took the bullet proofs off and headed straight to the location Tony sent us. Of course, he lived in a lavish estate with cameras all around.

Sbu: "Hello, Judge, please, let us in."

Judge: "What do you want?"

Sbu: "Hao (Goodness), you are being quite rude to the men who could end you."

Just like that, he opened the gate. My brother was the total opposite of me. He was playful but straight to the point. We went in and wasted no time. We even found him with a robe on drinking whiskey. He was most probably upset about what happened earlier in court.

Judge: "What do you want?"

Phila: "It is nice to see you again, Judge."

Judge: "I wish I could say the same for you. I must say, you did me dirty. I had no idea the Gauteng Mayor was so spiteful."

Phila: "Let's cut the bullshit, De Beer. We know you like dipping your hands in some illegal pie. So, I want you to help us. We scratched your back, now it is time to scratch ours. We want an interdict – ban Diego Rodriguez and any of his family from South Africa. A warrant of arrest must be issued and he must be sought after like the criminal he is."

Sbu: "Yes, Escobar style."

Judge: "I can't do that."

Phila: "You can and you will."

Judge: "And if I don't want to?"

Phila: "You seriously think you're in a position to bargain right now?"

Judge De Beer just shrugged his shoulders, testing us.

Sbu: “Be my guest then. Marissa! Mrs. De Beer!! We know you're upstairs! Please come downstairs, we have some news for you!”

Judge: “What the fuck are you doing?”

Sbu: “Marissa!”

Within seconds the wife came down.

Marissa: “Hello?”

Sbu: (smiling) “Marissa, my skat (darling), kom gou hier (please come here).”

Marissa: “Ken ons mekaar (Do we know each other)?”

Judge: (worried) “Okay, fine. You've made your point. I'll do it. It will go out first thing tomorrow morning.”

Phila: (shaking head) "I can't wait that long. Tonight."

Judge: "Fine."

The poor wife was looking at us like she had seen a ghost.

Sbu: (smiling) "We'll let your husband tell you. Ag, man. He has been a bit of a bad boy. Take him for a vacation or something, will you? Totsiens (bye bye)!"

We left the house, smiling and laughing at Sbu's stunt. What a crazy guy.

Three days later...

Ziphora

It had been such a horribly dreadful few days. Selina was now upset because an interdict had gone out for Diego and his entire operation. It left her so frustrated, most probably because he couldn't come get me like he had promised her to. It was a huge relief for me simply because I had no idea what he had in mind. In other news, Dineo was found dead and her body thrown at the bottom of the sea somewhere halfway across the world. Her mother must have been devastated, but I could only imagine what my father was feeling at that point. Desiree must also have been hysterical since her wedding was approaching and I was missing. Her matron of honour was missing and I felt so bad. It wouldn't be fair for her to drop her wedding just for me. I grew increasingly anxious because it was Christmas eve and I needed to get out of there. I wanted to be around my family. With each day that passed, my father was getting closer to reaching his end. I couldn't let that pass me. I had to do something even though I had no idea where they were. Somehow, I felt as if a breakthrough would reach me that day. Camilla made her way to my room to give me breakfast as usual, as I wasn't even allowed to leave the bedroom.

Ziphora: "Camilla, I never got to thank you for everything you have done for me. You have truly been nothing but kind to me."

Camilla: "Stop, please. Whatever you are trying won't work."

Ziphora: "Look, you might not believe me, but I can get you out of here."

Camilla: (laughing) "You wish."

Ziphora: "What is a good girl like you doing in a place like this? Are they forcing you to do this? I mean you could be anything you want and judging by your level of care, you most probably wanted to be a nurse, right? Where are your parents?"

Camilla: "I see what you're trying to do and it is not working! I am perfectly fine. You don't know me, and if you could help me, why haven't you helped yourself? How come you haven't been found yet?"

Ziphora: “I have money – a lot of it. If you don't believe me, lend me your phone and I'll show you.”

Camilla looked a little tempted but she was reluctant.

Ziphora: “I won't do anything to you, I mean I am all the way upstairs and you could scream for help. They will kill me if I try anything, right? Come on, let me show you.”

She gave me her phone and I knew then that I had to offer her a good deal. I logged onto my Internet banking, because I knew then that if Phila and his team were smart, they would immediately track it.

Ziphora: “See?”

She was so shocked to see that kind of money in my bank account.

Camilla: (shocked) “Who are you and what exactly do you do for a living?”

Ziphora: “I am a woman of God, and I know you are too. I have noticed that Rosary around your neck. You must be Catholic. I can help you get out of here if you help me too.”

Camilla: (contemplating) “How much can you give me?”

Ziphora: “How much do you want to start a new life? How about a million? Two million?”

Camilla: “Look, I am only here because my mother is ill. I am doing this to help her and you have no idea how guilty I feel every single day. Not a day goes by of me not thinking about what they want to do to you. I have seen a few of your sermons, and my goodness, every time you pray and speak in your church, I can always feel the holy spirit run through my veins. You were chosen for this, Ziphora.”

I knew then that I had won her over.

Ziphora: "Then help me help you. We can help each other."

Camilla: (shaking head) "They'll find me. You cannot protect me against them."

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Julia: "I know who took Ziphora. I have all the evidence you need against Diego that could put him behind bars - forever. I also know where he is."

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Ziphora

Yes, it might have been a sorrowful day, but we had reason to celebrate – we were having Christmas with the entire family along with Ziyanda's family. I was back home safe and sound and we got to celebrate the gift of life – my newborn nephew Elijah. Charisma had waited so long to be blessed with a baby; she suffered a lot of abuse at the hands of her in-laws and there she was, ten years later, blessed with a perfect little boy. God is a God of miracles. It turned out to be a feast – despite Frank's passing. We were all chipping in to cook, while David just couldn't keep his eyes off me. I had no idea what tensions my mother had with Daniel, but there was something there. David would check on me every five minutes.

Susan: “Bathong wena (My goodness)! Ziphora is safe and sound. Go and braai some meant, man.”

David: “Eish (Oh), I am so sorry, Mme (mom), but I don't want to lose her again. She is safe. Go, you can be all over her later on tonight.”

Ziphora: (blushing) “Bathong (goodness), Mama!”

Susan: “Le rata go iketsa bana, man (you like acting like children). We all know gore la sexana (we all know that you guys have sex).”

I was so red in the face, but she just laughed and kept pouring the wine. In a few minutes, Daniel approached her.

Daniel: (looking down) “Mme Susan, I humbly came to apologize. I should never have spoken to you like that. Ke kopa ma itshwarelo, mme (please, forgive me).”

Susan: “Hmm, next time ke tlo go tsipa marete, mfanaka (I'll pinch your balls, my boy).”

Daniel knew that it was Mama's way of saying apology accepted. He smiled in relief as he walked away, leaving the rest of us to laugh out loud. Jacob had arrived with Dimakatso, his new girlfriend. I had no idea he was even dating, but he was glowing and so was she. She seemed so timid and humble, I just loved her.

Susan: "So, Dimakatso, my baby. I see the way that man hovers around you. Have you done the deed yet?"

Keo: "Mama bathong (goodness)!"

Susan: "Thola wena (keep quiet, you)."

Dimakatso: (blushing) "Aowa (No), Mme."

Susan: "Ke bone fela (I just knew it). Can you imagine how clingy he will be the day you give it all up? I mean, I can remember how Frank was right after I slept with him. Yoh, banna (oh, men)!"

We all laughed.

Ziyanda: (whispering) “Zee, your mom is something else.”

Ziphora: “Tell me about it, it is no wonder she and Gog'Khanyi connect so well.”

We had a good time in the kitchen, with laughter and banter and a feast being cooked. No one dared enter the kitchen to even ask how far along we were with the food. Once we were done, it was about 2pm, and the entire kitchen team – us ladies, were halfway drunk.

Susan: “I'd like to make a toast; this year has been quite challenging, but nonetheless, we should always thank God for a new day. For not everyone are in our shoes and most people would die to be where we are today. He chose to keep us and bless us with new life. Psalm 118:14 says; “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” My children, my family we are still here because the Lord wanted us to be here. It simply means that we have unfinished business. Unlike Frank, he served his time and he went back to the spiritual world. You and I still have to do what we need to do, so I urge you all to live your lives like nothing else. Live each day as if it

were your last. Cherish life, one another and never go to bed angry. I have wasted so many years of my life being angry at Frank, all to just let go of that as a gift to him before his passing and also as a gift to myself. Forgiveness allows you to start being the conqueror, and no longer the victim. Do not hold yourself captive by being angry at people for too long, for your heart becomes so hardened, that you even forget to live. Living is what is most important. It is okay to choose you as forgiveness does not always mean allowing those who have hurt you back into your life. Remember, happiness is a choice; you choose to be happy the same way you choose to be angry. Life should not pass you by, more especially when you have your entire life ahead of you. I have survived so much in my life, that one would think I am lying. Anyway, here is to a good life, family, love and more sex.”

She just had to do that – on Christmas day to top it all off. I had everything planned – I thought that I'd have had my sermon at church and that I'd be giving people a few good words, but being around my family was the best gift ever. I loved preaching, but I felt as if Agape Church of Christ was just built on too many lies, deceit and evil. If David and I were to continue preaching the word of God, we would have to create our own thing. I had such an incredible day filled with love and laughter.

Five years later...

Life went on nonetheless. Our Christmas was filled with even more drama when Julia committed suicide right after she left Phila's house. Diego was found and arrested on all those charges, but he barely made it to prison as he was found hanging from one of the beds. Dineo's mother didn't take her death very well, but she still insisted on ruining Frank's funeral, until my mother gave her the beating of her life. I hadn't seen her hit someone like that in my life before. Life is so full of surprises, on the day of the funeral, it was revealed that Frank had a will. My mother was really not surprised, which was just hilarious. Frank actually left my sisters and I R250 000 each. I had no idea he even had money, it just goes to show that people can keep secrets, shame. I was so grateful to even find him again, because I managed to let go of all the pain and hurt. Faith tried to make amends with Desiree and I, but we wanted none of it. She had even lied about her pregnancy being David's, I mean ancestors work in mysterious ways. She gave up on that life and went back home. She had lost her job, everything but she wasn't my problem. I refused to let her screw me over the way Dineo did. Desiree had a beautiful wedding and even went on to have a baby boy a year later. I had yet another miscarriage a few weeks after that Christmas, but I managed to deal with it a lot better with David by my side. We decided to demolish Agape Church of Christ and build a

centre for the youth where we employed Boitu and fellow psychologists like her to assist youngsters with deep-rooted issues that could have potentially life threatening and life-long consequences.

Life with my David was really fun, where we took the time to travel and spread the word of God whenever we could. We took a few years to decide what to actually do with our lives. We were in Bali on our latest vacation, and after I thought that I had a severe case of food poisoning, I was actually pregnant. Funny enough, Frank visited me in my dreams the night before I found out and told me that my long awaited blessing was finally coming my way. All I could say is that everyone's journey is different, but we all experience pain and suffering – just a different kind of it.

It is always okay to forgive, although the mind is not so quick to forget. Sometimes, one should know when to forgive and let it be – not everyone deserves you – not even a piece of you. Once they taint your heart with pain; it is best to forgive and love them from a distance.

Nonetheless, God is always God, he does not change with the weather nor the days, He remains faithful at all times. If we all keep trusting Him, life will flow as planned. We should always remember that His plans are not ours and His timing is not ours.

Habbukuk 2:3 - “For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”

.....**The End**.....

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