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Chapter ONE

love is something she always longed for, the two most people who were supposed to love and keep her safe where the reason she was declared to have bipolar at just thirteen, just entering her teenage years, she felt like her life was ending, the suicidal attempts and the betings she got from her father over something so small or nothing at all, she lost hope in everthing.

of all her siblings, kagiso, katlego, the twins and Loyiso. she was mostly close to kagiso , he was the only one who was ever there for her. helping her with things she needed help with. he was the first person she told when she had her periods. you would think in such a case she would talk to her mother, but nothing. Maureen is a nice woman, but not nice enough to her. yes they talk at times but what more can you say to a woman sho isn't your biological mother and her husband, your father

keeps reminding you off. being told that your mother loved you older brother than she did you thats why she left you at the hospital and went to continue her life with your big brother and her husband.

its the beginning of the year and the schools have just reopened. katlego and kagiso are both at their matric year while shes doing grade eleven, both he and Loyiso.

it would have been nice if she and her siblings were in the school, but as luck or rather their father would have it he didnt want her anywhere near him, so he sent her to boarding school.

even in the years that she has been there, she never made a friend, well, not everyone was too thrilled with having a bipolar friend, she had a room mate, her name was Tshegofatso,like her, they both wanted thier fathers love, but you cant have everything you ever want. so by default, they became friends.

when she got to school days back, she learnt that Tshegofatso had left, she went to stay with her father, as happy for her as she was, she couldnt help but feel jelous. atleast one of them got something, she thought to herself.

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The canteen is filled with students, so like a norm, she goes outside to the back of security building to have her lunch, unlike usually, she's not alone today, there's another student there who is buried in his books, there's only one table available so she has no choice but to sit besides him.

the young man looks up and smiles at Maya who doesn't return the smile, feels embarrassed, he nods his head down and continues to read his books. she takes her food out and eats, focussing in her own thoughts.

the bell rings, indicating the end of lunch, simultaneously, they both pack their things and head to class.

the week continues the same, the pair continue to sit together during lunch and say nothing, both focussing on their own things, but today, things were different, somehow used to not being the only one at her secret place, Maya is surprised to see that she was the only one here today.

the nerd boy as she labeled him was not in, okay, given it is a Friday and not most people have classes on Friday, but she had hoped he would be here today. she continues with her lunch in a somber mood, and just like that, that's how the rest of her day and weekend end.

monday morning, she woke up feeling bright, in a much happier mood than how she was. even in class, people became shocked to see her interact, some made fun of her while others were too shocked to say anything, okay, fact! she's one of the brightest students in class, but she barely talks to anyone, so seeing her interact like this, came as a shocker to most.

lunch time came and she ran to her spot, like she anticipated the boy was her before her. a small smile made it's way to her lip and she ran towards the table, taking both she and the nerd boy by surprise.

"why were you not at school?" she asks.

shocked, the nerd boy looks over at her and smiles. "it's nothing" he says.

"mmmh" maya says and sits down besides him.

"i'm Maya by the way" she puts her hand out forward.

the nerd boy smiles at her and takes her hand, "nice name maya " he says, in smiles.

"well...?" maya cock her eyebrow in a question form.

suppressing a smile he too mimicks Maya.

"what is your name " he smiles and response.

"Tumahole" he says.

"nice to meet you too " she says, smiling.

maybe school might just be nice from now onwards. they continue to talk but Tumahole glances at his book every once in a while.

"am i disturbing you?" she asks, suddenly feeling bad.

"huh?, no its not that" he closes his book and looks at her, she bites on her sandwich and he looks another direction until she takes last bite of her sandwich.

"i feel like i'm disturbing " she says after taking the last sip from her drink.

tumahole looks at her and smiles. "no, you not, i just have to catch up in my work" he says.

the bell rings and they both head in different direction.

with the same unsettling feeling she had, she begins to replay their conversation, maybe she came on too much? but he seemed to not mind, or maybe it's because of what?

she continues to question but finds no answer to her questions.

when she gets to her room, she finds her roommate with a few other girls giggling. she greets them and they greet back.

"so you hang out with poor kids now?" Maya snaps her head to the direction of her roommate, not sure if she was talking to her.

"angizwa?" one of the girls giggle.

"i saw you with that guy"she says.

"okay?"

the girls look at each other and giggle.

"serious maya, no one wants to hang out with that guy,i know hes new and all that, but did you know that he stays at the cottage right next to the lake, like super poor. his mom works here at the school for free just so he can study here, like."

maya looks at the girl, waiting for her to make a point. the three girls look at her,waitig for them to say their point.

"you dont get it do you?" her roommate says.

"Candice im still waiting for you to make your point"

candice stands up and walks over to her.

"like Maya, he's poor, broke okay, stay away from him"

"So you judge people now, nakhona, what does him being poor have to do with anything? "

the girls all keep quite and look at her.

"aii, angi'understandi why nithanda ukuzenza unkulukulu ngabanye abantwana yaz" she clicks her tongue and slumps on her bed, putting her headphones on she plays music and blocks the rest of the world out.

suddenly like it had been waiting to be discovered, she remebers that when ever she would eat, Tumahole would look away, and come to think of it. he has never seen him eat anything since last week. could it be that he doesnt eat here at school? but why because everyone gets food.

still in thoughts, sleeps consumes her with all those thoughts running away with her.

3

When it was lunch time, she took her food and went to her spot, finding Tumahole there, she smiled at him and set down.

"hey" she greeted, he looked at her and smiled, then resumed to his books.

she opened her lunch and put it in front of both of them.

"here" his eyes snapped and looked at her.

"lets eat" she said, in a way, Tumahole felt offended that she would do that, is it that obvious that he hasn't eaten, that he doesn't eat at lunch, she felt offended by what she did.

"no thanks" he said and looked at her.

"i know that you are hungry, don't say no, please, take " feeling even more offended, he stood up, packed his books and left.

how dare she, do i look like a charity case to her, mxm, fucken rich kids - he thought to himself. making his way to the condor that he and his mother stay at.

"hao, ngwanake, gwabe go diragetseng jaanong?" the old woman asked.

"seepe mme" he answered. heading to his bed.

the old woman looked at him and said nothing. his sweet boy has been different lately, ever since they got here, the bubbly sweet boy is no more.

she thought that his grumpiness was because he was hungry since they slept on empty stomachs last night and day before.

she stole a few tomatoes and onions at the school kitchen, something she is not proud of but circumstances forced her to do so, as much as Tumahole is a bright student, even a genius like him can not study on an empty.

she dished up the pap and gravy she made and gave it to her son.

"tsaya ngwanake, tshwarisa" she said, sitting next to him on the bunk bed.

smelling the gravy, his stomach growled. he stood up and took the plate and took a big bite, he hummed immediately after he swallowed.

"o dinka kae?" he asked.

the old woman smiled and said nothing, taking her own plate she too indulged in the food.

after he was done eating, he went to get the jug and drink water

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to fill his stomach until God knows when.

meanwhile, Maya stood there shocked at what just happened. did she do something wrong? all these questions with no one to answer her, she lost her appetite and went back inside, she felt like crying all of a sudden, then she remembers that she didn't take her medication, going to her room to take them, everything comes back like a flood gate, she became even more angry. she took her pills and looked at them,

she felt angry thinking about the past, everything that happened to her leading to this moment, right here, right now. her father is the reason why she is like this, if only he loved her enough, if only her mother cared enough, hell.

if only Tumahole understood her, she took her pills and threw them out the window and went to drink water, but she didn't cool down like how she thought she would, she was fine yesterday, she didn't take the meds, then why now all of a sudden is she feeling like this, she paces the room tugging her hair, feeling the tears threatening to leave. she hated feeling like this.

feeling vulnerable and without control. she felt the urge to throw something, is it luck or misfortune, her laptop was the closest thing, she took it and threw it out the balcony, screaming in agony. tears streaming down her eyes, she started throwing things out the window.

learners who were nearby stopped to look what was happening, others took videos saying the cry girl has started yet again, the security ran to the direction of her room only to find it locked, they tried knocking but she screamed for them to go away.

they kept banging on the door, making her feel even worse. one of the security guys came with a key and unlocked the door.

they found her in a corner rocking back and forth scratching her hair, they picked her and took her to the counselling room.

4

The next day at school, everyone was talking about the school's crazy girl. Tumahole heard what happened but didn't know who it was, he just thought to himself that rich kids and their drama.

he wanted to apologise to Maya about him lashing out like that, he kept thinking over and over about it and as much as he would like to say Maya was wrong, the poor girl was only trying to help.

he went to their spot and waited with no sign of her, he thought, ooh well, i'm always the first to arrive so... he waited until the bell rang to indicate that lunch was over.

feeling disappointed, he packed his books and walked back to class, even after lunch, all the school could talk about was the crazy girl and her stunts, the rest of the lessons resumed as usual but his head was not here.

finally after school, he went home to rest. his thoughts were with the honey-brown eyed girl, the first person to ever talk to him in this school, the first person to ever be friendly to him, hell-she even gave him a hug, something that he doesn't know when last he got, sure gogo gives him hugs, but that's comfort hugs, not happy hugs.

in the counselling room. kagiso and his father just got in, Vusi Mahlangu is fuming, angry and ready to explode, if its one thing Maya knows how to do, is get under his nerves. she is just like her mother he keeps thinking to himself.

"lomtwana uxabanga ukuthi ngine mali yokudlala ngiyabona" he says, fuming as he opens the door to the counselling room.

Maya snaps her head up, fear creeping up her bones, she knows very well what his father is capable of. she quickly pulls her leg up curling up in a ball. when he sees this, he becomes even more infuriated.

"kagiso, leave us" mr Mahlangu says, looking at Maya not shifting his eyes off her.

"baba..." he starts to say.

"Mahlangu." he says sternly. knowing his father

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kagiso looks at his sister walks over to her, and gives her a hug, whispering in her ear. "don't hesitate to call me okay" he says to her.

Maya smiles at how protective her brother is, as much as she likes how he wants to be his knight, she knows there's nothing he can do to protect her from his father.

as soon as the door shuts close, Maya shifts her focus to look anywhere but her father's ranging eyes.

"Hlengiwe, anginayo imali yokudlala phela, who do you think will pay for the damaged objects huh?" he scolds not raising his voice, for the first time ever. Like a norm, she keeps quite when he speaks, apparently it is rude to answer when an elder is talking and also rude to keep quite, what is a person supposed to do because quite frankly, everything you do is wrong.

minutes pass without saying anything, "don't come back home during easter" with that he leaves the room telling Kagiso that he's going to talk to the school principal.

Looking out the window with silent tears streaming down her, Kagiso just hugs her, they share a bond no one would ever understand, scientifically speaking, twins share a bond like no other, but it's different in this case, it's like Maya and Kagiso are twins instead of Kagiso and Katlego.

"What happened?" he asks after some time.

I shrug my shoulders because I really don't know what happened, okay, maybe I might, but I don't want Kagiso

searching for him and beating him for making me have an episode.

"what happened to your pills ?" i shrug still. seeing as i'm not going to answer, he exhales and pulls something out of his bag.

"here" he takes out a container, with blueberry muffin, a smile automatically forms on her lips.

another thing they share in common is their love for blueberry muffins.

"i still dont get why you doingb commercial subject, you belong in the kitchen" Maya says, making Kagios crack in laughter.

"yeah no. i still value my life" as funny as it sounds, it is true. Mr Mahlangu would literally kill him if he dares try to be a chef.

they taalk and make jokes while enjoying the muffins.

mr Mahlangu comes back and tells kagiso that they are leaving. with one last hug to his sister he pulls another container and gives it to her, wishing her well and to be safe.

5

The following day, Tumahole finds that Maya is not here again, afraid that he might have pushed her away, he collects his books and attempts to leave.

dressed in casual clothes, Maya appears behind him.

"going somewhere?" she asks. startling him.

he turns and his eyes take her in, "hey" he says softly.

she sits down and so does he.

"look-", "sorry" they both say at the same time, smiling
Tumahole decides to go first.

"i'm sorry about my behaviour, it was wrong and uncalled for.
i'm sorry " seeming sincere, Maya nods her head.

"look, i would also like to apologise, you the first person to ever talk to me nicely, and i'm sorry if i may have ruined that. i didnt meant to offend you, i was only trying to be nice, sorry if i offended you"

she stands up and places the places the muffin container in front of him.

"i hope you dont get offended by this, but my brother bought more than enough, this is my peace offering." then she stands up, attempting to leave.

"where are you going?" he asks her. "i cant finish them on my own"

she smiles and sits down. taking one muffin she says."i need to get back soon"

"get back where?"

"counselling room, i had an episode so now they apparently need to monitor me" she says rolling her eyes.

seeing confused and lost, he asks her what she's talking about.

"my bipolar you know?" she says, thinking that he knows as everyone in school does.

"ooh" he stops midway from biting the muffin. "i didnt know"
silence falls between them, awkwardness that could be cut by a
butcher knife.

after a few minutes Tumahole asks her.

"are you okay though?"

she looks at him and nods her head. "i feel fine, but i need to take my meds, never skip them"

"ooh, okay then" he says, then they fall into another awkward
silence.

Maya then stands up, feeling even more down than before and says she's heading back. she had hoped that Tumahole would say something, but nothing.

later that day, Tumahole went to the school library to use the computer and research this thing called bipolar. he spent time there, he even went as far as searching for books that talk about the disorder. he has always been a book worm so reading never fazed him.

when he got home, gogo asked him what he was reading, he told about a friend of her that has a diseases called bipolar, in her old age, gogo knew nothing of such but only told Tumo, to treat her like he would treat any other person, sick or not.

he spent the whole night, up and learning about a disorder, he hoped that Maya would see that he doesnt view her differently, that she is fine and normal, even given the circumstances.

the following morning, he was excited to see her and tell her how much he researched about the disorder and all that.

During class time, his mind was occupied by the honey-brown eyed girl. Even his fellow classmates were surprised seeing him so lost, he never not once raised his arm to respond in class like he usually does, instead. He was all smiles and looked miles away.

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During lunch time, Maya went to the canteen to get lunch and walked to her table, where she hoped that maybe, just maybe Tumo was not in today, throughout the whole night she had been restless thinking about how now Tumahole will treat her like everyone else, she told herself that she will spare herself the heartache while it's still early. She will stop talking to him, try and avoid him if possible because she was actually starting to like him, she doesn't really like people nor tolerate them, but she does in this case, Tumo is the second person she ever felt free with, accepted and treated nicely. Yes it's too soon to say all this, but it is what it is. Liking a person does have to be a process when the person isn't even trying, it just automatically happens.

Much to her disappointment or rather not, Tumo was there, today, he didn't have his books open, he had a big smile plastered on his face that the moment she approached around the corner, he stood up and pulled her into a hug

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which caught both of them by surprise, but the smile was still there on his face.

"it feels good to see you" the statement took her by surprise but truth be told, she too likes to see him also.

"Thank you" she responded. Already he was making it hard for her to cut him off, he is such a nice guy.

She sits down and so does he, but before she could say anything, he beat her to it.

"look, I spent the whole night trying to learn as much as I can about bipolar and I'm sorry I kinna made things awkward, but trust me, it was not my intentions okay, I was just caught off guard I promise"

Okay, things have totally took a turn from what was supposed to happen.

"I know I don't know much about this, but I just want you to know that I understand, okay, you are not alone in this, let me be your friend"

He grabbed her hand, looked her in the eye to show that he meant each and every word he meant, no one has ever done this for her, yes it might seem like it's nothing, but it mean a whole lot to her, have someone aside from Kagiso care for her like this, then suddenly she feels bad for having wanting to cut him off, he is such a nice person, caring, she feels lucky to know him.

Unable to contain her tears, she pulls him in for a hug and sobs on his chest, she feels overwhelmed by emotions and other foreign things, unknown to them, a couple of students passing by look at them, some are shocked, are laughing at them, what are they doing they ask themselves.

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She went to sleep with a smile on her face, even if she tries, she can't hide it. When she got to her room, she found Candice studying, she hasn't seen her in a long time, well it was just a few days, but it felt like a long time, she was excited to her, Candice returned the hug that Maya gave her and they sat down catching up. Her phone vibrated on her study table, she looked at it and saw the name Tee❤️☐

She quickly grabbed it and answered it.

"hey girl, how are you?" ever since the year started and she learnt that Tshego left, they hasn't been any kind of communication, this is their first.

"I'm okay how are you?" she answered back.

"I'm good, I heard what happened, how are you holding up? I would have called before but I knew you didn't have your phone on you, I know how Walsh can be" she chuckled, hearing Tshegos' voice and how there wasn't a hint of sympathy or anything relating to that was a breath of fresh air, she wanted a friend that won't treat her differently, someone who will accept her for who she is and never judge her and also treat her like a normal person, and thank God Tshego was that, now she can safely say, she has friends, something she never had and never knew she longed for.

They continued catching up and laughing. That she felt at ease, happy for the first time in three days, ooh how she wishes every day could be like this, everything smooth sailing and with a smile on her face.

"someone is happy" Candice comments.

"what's there not to be happy about, life is good mogirl" she said throwing herself on top of her single bed.

"so I guess the rumors are true ke" she turned in her seat to look at Maya.

"what rumors" she asked, seemingly uninterested.

"that you and that poor boy are dating, people saw you kissing"

Maya just snorted at that. "you know Candice, if you take everything everyone says to heart, uzofa usasemcane ntombo I tell you"

She covered her face with her hands and closed her eyes, with a smile still plastered on her face. She slowly drifted off to sleep with the thought that no rumour formed against her and her mental state shall prosper.

6

The next few days pass in a blur, Maya has been doing totally fine and Tumo has been there like he promised, March holidays are just around the corner, kids are happy to go home, some can't stop talking about it, why are they so excited to go home all of a sudden, some literally go home on weekends, what's the difference now?

Or maybe the the fact that her father told her not to come that's weighing her down, phela everyone is so excited about going home, but it's not like she expected anything different from her father, Vusi Mahlangu is just as evil as they come, it's just by luck that the school allows them to stay over during March and September holidays, otherwise she would have been screwed.

It's a lazy Saturday afternoon, with nothing to do she decides to take a walk around the school, clear her head a little bit. She's on her phone talking to her brother when she sees a brown cottage from afar, then she remembers what Candice and her friends once said, they said Tumo lives in a cottage in the school premises next to the lake, could this be the cottage referred to? She asks. But then again, there is no other cottage aside from

this one, so this must be it, without thinking further, her legs take her to the direction of the cottage.

She can see an old woman sitting outside on the stoop knitting with wool.

"lotjhani" she saying, bending a little showing respect.

The old woman stops knitting and looks at her with a bright smile.

"Dumela ngwanake" she old woman said, putting her knitting wool down.

"Agee, eh! Ukhona Tumahole?"

"Tumo, Tumo tloo" she old woman called out.

"keatla mme" he shouted back.

A smile automatically formed on her lips just hearing his voice. The old woman looked at her and smiled shaking his head.

"ona le Matlho a mantle jaang, ngwanake" catching Maya off guard as she was lost in her trance.

"ke a leboga mme" she said, she lives In a Ndebele speaking household but she lives in a diverse place, E-Nkangala is a place with different language speaking people, plus Tshegofatso spoke Setswana, she can't really say she's good at it, but she's okay, she understands and can respond in it.

She has been told that she has beautiful eyes so many times, they are honey brown, of all her siblings, she's the only one with these kind of eyes, she used to wonder why that it, but Kagiso would just tell her that it's because she's a precious girl and she's is God sent. His angle and she would find confort in that.

Tumo makes his way out and immediately when he sees her, the smile that was on Mayas face is incomparable to his, he pulls her in a hug

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suprised, shocked yet happy to see her here.

"what are you doing here?" He asked.

"I was just taking a walk and decided to come here" smiles still there.

The old woman looked at her son and the beautiful eyes girl and couldn't contain her own smile, so this young girl is the one responsible for the happy mood Tumahole has been in. Ever since they got here, Tumo felt left out for for the past few weeks now, he has been all smiles and nothing less. Seeing him like this melts her heart. Tumo used to be a happy child, a bright student, okay, he still is a bright student, but not a happy

child, it all change within a day, and their lives took drastic turn for the worse.

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Walking towards the riverbank, the pair remained silent, Tumo with his hands inside his pockets and Maya busy fiddling with her fingers, they approached a fallen tree and settle on it.

"it's much nicer when your feet are inside the water, come"
Tumo held her hand and helped her turn so her feet touch the flowing river water, because she is short only the tip of her foot touched the water, grabbing both their shoes, Tumo placed them next to him and sat down next to Maya.

"this place is really nice" she said, not looking at him, but enjoying the quietness of the place.

"mmmh" Tumo replied.

Minutes passed by in silence, not an awkward one. But a nice silence. Both enjoying the sound of the flowing water, the

quietness surrounding the place with the sound of the birds chipping.

What I would give to have this quietness at home, Maya thought to herself. The thought of going home has been at the back of her mind. As hard as she would try not to think about it, she couldn't help it.

"do you come here often?" Tumo turned his head and nodded yes.

" this is my solace "he said, seemingly lost in thought, without thinking, Maya placed her hand on his, Tumo turned to look at their hands and locked them together. That made Maya smile. She then placed her head on his shoulder, he did nothing to object to the action so Maya closed her eyes to enjoy the comfort the place brought, and release an exasperated sigh.

No one said anything and the silence was welcomed with opened arms, each one lost in their own thoughts.

Maya thinking about her home situation and Tumo thinking why he suddenly feels weird emotionz when Maya is around. She makes her happy and nervous at the same time, what feeling is this? What is happening to him?

The sun was setting so the pair decided to walk back home, if you can call it that, Tumo being the gentleman that he is, offered to walk her back to her residence.

"thank you for taking me there, I needed that" Maya said turning to look at Tumo, they have reached the girls residence building. As much as they want to continue hanging out, they both have things to do.

"it's nothing" he responded. Before turning and heading back to their condo, Maya wrapped her arms around his arm and mumbled another thank you.

Heart beating fast. Tumo brushed her back and tried to put a smile on. Truth is. He's in a battle. He doesn't know what has suddenly happened to him. Having Maya in his arms is bitter sweet think, bitter because he doesn't know what is going on with him and he hates it. Sweet because he can't stop himself from liking it.

"see you" she said and pulled out. He offered her a smile and watched her turn and go inside.

Releasing an exasperated sigh and tuned and kicked a rock and walked back to their condo, head bowed down and hands inside his pockets.

Things have changed, they both can feel it, but question is, what? What changed.

Tumo continued lazily walking towards their condo. Gogo stopped knitting and watched him kicking invisible rocks, she just looked at him and shook her head smiling, "ao mosimana Waka, gorileng?" (oh my boy, what happened)

"seepe mme" (nothing mother) he said, he sat down on the stoop and exhaled burying his face in his hands. The old woman just looked at her and chuckled. She knows Tumo the back of her hand, she knows when something is bothering him but she doesn't like pressuring him into talking, when he's ready to talk, he knows where to find her.

The old woman continue with her knitting and humming a gospel song, Tumo seemingly lost in his thoughts manages to hum also. He wants to understand what is going on with him but he doesn't understand. What could have happened? What went wrong, what is going on, he feels overwhelmed he doesn't know what to do with himself. Since it's almost dawn, he decides to go cook, he managed to get some change nyana and bought maize and a pack of potatoes and some veggies, he decides that he's going to cook cabbage, that's gogos' favourite anyway. Ena he will just go to bed early.

He starts slicing the cabbage and putting the pots on the paraffin stove, he has to decide which one to cook first because it's only one plate, since already he has started slicing the cabbage, he might as well start with it. He switched the stove on with a matchstick and puts pours a small amount of oil inside the pot before he adds finely chopped onions, once the onion and oil have heated, he adds the cabbage and puts the lid on.

He almost burns the cabbage lost in thought when gogo brings him back to the world of the living.

"Hao Mara Tumo keng na?" (what's wrong)

"seepe" he continues to say.

"Hao

Mosimana Waka, Bua lenna tlheng" (my boy talk to me my boy
"

He looks at her and sighs, he bends and stirs the cabbage slightly ignoring gogo. The old woman can see that the boy is not fine so she bends and switch the stove off and pulls him by the hand and goes outside..

" go diragetseng ngwanake?"(what happened my child) feeling overwhelmed and frustrated he brushes his face and pulls nonexistent hair.

"ake itse gore godiragala eng lenna mme, ga ke itse gore ke tlhalose gore kereng kannete" (I dont know what what is happening I don't even know what to say?)

"a keka mosetsana yole?"(is it about that girl)

He looks at her and chuckles, "leina LA gagwe ke Maya Mme, and maybe ake itse" (her name is Maya and maybe, I don't know "

He stands up and leans on the pillar and says nothing. With curious thoughts, the old woman concludes that whatever is going on must be big, but not big enough to cause trouble. Or maybe his little boy is starting to be normal again? What she would actually give for him to live his youth years and not worry about the future

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stressing about school work and what they would eat the next day, is her old age, she can't do enough to fend for them because you know old age and painful legs go hand in hand, but she doesn't like the fact that every Friday her child must bunk classes and go look for something to put food on the table. He doest hard work at a young age when his mates are busy

playing with girls and all that, not that she wants him to play with girls, but it would be nice to hear him talk about a girl or two.

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Maya walked to her room and laid on her bed facing up. Even she could feel that something is different, the time to take her meds came and reluctantly she stood up and took them, she felt like crying, she doesnt know exactly what she's feeling, but she knows that she just wants to cry so that's what she does, the first tear slipped and the next followed, it was a silent cry and she was fine with it, a few minutes later she wiped her eyes and it was like nothing ever happened, she walked downstairs to have supper with everyone. It was too noisy for her liking but there was nothing she could do, suddenly her thoughts traveled to Tumo, was was he doing, what is he eating. Does he also feel what she's suddenly feeling? Sigh. Those are questions she can never have answers to unless she speaks to Tumo, but how does she do that when he doesn't have a phone, or maybe-

Without thinking twice she ran to her room and grabbed her jacket and went out, it is the weekend after all so they must all be in their rooms by 10 its still quite early, it's just after seven.

She doesn't know what is happening but she knows one thing, she wants to see him again, and as much as she would like to deny it, she likes him and she's afraid she likes him as more than just a friend.

She ups her pace and walks towards the direction of the condo.

"hey, where you headed to" she looks up at him and her heart rate picks up.

"i-I was coming to you actually" she answers, slightly out of breath.

"okay, what is it?" she looks at him and - and says nothing, she doesn't know what to say, she throws herself on him and just by luck, he catches her. "i wanted to see you" she says feeling overwhelmed again, unknown to her, he also was coming to her, for what? He doesn't know but he knows he just wanted to see her before he could drive himself crazy.

8

No one is saying anything, they in their table behind the security building looking at each other, Tumo is busy playing with mayas hands and she's enjoying it.

"what is it" she asks blushing because Tumo has been looking at her for quite some time smiling and saying nothing.

"nex" he says still smiling. "tell me about yourself kutlwe" she smiles and chews her bottom lip.

"what do you want to know?"

"mmh, what do you want to be, career wise" no one has ever asked her this.

"an accountent maybe?" she shrugs her shoulders.

"so you love numbers?" she looks at him and chuckles.

"I wish"

"then why accounting?"

She never thought she could ever say this out loud, but something forces her to say it.

"I want to bankrup my father's company, I'm still not sure if I should go the accounting way or business way, but all I know is that I want it burnt to ashes"

Shocked, Tumo brushes her hand. "why?" she looks at him and blinks away the tears that threaten to come out.

"he always care about it more than me, if he were to choose, it would be my siblings and then that company, and I will be excluded from everything."

"I'm sorry"

"no, don't be, it's what it is. Funny I'm the only one interest in the business world, even if it's for the wrong reasons" she sighs and rubs her tramples. "sorry. I don't want to come out as crazy or-"

"hey, hey, hey" he holds both her hands. "you don't sound crazy okay, you have a good enough reason why you want to do that, I'm pretty sure of it" he gives her a smile that's quickly replaced by anger "you lucky its just a company, only God knows what I would do to my father" he clenched his jaw and unclenches it.

"what did he do?" Maya asks. He quickly snaps out of his trance and smiles.

"don't worry about it. Now, tell me about how you plan on doing that?"

"when I was twelve, my father had some of his business friends over, my siblings were out I don't know where, I was in my room, I was busy reading when the door opened, this one guy

came in, said he was looking for the toilet, I told him where it was and he left"she said. "that year. The same guy continued coming to our houses, he liked asking me questions and I became intrigued when he spoke about his businesses and all that"

For the first time ever she felt like speaking, she was somewhat tired of bottling things up, maybe if she spoke she might lift off the burden off her shoulders.

"he came on my Thirteenth birthday, only Kagiso wished me a happy birthday, none of my siblings, father or mother said anything so when he came he bought me a laptop, j was happy and excited, no one had ever bought me anything before, well, besides Kagiso, he was the only one who cared enough for me, so when someone else who wasnt him did. I dont know. I dont know what I to even say about it" a tear dropped from her eye.

Slightly catching on, Tumo scooted closer to him and brushed her back. "it was not your fault" he said.

"no I know it wasn't, I didn't do anything, if he had been a father to me, none of this could have ever happened" now the tears were flowing but she felt nothing, if anything, her hatred for her father grew even more, she knew her father hated her but that day, it showed to what extend, what's worse three months later she was diagnosed with bipolar and later shipped

off to boarding school. So her reason for hating her father was justified.

"anyway, enough about me, what about you, what do you wanna be" she said smiling as if she wasn't crying literally less than a minute ago.

"I want to be a lawyer, human right lawyer or criminal lawyer, I don't know, I'm still deciding which one would be better"

"why do you want to be one"

"like you, I want revenge on my father, if it weren't for him I would still have my mother, he took everything away from me"

She knew gore gogo was too old to be his mother. "I'm sorry, what happened to her?"

"I hate entitled man, who think a woman's body is theirs to do as they please, he hit my mother and rapped her, he hit her until she bleed right in front of me, he thought that just because he has money he can do exactly what he wanted, that he could get away with everything, but then I guess because he said my mother died from a break in that happend, I wanted to tell the police what happened, I really did Maya, but that burstad said I was traumatize to think properly, he never wanted me to talk to the police or anyone for that matter " his

eyes were red, filled with rage and he tried to control his emotions, thinking about his mother breaks him down, gogo always tried to make him talk but he wouldn't, but then here he is with this honey-brown eyed girl saying everything he never said to anyone.

"promise me that you will make him pay, they have to pay"
Maya said. He turned to look at her and nodded his head.

"I promise, but your father is on the list too, you didn't deserve any of the things he put you through".

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After that night they made a pact, to make their fathers pay, come hell or high-water

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they will pay even if it's the last thing they do, but unknown to them, feelings started brewing, they would meet every day and have lunch together, Tumo became more open and to Maya and vice versa, as much as they thought this was friendship, during the night lying alone in bed, their thoughts drift off and questioning what the sudden change is all about.

"Tumo dira ka Pele hle man, retla go fitla late kwa kerekeng hay" (Tumo be quick, we will be late for church)

"ke atla" (I'm coming) he shouted, Gogo shook her head and took a sip of her water, and checked if she had everything she wanted. Bible, check, tissue, check, money for thithe, check.

Isn't it crazy how those who have nothing are the most devoted to the lord, they have no money to buy food and yet the little that they have they give to God?

Feeling alive and thankful Tumo made his way out looking dapper in his Chino pants and shirt. One thing he could say he's thankful for from his devil of a father is the clothes he has on his back.

All the way to church he and gogo kept talking about scriptures and their understanding of them.

Meanwhile, Maya was in her room watching Candice pack and waiting for her parents to come fetch her, if March holidays and almost have the school has left for home. As much as she misses Kagiso, she knows that Home Is the last place she wants to be, and lucky for her, Kagiso understands just that.

"so vele uwuyi ekhaya girl?" (so you really not going home) asked Candice.

"iye, I just don't feel like it" she said, busy typing on her phone. Her phone rang just as Candice was about to ask her another question.

"bhuti"(brother) she said. Standing and going over the to the window looking outside.

"I'll be there in an hour, we going out for movies, be prepared" the smile on her could not be wiped,.

"okay" she quickly hung up and went to the communal shower to get ready.

Thirty minutes later she was getting ready and doing final touchups.

She is one girl who takes her appearance very seriously, I guess that's one thing she and her sister, Kagisos' twin Katlego have in common, well, probably something all the Mahlangu kids have in common.

She and Katlego are the only girls, and then it's Kagiso and Loyiso the last born. She is only two months older than Loyiso, being the same age and all that, you would think that at least they would get along, but no, if anything, Loyiso is just a younger version of their father, Vusi.

Minutes later there was a knock on her door, Candice opened the door for everyone to get in. She thought it would just be the two of them but to her surprise, the whole Mahlangu anterage was here, by anterage we mean her two other siblings, Loyiso and Katlego.

"I hope uready because we can't be here for long" said Kagiso settling down on the bed.

"yeah I am, let me wear my shoes"

She's in a black tight fitted dress and a blue demin jacket to top her outfit, she wears black vans shoes and grabs her side bag and they all walk out.

"bye girl" Candice yells behind.

They all walk to the car that they came in, Katlego goes to the front with the driver while the three goes to the back.

The drive is filled with silence with only Maya and Kagiso talking. When they get to the mall, all four step out and go for some eye shopping before the movie starts. It's almost twelve and their movie starts at two so they walk around the mall having small talks.

They decide to have lunch first before going to the movies so they go to Spur and have their lunch, everything is on Kagiso so everyone orders however they like.

"Haibo, just because I'm paying it doesn't mean you should milk me hawu" he says when he hears what they ordered. Katlego and Kagiso are in matric so Maya asks them how it's like there, Katli just flips her hair and says it's fine, of course she enjoys the boys' attention as she's now a senior, she's always loved popularity which is why she takes acting classes academically... she's a Mahlangu so she doesn't fail, but if they were to compare, she's the least performing one.

She and Loyiso are in grade eleven, Seventeen this year. Loyiso is more focused on his phone than anything else and he seems bothered.

Kagiso decided to go check the cinema while Katli goes to the toilet, or the guy she was making eye contact with rather.

"soo, Loyiso, kunjani eskolweni?" (how is school?) she decided to break the ice.

"huh?" He asks scratching his head.. "ooh, yeah, kuright man"
(it's fine)

"mmmh, usharp Mara?"(are you okay) she's trying, they never
been one to talk and it feels rather awkward right this minute.

"eish, aii Hlengiwe, khanti ninjani Nina amantomabazane?"
(what is it with you girls)

"what do you mean?" she asks, taking a sip of her drink.

"aai, nex, just girls confuse me at times you know"

Maya chuckles and takes her last sip before Kagiso comes back
and they all stand to leave, they bump into katli on their way
and they all go to the cinema.

Its time for everyone to leave so they go drop Maya off at
school.

"hawu, kanti you not coming home?" asks Loyiso.

"uhm··· No. I'm staying here for the holidays" she doesn't know
if they know the reason why, but she's not about to tell them
either way.

"let me walk you in" she's shocked that Loyiso is one to offer
but she doest say anything.

On their way in, she spots Tumo sitting on the chair talking to the security guard. They make eye contact and immediately blush covers her chubby plump cheeks.

"is he the guy that's got you all giggy?" huh-?

"what are you talking about?" she asks confused.

He nods he's head towards the direction where Tumo is.

"uuh, no" she's quick to defend.

"it's fine, anyway, here, Tshego wanted me to give you this, and for what is worth" he pauses and shifts on his feet. "I don't hate it, I just choose to ignore everything, but I don't hate you" he says and brushes her arms and turns to leave.

"ooh by the way, happy birthday" then he gets inside the car before it hoots and disappears from view.

After the car disappears, Maya looks to the direction where Tumo was but he's nowhere In sight, he goes and asks the man he was with, he tells her that left all of a sudden. With a nod, she turned and went to her room. She decided to go put her present down and go look for Tumo, thinking about the present, what the hell, she thinks to herself.

So if Tshego is the one that asked Loyiso to give her the present, then it means that, they are dating right, but how did she know that they are siblings? She would have to call her and ask but now. Now she needs to go see someone who has been occupying her head lately.

She takes her jacket off and wears a hoodie and walks outside, she has a slice of cake on her that she reserved strictly for him. She walks outside bouncing on her steps because she was happy, happy that atleast Loyiso doesn't hate her, happy that she's happy, she atleast has people who care about her.

When she got to the condor, no one was there, she tried knocking but no one came, feeling down, she walked back but something told her to gi to the lake, and lo and behold, there he was, sitting throwing stones in the river.

"hy" she said to get his attention, with her hands behind her, and biting her lip and a smile on her face. He turned back, as much as he wanted to, he couldn't help the smile that formed on his own face.

"so... You left?" she said.

With a chuckle, he said "I left yes"

"why?" she stepped closer and sat on the branch, with each facing a different side.

"I don't know, I just did" she nodded her head in understanding.

"so... I brought you this" she took out the wrapper and showed it to him.

"what is it?"

"my... My birthday cake, my brother and sister came and we went out to the mall, they gave us a cake so... I thought I should save you some"

"thank you.... So.... Brothers you say?" He raised his eyebrow.

"yes, I think Loyiso and I might be cool, I don't know, he said he doesn't hate, even gave me a present" she said with a smile.

"how many brothers do you have?" He asked taking a bite from the red velvet cake. "mmh, this is good"

"thank you, I have two brothers, Kagiso is the oldest and then Loyiso, I'm two months older than him though, you saw him"

"I did?" he asks confused.

"yeah, he was the one I was with when I got off the car, he even have me a present"

"so... That guy Is your brother?"

"uhm" she said. Feeling stupid for letting him mind run with him, he decide to not say anything but nod his head.

They continued sitting in silent, with the wind picking up a little bit.

"where is your grandmother?" she kept tugging her jersey down before the wind was hitting her thighs.

"she went for the woman conference at church" he said turning and putting back on his shoes.

"oooh

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that's nice, I've never been to church before"

"what? Really, you should come, it's very nice"

"OK" then their conversation died down.

"it's getting cold, come let's go" he stood up and extended his hand to for her to take.

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With each passing day, the pair grew closer and closer, like a routine, they would spend lunch time together, on weekends they were at the river, feelings grew but neither one of them acted upon them, for fear of the unknown and ruining what they have. During March holidays, Maya went with him to his church and she 3njoyed it so much that every chance she has,

she goes with them, she started developing a strong bond with gogo, a fifty six year old woman behaved like a mother to her than her own mother did. She would find herself confiding in her and she would console her with verses from the Bible, something she has learnt to love and enjoy reading,

June exams are around the corner so it means less time to socialize and more time studying, doing different courses, they are forced to study separately, but thanks for the library, they always meet.

Its a Saturday and Monday they are writing their first ever exams, Tumo being in matric he has to pay more attention, plus the pressure of applying to universities, but lucky for him, one teacher came through for him and payed for application fees, of which he did not know where to get.

"are you ready for your exams?" they are sitting in their second favorite spot but this time, no one has their feet out and into the water because it's cold.

"no I'm not, really" Tumo laughed at her and nudged her.

"ooh come on, I know you going to nail them"

"ooho, easy for you to say, you are the schools top achiever, even if you don't study, I'm sure you would still ace them" she nudged him back.

"ooh please, don't flatter me"

"have you thought of applying for that bursary I showed you, just to be on the safe side"

"yeah I did, but... I Will look into it, I promise" he gave her a smile of which she responded to.

She doesn't want to say it out loud, but having him leave scares her, she still has one more year before she's done and she's afraid no one will want to be her friend, she's scared of being alone next year.

She's thinking of finish her academic year next year somewhere far away from here, she has been looking at scholarships and some seem a bit promising but she doesn't want to do far and leave Tumo. Behind, liking it or not, he has become part of her life, a major part of her life.

10

"let's go watch a movie, you not busy mos?"

"no I'm not, but I have to wait for Mme to come, akere I have the keys" he says, putting his shoes on and still taking her hand into his.

"okay then, let me fetch my laptop from my room, then we will wait on her together neh?" she suggested again, truth is, she didn't want to go back to her room where she would be surrounded by four cold and quite walls and make her go deep into her thoughts and think about the things that should be buried in the past, she wanted to stay with him and have someone to converse with, she wanted to be with people who treated her like a normal person she wants to be instead of that girl with bipolar and dark family affairs.

"okay then, let's go" holding hands, they both walk towards the schools, girl residence, since boys were not allowed, Tumo stayed behind and Maya proceeded to her room, she took a look at the purple gift bag on her bed and contemplated looking at it, but the thought of watching a movie with Tumo got the best of her and she took her laptop and locked her room, but not forgetting to take a packet of gummy bears she always keep in her drawers.

"what do you want to watch?"

"I don't know

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I know almost half the movies in here, you take a pick"

"mmmh" he scrolled until he settled for 'friends with benefits'

They both settled on the couch, and pressed play, through the movie no one said anything and they watched attentively.

Maya shifted and layed her head on Tumos lap because sleep was slowly sipping in, before long, they were all passed out on the couch and didn't even hear gogo come in. She took a blanket and covered them before she went to her bedroom and prayed first before going to sleep.

"now tell me how the hell are you dating my brother and I'm only finding out now" she says in fitd of laughter, at the end of the phone call, Tshegofatso can't help but laugh also.

"oh come on, I didn't know he was your brother until recently, why didn't you ever say anything, he's hot hle"

"okay, okay, that's my brother okay, there's not hotness I will be saying about him"

They both laugh as they catch up before exams approach and they cease communication, well, more like Tshago seize communication, she asks about Tumo and the smile on her face as she tells her about him can not go unnoticed, she talks about how church was, how she had hoped that it would be boring but she swallowed her tongue when she got there and the experience was out of this

After the call, she takes her clothes off and go take a shower before she dives into the world of academics where she might only snap out of it after a few hours.

11

Months later.

TUMAHOLE

the sad thing about life is that it's unfair, and we all know that and yet we expect more from it. He was already getting used to the life that he's living, going from riches to rags, for want of a better word. Things were looking good, he had applied in different universities for law and his future looked promising, but like it is said, life will throw you lemons, but the bitter taste of it can't help him make lemonade, not when Mme is lying at the hospital bed with massive bills to pay and no clue as to where he will get the money from.

"come on Tumo, she will pull through okay" he wants to believe that, but no amount of words said to him can make him believe that, Mme is old, she needs to be resting, her children should be taking care of her, not the other way around, but because troubles of life know no boundaries, mme lost the only child she ever had at the arms of a man who claimed loved her, now

she's taking care of her grandson because his father ruled him an orphan while he still alive. What more can a person take? Where is the God that they pray to? The most happiest time of his life just had to be the most painful one, he can't even enjoy the goodnews he has nor his December holidays because of this, besides, Christmas has a bitter and sour memory which he wishes to forget. This is the first Christmas ever since the passing of his mother and its just proven not to be a jolly season.

Besides all else, he's happy that Maya is here, when he called her, he didn't think that she would drop anything and come see him. He had to ask one of the schools security to lend him his phone and getting her number was not easy, by luck he got kagisos' number, without thinking twice, he had already called the number and asked to speak to Maya, Lucky for him, Kagiso didnt ask question and gave the phone to Maya.

She dropped everything she was doing and asked their driver to drive him here, she had never walked out of an argument with her father, but that day she did, and didn't think twice doing it. She could lie and say she's scared what her father is going to do, but the honest truth is, she just doesn't care anymore.

It was one of their regular endless arguments that started out of the blue and the next thing she's being shouted at. She knows that when she goes home she will get the end of it, but

she's used to it isn't it? And being here is more important than fighting with Vusi.

"this year was supposed to be better Maya, it should have been" he says

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a single tear dropping from his eye, he let it slide. They sat man don't cry, but he's not a man yet, he's still a boy transitioning to become a man, but what kind of man will he be?

"it will be. I promise" she pulled him closer into her embrace. "I promise you"

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One way or another, he had to go back home, he couldn't stay at the hospital all day, home is not a place it used to be, where it never was, but with Mame, it became home.

"I have to try and make money to pay for her bills, I don't know what to do" he suppressed a sigh and rubbed his face.

"something will come up, I promise you. In the meantime you take a rest okay" she took a blanket and covered him with it, as much as he tried to fight sleep, it won and took over, now he's on the couch passed out like he hasn't had a proper sleep in months.

Tomorrow is yet another day, and hopefully they will be able to make lemonades, or atleast try right? You cant get it right the first time.

Stepping outside, she took her phone out and called her brother, she doesn't know what to do but being here is the first step In helping right?

"hey, how is he?" kagisos voice boomed over the phone speakers.

"not good" she said, sounding tired and exhausted. "how are things there?"

She doesnt really want to know. But a change of topic could do. At only Sixteen she's encountered a lot she deserves to be a grown up. They don't face such difficulties right? Or is she juts one of the unlucky?

"he left, don't worry too much. When are you coming back?"

"ha.a Kagiso, mane ngihlale Lana than kini. Uphi umawakho?"
(no Kagiso, I would rather stay here. Where is your mother?)

"angazi, Yaz kuhlanguhlangene Lana ekhaya, Katlego ophumile nabangane bakhe, u loyiso is with umuntu wakhe, kahle kahle ngisele ngione" (I dont know, you know it's a mess here at home, Katlego went out with her friends, loyiso is with his girlfriend, so basically I'm all alone)

"aii. Okay heh. We will talk, I'm going to try and make him something to eat, Kagiso this is taking a toll on him hle" she rubbed her forehead. Something she does when she's stressed.

"I might just swing by soon. Xap"

She hung the phone and rested her head on her knees. Why must good people like gogo get sick, but the devils incarnates like Vusi Mahlangu live? The world would be a better place without him in it.

MAYA

Today would have been the best day in Tumos life, if only he hadn't woken up in wee hours of the morning to go look for something to do, 'work' to be precise, the matric school results are out and everyone is making a frenzing here at school, but Tumo is not even around to get his.

He has been taking anything he can just so he can gather money to pay hospital bills, Mme is looking better. But because he hasn't paid the bills, they are keeping her there until he pays, and the more they keep her, the higher the bill gets.

They allowed her back to school because well, she is a Mahlangu, as much as she hates the surname. Sometimes it gets her thing, and now she couldn't be more happy for it. Obviously her father would have never allowed her to go stay with a boy, but the moment they had an argument, she demanded to go back to school and they gladly took her, it's not her father can stand her anyway, she's not proud to say this, but she purposely started the arguments because she knew it would lead here, and now she has no regrets,

You would think gathering 1.5k would be easy, but it's not, and now it has been raised to 3k. just as she was sitting outside, she hears a group of girls talking about the new Jordan shoe and how they need it, one of the girls see her wearing it and they start complimenting it.

"you want it?" she asks out of the blue.

The girls look at each other and giggle.

"it's still fairly new, I can see it to you"

"really? How much?" one of the girls asks.

"how much do you have?"

The girls look at each other. One of them says.

"I have one point five?" she considers, she bought it for three point five so-

"I can take it for two point five" another says.

"aai Anathi, I want phela" the girls bather with each other.

"decide phela, I don't mind not selling it"

Lies, she knows the money could help a lot.

"I'll take it" says the 'Anathi' girl,

And just like that, she scored herself two thousand and five hundred. She didn't plan on, but hey bathi 'unkulunkulu angaphi esandleni' angisho?

"I have a few other sneakers, you don't need to be bumped" she takes them and lead them to her room where the girl do as the please with her clothes and shoes.

By the time she is done, she has five thousand because some of the other students came and bought more of her clothes,

She knew that Settlers kids had money, she just didn't think that they would actually buy clothes from her, but truth was, they know her and how her family is rich. Having clothes brought from her is like wearing a panty from the queen of England.

When all is done, she goes to take a bath, she would like to say she has no clothes left to say, but truth was

even after all the clothes bought, she still has a lot, you would think no one did anything, since some did EFT transfer, she has only a bought 500 on her, so she takes it and goes out.

She takes her phone out when she gets to the hospital. "hey, I need your help" she says over the phone.

"yeah sure what is it?" He doesn't sound too good, but she needs to get this over and done with before she holds a conversation.

"I'm going to send you banking details, I need you to transfer three thousands into it. Can you, I'll transfer it right now"

"sure" he says and cuts the call.

Okay, she looks at the phone and indeed he hung up, that had never happened before, but she needs to do this first before she confronts her brother.

Five minutes later, she gets a confirmation sms and she goes over at reception. They check and they tell her that an elder is needed in order to check gogo out. Well, her job here is done.

Onto another pressing matter. Kagiso. Something is off about him. She calls a cab and go back to school, she knows that Tumo is not back yet. So she goes and back a small bag and catches a taxi back home.

She hopes this year bring nothing but good things only. It has started off on a bad side, so hopefully all will go right from now

on. An hour later, she climbs the taxi off and walks the short distance home, she sees Katlego in a car parked at the corner but says nothing, it's not her business either way.

When she gets home, she goes straight to her room before heading to Kagisos' room. She knocks once and enters. She finds him lying on the bed, facing up with his hands behind his head.

"hey buthi" he turns and looks at her but doesn't smile.

"okay, now it's confirmed, something is wrong, what is it?"

He says nothing. Not wanting to push, and also not wanting to give up that easy, she takes her shoes off and climbs on bed, imitating Kagisos' position.

"I sold my clothes today, the money was to pay for Tumos mothers hospital bills" when she sees the look on his face, she continues. "and before you shout at me, I just did something for a friend Soso. The poor kid didn't even fetch his results, he's busy slaving himself trying to gather money for the bills, what a pair if skirts and tops compared to someone's life? So please don't shout at me "

A smile forms of Kagisos' face.

" how are you his daughter when you this nice? " she laughs and shakes her head.

" I could ask you the same thing, and speaking of results, how did it go? "

He turns so he's lying on his stomach." okay I guess"

She cocks her eyebrow In a 'explain further'

"I got seven distinctions" covering her mouth with her hands, she laughs, more like a happy laugh and she bumps her shoulder with his.

"modest much?" He chuckles. "what's got you so down?"

"he wants more" there's no asking who 'he' was.

"now I'm definitely sure he has bipolar" they laugh together.

"hey, don't talk like that okay" he tries to scold, but he can't help but laugh.

"ooh come on, I had to get it from someone right?" they continue to laugh.

TUMAHOLE

They say the lord works in mysterious ways, Tumo has been slaving all over trying to gather coins to pay for Mmes' medical bills, and then out of the blue someone just decides to lay for the hospital bills, it's a weight lifted off his shoulder but he can't help think who might have payed them.

He knows going to confront his father about this is a bad idea because he blatantly refused to do it, but what if he did? He doesn't want to entertain the idea but it's at the back of his mind.

When he gets to the school premises, the first thing he does is go in search of Ntate 'Tomas, he's eighteen so he's legal enough to sign Mme out but he wants Ntate' Tomas to drive him there, he doesn't have a choice anyway, the house he has been helping build, they haven't paid them yet, that old man is taking advantage because majority of the builders were foreigners and young boys.

He doesn't want to dwell much on that, so instead he takes the news of his grandmother getting out of the hospital as good as it is. Ntate' Tomas agreed to take his to the hospital to get his grandmother. He's is specially fond of Tumo, he reminds him of his oldest son, the way he doest allow his situation to define him or drag him down. He knows most kids Tumos' age who dropped out of school and went go 'phanda' as they say it.

His only wish is that he keeps up like that, but mostly, he never does and do bad things in the name of 'go phanda'

He got accepted to study LLB Law in wits, he should be happy, he should be over the moon, but it's not happening, he's not happy because of the current situation Mme is in, it's been a few weeks since she's been out of the hospital and still, he hasn't had a single cent on him, sometimes he goes to bed hungry because he has to secrifice whatever food is left for Mme to eat because she has to take her medication.

Just as he decideds to get some air, he sees a black range rover parking infront of their condo. He knows it too well, even if he tries. He can never forget it. He folds his arms and closes the door so that Mme doesn't hear anything.

"o batla fa?" that's the first thing he says when the man steps out of his car. (what are you doing here) the man looks at him and smiles.

"ooh son it's always pleasant to see you don't you think?" the man says, Tumo just folds his arms and waits for him to say whatever he wants to say. "anyway, I came to tell you that I found out who paid for your grandmothers hospital bills" he says, unbuttoning his suit jacket.

Despite all else, this man has love for his son, he might not show it, but he does, and he knows that whatever he does will not make Tumo see him any different, especially with what he witnessed.

"okay. I know it wanst you so why bother coming here?" the man looks around before stepping forward.

"son, I know you need money. Money of which I have, just... come back home and we will pretend like nothing ever happened okay, I can pay for your grandmothers bills and we can be a happy family again, like how it was when your -"

"don't you dare bring my mother back into this, don't" he warns.

The man raises his arms up in surrender. "i won't, I promise" he says honestly.

They stare at each other until the man finally decides to back down.

"I'll take my leave, I hope you consider my offer" he says before he turns and gets in his car before it drives off, after the car turns, Maya appears looking at the direction the car went.

"hey, who was that?" she asks.

"no one" he says, trying to dismiss her, he doesn't want her to know who his father is, he's not ready for that.

"mmmh" she says, seemingly lost in thought.

"what is it?" He says. Taking her hand into his and taking them in the direction of the lake.

"it just looks a bit familiar that's all"

Tumo chuckles and says "cars look the same Maya"

Yes, cars are the same, but she could have sworn that, THAT specific car is overly too familiar.

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"I know you were the one that paid for the bills" the silence is broken.

"and you not mad?" He looks at her and chuckle.

"honestly?" He looks at her and she nods her head yes.

"I wanted to be, but I knew you were doing it from the bottom of your heart, you were only just trying to help, and I appreciate it"

She held his hand and nudged him a little, something he realised she likes to do.

"thank you" he said.

"it's not a problem, you know I would do anything for you right?"

Smiling, he looked at her and nodded his head "and you also know I would do anything for you too right? I never had a friend like you before"

"a friend? Yeah... me too" she said the last part so low, Tumo thought twice before asking her if she said anything of which she responded with a head shake as a means to say no.

They both know this isn't just friendship only. Or is it? The line hasn't got blurred yet, that's if there ever was a line to begin with.

"so tell me, when do classes begin? Must be nice knowing you got accepted at a university of your choice huh?"

He looked at her and chuckled.

"I don't think I want to go"

Its like time stood frozen for a bit.

"what do you mean?"

Firstly, he shrugged his shoulders before answering. "i can't leave her alone, she's way too old to be staying alone you know?"

She doesn't want to understand, but she does. It's not easy leaving an old woman to fend for herself.

"I understand, but what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. Do something, find some thing to keep me busy and make money at the same time?"

She squeezed his hand.

"I hate this"

"yeah, me too. But there's nothing I can do" he said before a moment of silence filled them and she rested her head on his shoulder and he rested his on top of hers.

After some time Maya spoke.

"would you consider going to school if your grandmother was in a safer place?"

Tumo kept quite, wanting her to finish what she is saying.

"I know a place for older people it-"

"no." that's all he said.

"bu-"

"please Maya, I won't take her to such a place, and you have done enough okay"

She wanted to say something but she decided to say nothing, as comfortable as she was with him, she didn't want to cross the line, she knows she has a habit of doing that.

You know connections can get you everything? Katlego didn't pass her matric that well to qualify for drama classes but here she is, packing her bags along with Kagiso going to university. She was overjoyed because she was going to a place where she won't be guarded to told what is right or wrong, finally she was going to be free and do as she pleases.

It didn't come as a shock when her father told her she got accepted. With a father like Vusi Mahlangu, you can literally get away with murder, what's a thing as little as school admission?

While everyone was happy and overjoyed that the twins were going to university, Kagiso couldn't help but feel down. He wants to be a chef, it's his passion but now he's forced to go and study business management, sometimes he hates, okay

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maybe hate is a big word, but he wanted to go to a culinary school and maybe later look into doing a short business course, but now he can't do any of those because immediately after

graduation a position in Mahlangulogistics is waiting for him. It's a transport related company, the transport goods and services all over and now, the business just started rubber production, it's only the second year into it, and already the company is making millions, plus they use their own vehicles to transport them, it's means millions are secured in the bag.

In all honesty, he has nothing against the business course, it's the fact that his father expects him to be a business man only. He takes no mind into Kagiso wanting to be a chef, a pastry chef. He says baking is a woman's job and he's stupid for wanting to go that route.

If only he would allow him to atleast take part time baking classes then he won't have a problem 'growing his legacy' in the words of the oh so mighty vusi Mahlangu. The man wants everyone to follow his word and not question it.

He doesn't have a problem going against his father's wishes, probablem Is that his father is wicked and he knows Kagiso would do just about anything to get everyone to listen to him.

If it were not that he cares for Maya the way he does, he won't be packing and headed to johannesburg right now, he would have been long gone, but Vusi threatened to not pay for Mayas' fees, now he has no choice but to actually do as he's told.

*

It's a bitter sweet moment for Maya, she's happy that his brother is going to university, but sad because no one will be there for her, but it's no big deal she told herself, they will see each other during June and December holidays, and she knows that he will always be there for her whenever she needs him.

All the bags packed and the twins ready to leave, the family gets in the two cars and off they drive to the city of johannesburg, firstly they dropped Katli off at her apartment before they took Kagiso at his place, he put his foot down when they wanted to get him an apartment, he wanted to feel like a normal person so he settled for a commune, it's a five bedroom flat with one kitchen and bathroom.

Despite his father's disapproval, he wanted this, it was either the school or apartment, and well, now we know what the decision was.

They say when it rains, it pours, both literally and figuratively. Just when he was starting to stress, God came through for him using Ntate 'Tomas, the old man has been nothing but kind, he offered him and Mme a backroom at his house, the one his used to stay in, it has been a few weeks they moved in here, because well... they couldn't stay at the school premises anymore because Mme couldn't do the work she used to do anymore, especially with her going in and out of the hospital like she has been doing lately.

He tried asking trying pleading with the school to take over the job Mme has been doing, but all they said was they couldn't pay him for it, as they did with Mme.

His seating outside on the stoop on the blazing sun lost in thoughts, he doesn't even notice Ntate'Tomas pull up with his bakkie.

"morwa" he calls out. But nothing. The old man just shakes his head and turns to the honey-brown eyes chubby girl next to him. (son)

"mogwera wa gago o rata go nagana go fitisa tekano watseba"
Maya looks at him and smiles, agreeing with the man. (your friend likes to overthink too much)

"tla kere amararo ama bedi fela Leena Pele, oka ya go ditirela sengwe sa gonwa nyana ka Foo ntlong" (let me have a word or two with him, in the meanwhile, you can go make something to drink inside) Maya couldn't believe that there were still nice people around like Ntate'Tomas, he doesn't know Tumo but already his helped him every chance he could.

"thank you" she said before disappearing behind the house doors letting Ntate'Tomas have a word with Tumo.

Inside, she finds an old woman in the kitchen, she didn't know there would be anyone but then still, she didn't expect Ntate'Tomas to live alone, surely he has a wife right?

"ooh, ngiyaxolisa, ubab'Tomas uthe-" the old woman cuts her short with a big smile on her face.

"Gosiame ngwanake, oka kena" (it's fine my child, you can come in) she old woman ushered her inside to the couches. She scans around the house, she can see the big picture on the wall of Ntate'Tomas and the lady next to her and a young man, one she assumes is their son maybe.

"that's my boy, Keagile, such a bright young boy. He's married now and lives overseas, we see him once a year during Christmas holidays" the woman says, you can see and feel how proud she is of his son. Keagile.... Can't likes the name...

"what does it mean... the name I mean?" she old woman smiles and places a glass of juice and biscuits in front of them.

"you like it?" Maya nods her head yes. "it mean i built, after crying for so long, finally God answered my prayers and gave me a family, so it means I finally built my family"

She places a hand on under her chin and smiles, admiring the picture in front of her, this picture was taken the day their son left for university, they were the happiest parents on planet earth, they money they made from her husband Tomas working as a security guard at the school and transporting goods on weekends and the money she made from selling fruits at schools was not enough

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but atleast it took their child to school, and thank the heavens he never forgot where he came from, he never pestered them about money, he was understanding, instead, he found a Job, a transporting Job and the money was enough to help him.

Meanwhile outside, Ntate'Tomas and Tumo have shifted, they took chairs to go sit under the Mango tree with the biggest shade ever, the shade would Make anyone fall asleep, a peaceful night sleep if you sit under it for long.

"morwa, for how long do you think you are going to stay home?" the man didn't beat around the bush, he dove straight to the point.

Instead of answering, Tumo shrugged his shoulders. "i know someone, who's looking for a driver, I told him about you and he wants to meet with you tomorrow, can you do it?"

He quickly rose to his feet, not believing his words, "ka ntate?" (really? " He asked, the old man chuckled and nodded his head a couple of times.

" the money is enough to help pay for your grandmothers hospital bills, you don't have to stress too much, but I'm only doing this one ine condition " the old man said, Tumo slowly sat down, he would take anything, literally just as long as he has money to pay for Mmes' bills, that's all he wants, Only God knows the sacrifice the old woman has done for him, if it means riskyin his future to save her, he would, in a heartbeat.

"next year you are going to school, no excuses about it"

"yes, yes, yes, God yes, deal" He agreed, and the man means it, he believes a real man never goes back on his word, and he hopes Tumo is like that, he would hate it the boy lost himself like some of the people he knows who did, like his son.

Maya left the room when Ntate'Tomas was getting in, she figured that they were done talking and she can now go see him, when she left the room she saw Tumo under the Mango tree dancing, she couldn't help the smile on hers, and his as well.

"I didn't know you could dance" she said, startling him, even still. The smile on his face remained permanent. He stepped closer to her and lifted her off she feet, spinning her on the air.

"yoh, God is massive neh" he said, still spinning her, she couldn't help the but giggle, she's never seen him this happy ever before.

It must mean whatever Ntate'Tomas was telling him must have been good news.

"I suppose, what happened" he stopped spinning her and put her on her feet and hugged her, she hugged him back and just as she was thinking that he's shaking from excitement. She felt her shoulder getting wet.

Instead of asking him what's wrong, she brushed his back and allowed him this moment, clearly everything is going fine right? He was just happy, literally a second ago, now this.

"should I be worried?" she asked him with a small smile, whipping his tears away.

He shook his head no, and chuckled a little bit out of embarrassment, "no. I'm fine, just happy"

She looked at him, smiled and embraced him in a hug, one that he needed. "I'm happy if you happy... are you?"

"yeah, just overwhelmed that's all"

They decided to seat under the tree since Mme was sleeping inside, he told Maya about Ntate'Tomas' offer, and like a great friend she is, she seemed more happy than Tumo. Was, not because she felt like she won't have to do anything for him anymore, but because of the terms of the agreement. She wanted Tumo to get an education, not that people who don't have don't matter, but because they had a deal, they both want to bring their fathers down, and what better way to do it than how they originally planned.

They spent half the day together sitting under the tree and eat the delicious food cooked by Ntate'Tomas' wife, who she learnt her name was Malita, after eating, she and Tumo offered to do the dishes, siemthing she's not used to doing because of where she comes from and she seemed to enjoy it.

She's used to having people serve and wash dishes of course when she just wants a snack, she goes and do it herself then rinse whatever it was she was using. But it's not the same as washing dishes, she likes cleaning after herself.

It was getting dark so Ntate'Tomas gave Tumo his car to drive Maya back to school. She's I'm matric now, she needs to pay more attention to her school work, but of course she's never been fazed by it. She trusts herself that much.

When they got to the school gate, Tumo park the car and turned to look at Maya, who seems to be miles away, he kept questioning Mayas' presence in his life, what exactly is it that she wants, she's rich and he has nothing.

And without thinking twice, he blurted it out, catching both of them off guard.

"askies?" she asked, scrunching up her face.

"no I'm sorry it's just?"

"just what?" she snapped.

"no please don't get mad okay" he quickly covered her hands.

"I'm sorry, it came out totally wrong? I just... I don't understand okay?"

"what is it that you don't understand Tumo?" she was on the verge of tears now. She hates feeling unwanted, and right now,

with Tumo questioning her like this, that's exactly how she feels.

"I help because I like you okay, and I have a feeling that if I were in the same situation, you would help me also, so I'm sorry if me helping a friend out seems too much, I'll back off" she opened her door and walked to the gate, but not before Tumo caught up with her.

"I'm sorry okay, I didn't mean it like that, just that, I've never had anyone for me okay, and with everything happening, it's overwhelming" he confessed.

"and you thought of questioning my help?" you could feel the hurt laced on her voice, choking on a sob.

"no of course.... I'm sorry" he said, sincerely so. "I shouldn't have, and yes, if the roles were reversed, I would help without thinking twice. I'm sorry okay" he said, with their forehead touching, "I'm sorry" he wiped her tears away, she closed her eyes to take a deep breath and when she opened her eyes, her words got stuck in her thought and taking both by surprise, or rather not much of a surprise, their lips locked and she stood on her toes and held onto his shirt for balance.

It has been three days since the kiss and they hadn't seen each other, immediately after the kiss broke, Maya got scared and rushed to the school gate and they hadn't spoken ever since, but how will they speak when Tumo doesn't have a phone?

'he can lend nstate' Tomas' phone ' she said to herself, all this thinking too much was driving her insane, and having no control over a situation is one of the things that makes her lapse, she's in class but paying no attention, her leg starts twitching and tears start blurring her vision.

Its becoming too much and she doesn't want to cause a scene, so she raises her hand up and the teacher looks at her, she keeps quite and says nothing, but because of the tears and twitching leg, Mr Greg smiles at her and nods his head, right now she's just thankful that her teachers know about her condition so they don't get spooked out when she lashes out.

She takes her books and goes the direction of the counseling room. There are a few student waiting outside so she goes and wait with them. She keep biting her nails and chewing on them, she knows that the session normally takes up to an hour with each student, so she takes her pills out and drinks them, with the bottle of water she always has on her.

They do the trick but of course they don't ease up the wild thoughts she's having, all she needs is to see Tumo and ask him what happened, did she like it? Of course, more than she was supposed to, but she doesn't want to ruin their friendship, she doesn't want to ruin their only ever good friendship she's ever had because she has romantic relationships for the guy. Lord knows nothing ever ends right with her.

A few hours later, she managed to do some deep breaths and calmed down, it's her turn to go see the counselor so she stands up and goes to the door. She is welcomed by the lavender smell of the room and a warm smile gracing Miss Walsh' face.

"I don't know if I should say it's good to see you or what?"

She smiles and sits down. "we always talk over the phone" she remarks, making Miss Walsh chuckle.

"but it's not the same" she nods her head in agreement. "what happened?" she takes her notebook out and pour her a glass of water.

With a sigh, she takes her shoes off and settles down on the couch

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Miss Walsh looks at her and smiles at how comfortable she is becoming. Getting her to open up has been a struggle, and even some of the things she's said, she can't prove how true they are because of how careful the girl is.

"I almost had a relapse" she says, catching Miss Walsh off guard, normally they have to run around before she can say anything.

"ooh? What happened?"

She bites the bottom of her lips to suppress a blush. "he kissed me" as hard as she tries, she can't help blushing.

Miss Walsh sees this and smiles herself. "who is he?"

"Tumahole" she says.

She continues asking her questions, and her answering, for so long Miss Walsh thought that maybe Maya was in love with her brother Kagiso because of how she would always talk about him, of course she asked her and the girl denied but not after laughing first, and she still had her speculations, how else would you think when you ask a person question they don't answer but the moment you ask them about another they talk?

But now, seeing her so smitten she's happy that maybe she's not in love with her brother, but she can't completely eliminate the thought out of the equation.

It's been a week Tumo started working, meaning a week since the kiss, and like Maya, he too can't seem to wrap his head over what happened, she doesn't want to come to terms with his feelings for her because he's scared it will ruin their friendship, but at the same time, not doing anything is driving him crazy, he's trying to be a normal teenager but it's not easy.

So far this has been going okay, he's been shadowing his boss, Bob and the man took a liking to him in first sight, he will start driving once he gets his code 14 license of which he has booked from next week to start classes. The company will cover the cost of everything, how lucky is he?

Because of how demanding his job will be, he was given a new phone and tablet to track the cargo movements, Mahlangulogistics is one of the biggest transportation companies and having to work at it with literally no experience nor a driving license has to be a manner from heaven.

He got home early and took Mma for a checkup and now they are sitting under the mango tree having small talks until they fall asleep but not before ma'Malita comes and joins them.

"no, put that box over there, don't drop it okay" he instruct man old enough to be his father's not looking at them but busy typing on his phone, a big smile plastered on his face.

"what about this one?" one asks him, he looks up for a brief second and point towards the passenger side of the truck.

"Pasaanger seat" he says, back to his phone again. The man look at each other and smiles.

After Kagiso left, they never thought they would work with anyone equally if not more humane than Kagiso. Yes he was flawed, but this young laittie here is just so effortless. He makes their work seem so easy, they hardly ever complain when they have to wake up at the wee hours of the morning to come to work, because this young Tumahole has made their work so easy.

Today he will be the one transporting the cargos, with the help of one the regular man of course, he's only just got his driving license and doesn't know the routes that much, but he must be the one to oversee this shipment. They have to test his skills, how good is he, how reliable is he.

Behind the security building is a man eating an apple using a knife. His eyes are solely focused on Tuma, Bob can't seem to placr the pieces together, this young laittie is so familiar, even

the way he just got the hang of this, it's like it's in his blood, the way he walks, the way he knows just how to instruct and everything. But mostly the walk, his knows it all too well, the small yet very much visible Rickets (bracket as we bantu banyama call them).

He looks at him one last time and chuckle because this, this just got interesting. He just wishes no one gets curious as he did and puts the puzzles back together because shit will go down.

His companion is Mr Nkoana

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a man who has been driving the Mahlangu trucks half of his daughter's life, he recently just to promoted to be the truck supervisor but he just couldn't pass and opportunity to train this young capable man. Although he won't travel with him until the last shipment, he's only doing the first with him and the last one he will see it himself, it's a bummer, but he can't afford to be away from his wife and daughter, his precious Azania.

She should be preparing for exams, but because dear girl now has a boyfriend, who by the way, just texted her if she's up for a road trip. She busy packing a small bag while singing and swaying her hips from left to right.

Candice juts looks at her and shakes her head, they are preparing to write their June exams and Maya is excited for a road trip? Who does that. Okay it's a given, she's clever, but even clever people need to study.

A call comes through Mayas' phone and the smile on her face juts confirms who it is.

"I'm on my way" is what she says when she answers the call and hangs it.

She wears her shoes and bids Candice bye before taking her key and leaving the room with smiles on her face.

When she gets outside the gate, he finds Tumo with Ntate'Tomas talking, her smile brightens when she sees him

and so does he, when Ntate 'Tomas realises that Tumo no longer has his attention, he turns to look the direction he's looking and lo and behold, Maya is in smiles. He shakes his head and pats his shoulder "retla bonana morwa" (we'll see each other son)

"yeah, yeah" he says, still not paying attention. When he gets to Maya, he nods his head with a smile one that she returns.

"I missed you" Tumo.says when Maya throws herself on him, making him spin her around.

"I missed you too" she says, giggling, he puts her down the same time she captures his lips into hers, wrapping her hands around his neck. He pulls her by the waist closer and deepens the kiss.

soft music playing, rose petals scattered all over, food on the table and roses and candles nicely decorating the room. Tumo stands behind Maya admiring the work done here, when he said he wanted a nice romantic set but not too much, he didn't think they would pull it off, and the fact that Maya is awestruck just adds a bonus for it.

"happy one month anniversary" he says behind her, pulling a rose out of the vase and giving it to her. Tears threaten to flow. She chuckles as she takes the rose and wraps her hands around his waist.

"you didn't have to, thank you" she says, her head buried on his chest.

"I wanted to, you deserve everything good, I know this is nothing, but I promise to do everything in my power to show you how special you are" he says, kissing her forehead.

She looks up at him, silent tears streaming down her cheeks, "thank you"

"of course" he wipes her tears before cupping her neck and bringing their lips together.

"I love you" he whispers. No matter how many times they say it, it always feels like the first time ever.

"I love you too" she says, standing on her tippy toes and kissing him.

"come, let's eat" he takes her hand and lead her to the table, pull her chair and poured her a glass of nonalcoholic champagne. Taking off the lid, he had rice, roasted chicken with gravy and mashed potatoes.

"these look delicious" indeed they do look delicious, Tumo was a little bit worried that she won't like them, you know how rich kids are like, but he should know better, yes Maya comes from a well off family but she's just like any other child, maybe if she grew up spoiled and given everything she ever wanted, then maybe she might not like the food, but she does, which explains why she's already taken bites out of her plate without saying grace first. She licks her hand and takes another bite out of the chicken and sips her juice, Tumo looks at her and chuckles before he too starts taking a bite out of his won chicken.

Clothes scattered all over, bodies heating up, room feeling smaller, kisses getting heated, the pair walk towards the bed, this is the day, this is it. That's what ran at the back of their heads

Tumo looked at her panting, he placed light kisses on her neck down. "i hope I'm doing this right" he said. Instead of answering, only a moan escape Mayas mouth.

He took her panties off, she closed her legs a little but Tumo opened them, and without thinking twice, he started licking her, this is his first time, he's never done this before, he's scared he might now be doing this correctly but the way Maya is screaming says he must do it again. He's watched the video, this is what the guys do, they started with the girls first before them.

Maya screamed to the mighty one above before something came out of her. He wasn't too sure if he should lick it also, but the way his pants was strained, he wanted to get off also.

He watched her pant, trying to catch her breath with a smile on her face. "i just had my first orgasm" she said before covering her face and giggling.

"so that was an orgasm?" He asked amused. He's never been a kid before, he's never went past the adolescent stage because he was always reading books and nursing her mothers bruises, but that changed when he met this honey brown eyed girl here. How is it that he's only starting now to experience such? At eighteen he doesn't know what an orgasm is. What kind of a boyfriend will he be if he can't even-

"stop stressing, you gave me mine, let me give you yours?" the statement caught him off guard but before he could say anything, Maya was already on her knees undoing his pants.

"are you sure you want to do this?" He asked her when he saw how hesitant to do it.

She swallowed and nodded her head. "yeah, I'm sure" he helped her take his pants off.

"you don't have to do it if you don-oooooh my God" he exclaimed. Maya put him in her mouth, she did as she saw the girls do on the porn videos she's been secretly watching do. She felt Tumos hands on her head, that's it Maya, she kept chanting, patting herself on the back for probably doing it right.

Meanwhile in Mahlangulogistics, Bob is sitting in his office laughing his ass watching the cctv cameras in Tumo and Mayas room. Kids. He says to himself. He switches it off before he can see things his eyes are not mean for.

He picks his ringing phone and answers it. "bozza"

"aii no, the young laittie is there already, he will get the job done, don't worry" he can't keep the grin off his smile.

"aii, Ska wara wena, otlos'chuna spane sena wena ota bona"
(don't worry, he will get the job down, you will see)

"sure" he sits back down on his chair swinging watching the busy streets of Midrand.

He takes his phone to call her baby girl, hopefully she is settling well at her res, he just hopes he could do more for her, if there was more he could do for his pride and joy.

"papa" he smiles blinking his tears away.

"o xap my baby?"

"ee, ke xapo papa"

They continue talking over the phone and hangup with a promise that he will check on her the coming weekend.

just as he was aligned on her entrance, a heavy knock sounded at the door. He stood frozen to his spot and looked at Maya.

"Maya open this God damn door"

Panic started rising, what the fuck!

"open this God damned door before I knock it down myself" they quickly got off the bed wearing their scattered clothes.

"what the hell Maya?" instead of answering, Maya shrugged her shoulders. She knew exactly who was behind the door, but what could be the possibility?

After they were all dressed, she quickly went to the door and opened it, and lo and behold, the mighty Vusi Mahlangu stood behind the doors fuming with rage.

"is this what you do when we think you in school?" instead of answering she rolled her eyes and stepped aside, letting her father in. Scared Tumo walked closer to Maya, and the look Vusi threw his way was enough to make him stop on his tracks.

"is this what you do when you don't come home?"

"you mean the same home you banned me from? Yeah"

"maya..." Tumo tried to stop her from saying anything further.

"anyway, Tumo this is man apparently is my father, papa, this is Tumo, my boyfriend"

Vusi couldn't believe his ears, the girl has some guts, who the hell says the things she just uttered? That is pure disrespect.

"wena, what the hell is this that you are doing to my daughter? Is this what your parents taught you, to go sleeping with girl in motels? Koor nawe you don't respect yourself enough to not want to have sex in such places?"

"ufunani Lana baba?" she said, sitting down on the bed, crossing her legs and looking at her father nonchalantly.

instead of answering, he pulled his gun out and put it on the table.

"wena, sit down" he said, reffering to Tumo.

Poor thing sat down, sweat dripping down his forehead.

"I'm sorry please, it won't happen again I promise" he saw on the verge of tears. He should not be, he's used to seeing guns, better yet, being pointed with one. But he can't, not after seeing her mother die from it. He knows just how fast this thing can end one's life. If anything, he's terrified of it.

"you bet it wont, boys" he called out and three man came inside their room and dragged him out.

Seeing that, Maya quickly stood up and stepped in front of him.

"don't touch me" she yelled when one of the guys attempted to remove her.

"Maya.."

"no Tumo, if this man thinks he can just come and ruin my life the way he wants, he's got another thing coming" she looked at her father dead in the eye "he's not going anywhere, and neither is he, I'm gonna have to die first before I allow it."

Chuckling, Vusi cocked his gun "that can be arranged"

"Maya stop okay, don't do that, it's fine, I will leave with them, but don't talk to your father like that" Tumo hissed, the three men looked from Tumo, to Maya then their boss.

Vusi bit the insides of his lips and made an evil smile, "did your dear little friend tell you who he is?"

"what are you talking about? Don't touch me dammit" she hissed when one of the men tried grabbing her hand.

Smiling, Mr Mahlangu stood up and stopped in front of Tumo.

"tell her, what's your surname?"

"what's that got to do with this?" Tumo tried acting strong, but even he could tell where this was going, he didn't want anyone knowing his true identity, okay. Given, Maya knows about his

past, but he doesn't want to be condemned because of his father's surname.

" just tell her"he stepped closer" or I will shoot you, your choice "

" you can't do that, and you can't threaten him, what the hell is wrong with you? "her voice fell on death ears, Vusi kept his eyes and gun on Tumo. Who slowly was starting to crack.

" Ngoepe " he finally said, so low, Maya wasn't so sure she heard correctly.

" again " Vusi grined

happy with his small victory, he has been watching them, particularly Tumo since from last year, he knows everything about him, about his grandmother and how Maya went to great lengths to help him, but the fact remains, he is a ngoepe and he needs to know exactly what he wants from Maya, things could turn south quickly.

"tell her whose son you are"

"dad stop" tears were threatening to come out. She doesn't want to think the worst.

"Richard... Richard Ngoepe" he uttered, within seconds Maya is on the floor crying. Confused, Tumo tries to go to her but they hold him back.

"you and your father have done enough damage, I don't know what your plan is, but okay far away from my daughter okay" he bent down to pick Maya up but she quickly threw his arms away and stood up in a split second.

"leave me alone" she stepped closer to Tumo.

"what the hell is wrong with you Maya? Lets go" he walked toward her and threw her over his shoulder. Ignoring her screams and kicks. When the door closed, she heard Tumo groining.

"dad please" she closed her eyes, crying because she could hear that Tumo was getting a beating.

When they got in the car, Vusi threw her in the backseat and closed the door, she stood upright and saw Kagiso in the passenger seat.

"bhuti please, let him go please" she pleaded, instead of answering, Kagios fastened his seatbealt and looked forward.

"I hate you, yezwa, baba... please let me him go please okay, I will stay away from him I promise"

Vusi settled in his seat and fasten his seatbealt, fixed the reawiew mirror and said "of course you will" and that was it, the whole trip no one said anything.

She grew angry with each passing minute, seeing Kagiso pissed her off even more, she thought he had her back, he was supposed to. Despite what she just found out, she knows better, she knows Tumahole, he hates his father, he doesn't believe her fathers theories, she knows Tumo better than anyone.

When the car parked in front of their home yard, she opened her door and slammed it, causing everyone to look their way, she stepped next to the driver's window and looked her father dead in the eye.

"what will you do to him?" she looked behind them where a van was parking, a van that she suspected Tumo was in.

"kill him" he said lightly, then opened his door stepping out. She knows her father very well to know he keeps to his promise, if he says he will kill him, then that's exactly what he's going to do.

Blood boiling, she stood in front of her father, eyes locked, her shot stature doing nothing to the big muscular and scary stature of her father, "If you dare touch a single strand of his hair, I will deal with you"

She stepped away but Vusi being Vusi spoke, "what are you going to do, go to the press? Yeah right"

She scratched her nose, and chuckled "no, dare touch him wena, you will see"

"what can you do Hlengiwe?" He chuckled, which pissed her even more.

"I will fucken murder you Vusi" she said, without a blink of an eye.

He found her amusing, "yeah right"

"apple doesn't fall far from the tree, ungakholwe, I am a Mahlangu after all, you should know that better than anyone"

Then she turned around and walked inside where Kagiso was sitting focused on his phone, she looked at him, clicked her tongue and walked all the way to her bedroom.

sitting alone in his office, having a glass of whisky. Vusi Mahlangu couldn't help but remember Mayas' words, the look on her, he knew it very well, he's seen it once before on her mother before things spiraled out of control. If anything, she looks like her mother, she's what they would call a total replica. The eyes, the kindness, the only thing she takes from him is the attitude and stance, which is why he can't help but think if she's capable of killing her, with everything he's put her through, he won't be surprised, and it's not like it would be her first attempt.

He remembers the day like it was just yesterday, he found her crying in the hallway bathroom, she couldn't walk properly, it didn't take a genius to figure out what exactly happened here, he saw Richard walking out buckling his belt. A smug and satisfied look on his face, he knew of Richard's fondness of young girls, but he just didn't think he would do that to his daughter. She was just young, a vulnerable child.

When Maya told him what had happened, he brushed her off and said no such thing happened, he couldn't afford to have Richard arrested because then, out of spite, he would tell the police about how he murdered a man and his wife in cold blood, all because of his hunger for power. The David Millano murder and his fiancé was a big scandalous murder mystery,

mixed with the fact that a Kotze was involved, that was just damage control, then the burstad survived and married the one girl that drove him insane, a woman he later found out was his half sister, he couldn't handle anything.

He lost sense of reason and kidnapped their first born son, his own nephew. The thoughts of how he could have had a child, a son maybe with kele hurt him to a point of revenge, and then Lindi had to conspire with her and run away from him. All he ever wanted was to have both the woman he loved, but neither one of them wanted anything to do with him, especially when they found out about his monster side he has, he hurt Kelebogile that's a given, but all he wanted was to fix his mistakes, that's all he ever wanted, and it's not like kele didn't love him back, he knew she did, but that son of a bitch Akin Kotze had to come in the picture, he should have finished him right on the spot, if he had died that day maybe his life would have been easy, but then Kele saw him kill those people, there's no way she would have taken him back.

Like his life wasn't a mess on its own, Lindi took sympathy on kele, they became friends out of the purple. The next thing he knows, Lindi doesn't want him any more, he could take it, everything became a mess. One day he lost control and beat her to early labor, she gave birth to his first born son. Quinton Mthokozisi Mahlangu, he was over joyed, he asked for

forgiveness, they were on the process of fixing things, things were looking good, but his obsession with Kele couldn't stop, he just destroyed everything and that day, he lost it all. He got home one day and his fiancée and son were nowhere to be found.

Years later he had to take the reins as the king. Meaning he's got to marry a princess, he lost all hope and gave into it.

Maureen was a young princess from a Ndebele kingdom, young, humble and down to earth. He instantly found her attractive, it was hard falling for her, even though he was dealing with a lot, she was there when he needed her, a year later they were blessed with twins, Kagiso and Katlego, that's what he named them, he became happy, ecstatic, but like a curse, his happiness was short-lived when Lindo came knocking on her doorstep with a very sick Quinton, Maureen said nothing to that, instead told him to do the right thing for his son, for two years all three of these kids grew up together until he slipped and one day woke up in bed with Lindo, he regretted it, he for once was happy with a woman who didn't care about his past, a woman that loved him and his flaws, he told Lindi that it was a mistake, shouldn't have happened, they both agreed, until four months later Lindi came to their house claiming to be carrying his child.

He had never been scared of anything ever in his life, Maureen was a few weeks pregnant also, he never wished for the grounds to swallow him like he did that day.

That's probably one of the reasons why he doesn't treat Maya like the rest of his kids, he almost lost everything because of her and her crazy mother, but if anything. She is more like him than any of his kids, even his beloved Katlego is nothing like him which is why Mayas' threat keeps nagging at him, he can't help but wonder what she will do this time because she once poured salt in his whisky bottles.

Despite preparing for exams, Maya always makes sure that Tumo has food to eat, Vusi has kept him locked up in the basement like some animal, she's been going to school from home, she's cared of what her father would do to him one of this days, she almost had an episode that day, but she took her medication, she couldnt risk giving her father more ammunition, she still hasn't said a word to Tumo, all she does is give him food, water and a change of clothes, she also makes sure to check Mme and how she's doing because she knows that Tumo is probably worried, she told Ntate'Tomas that Tumo was busy in joburg with a serious task, he couldn't be home for the next couple of days, she didn't know what else to say.

"why do you keep doing this?" she stops and looks back at the door, she has been saying anything because she's scared she

would break down and cry. It hurts seeing him like this, he's paying for his father's sins, he doesn't deserve all this.

"Maya I didn't know okay? You have got to believe me please" he was choking on his words, it hurt her to the core.

"I know" she said, before turning around attempting to leave.

"then if you know then why are you like this, you haven't said anything to me all this time, if you think I deserve to be here then fine, but what I don't deserve is your silence, please" he walked closer to the burglar doors.

"talk to me please okay" She looked up trying to blink her tears away. then shook her head.

"ooh come on Maya, look at me and tell me that you think I deserve to be here, tell me you think your father is right, tell me that you think that my father sent me here to hurt you even more, tell me, tell me you think I knew that my father was responsible for taking your innocence " a lone tear escaped his eye

"because I didn't okay, I hate him, with everything in me, and with the new found information I despise him even more, maya I love you okay, I would never do that to you. You have to believe me"

"I... I do, I never doubted you for a second Tumo."

Stress, worried and all things not healthy is what Maya is experiencing, it has been months with Tumo locked up like an animal, at the end, she had to tell Ntate'Tomas the truth, but it didn't come as a shock for him, he is after all Bobs' brother and knowing his brother, his boss is even worse, she was forced to go back to school and focus on school, but it has proven to be a problem, she misses her meds due to stress, she's basically losing focus on everything even herself. June holidays are here, and for the first time ever, she wants to go home, she has been spending most of her weekends going to church with Mme and Ntate'Tomas' wife, their church is different, but it's a church nonetheless and she enjoys it, something that might actually grow on her.

Bags packed and everything all packed, she waits for her driver to come pick her up. She waits and waits and waits, three hours later, she's still waiting.

When finally her phone rings, it's her father calling, telling her that she's downstairs waiting. Reluctantly, she picks her bags up and goes to the car, with just the two of them only, only God can intervene and prevent the inevitable.

Its a Friday night, schools are closed meaning all her siblings are here, although she has to attend winter classes, Lucky for her, they allowed them to attend at nearby schools that they want. As long as the register shows that they were attending.

"everyone is waiting for you. Come" vusi says, catching Maya off guard, when she gets inside, everyone is at the lounge

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catching up, when she finally appears, Katlego stands up and like her dramatic self. She doesn't hesitate to tell them how hungry she is.

They all go to the kitchen and sit down, "alright, today all my kids are here, even the ones who disrespect me, but I'm happy to be here with all of you, and also, I want to take this opportunity to be thankful for the gift of life" he says the last part looking at me, i would be scared, but I'm not, so I return his look back.

I know he's up to something, he can never be this nice, or is he being nice?

"Maya, I really love you my baby, I know it might not seem like it, but I do, both your mother and j do, that is why I want us to bury this hatched, and move forward okay?"

Yeah no, he's definitely up to something. "right, okay, let's eat" he signals for someone and they go out and you know what, if it smells like a fish, it's definitely a fish, you know when the devil keeps testing you, it's like his dedicating his life to making my life hell, behind one of his minions, in an apron carrying a tray it's Tumo, the devil is a liar.

"kids, this will be our new maid, he will be doing each and everything you guys want, okay" he had an evil smirk on him.

wonders shall never end, she should have known where there's smoke, the definitely is fire, she remembers the look on Vusi's face, a triumphant look, a victorious one. She dared stand up and walk out on everyone eating and no one said anything to her, right now she's at the back yard watching the stars having a peanut butter sandwich and coffee that Tumo made for her, she didn't want to take it, but the rumbling of her stomach and with Tumo convincing her, she finally took it, not because he's her maid or something.

"Maya, I'm your boyfriend, allow me to feed you. I am still your boyfriend right?" the slight hesitation in his words jabbed Maya's heart.

"always" she answered him.

"thank you for believing in me, I know it must have taken a lot. But thank you"

She chuckled and looked up at the skies. "I know the people surrounding me Tumo, between you and my father, I know whose word to trust, Vusi is a vile man out to make my life miserable, and he would do almost everything to win. Of course

when he told me whose son you were it caught me off guard, but I know you so not once did I doubt you "

" thank you " she took the last sip of her coffee and place the plate and mug aside.

After minute of silence Tumo finally spoke up" I love you Maya " that warmed her heart. It has been long since she heard the words.

She took his hands into hers and repeated his words.

" come, it's getting cold. You should go inside "

" I'm not tired, and I haven't seen you in a long time, I missed you " stepping closer to her, he wrapped his arm around her. And kissed the side of her head. "I missed you too" he said before claiming her lips.

Unknown to them, Maureen was watching from a distance, once she saw that things were getting too intimate, she turned around and was scared when she saw her husband standing behind her.

"baba, you scared me" she said, placing her hand on her chest.

"are they still out there?" He asked going over to the glass door to look at them, even though it's dark, he could still see them, with their foreheads pressed together and laughing, he looked at them and turned around taking his wife's hand and going to

bed. Deep down he knew that nothing he would say would make Maya believe her, but he had hoped, just a little that the little girl that resembles the woman both hates and loves would spare him an ear.

A baby crying, it's dark outside, in the bushes but the path is clear

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he can see where he's going, he goes to pick up the child but quickly throws it down when she sees the face on the woman that haunts him on it. When he looks around, she can see another face peeping from the bushes and then footsteps running away, then a car screech and then bullets next thing two man and a woman lie dead on the road.

Again, he wakes up drenched in sweat, heart beating fast. Three times in a row he's having the same dream. He looks outside and it's still dark, he gets out of the covers and goes to drink water, just as he puts his glass down he hears the sliding door open and quite giggles before Maya appears.

"where are you coming from?" scared, Maya turns around only to turn around and walk up the stairs. He doest have the energy to shout at her, he's still scared from the dream he had. He

doest understand why all of a sudden she's having such dreams.

Like his wife suggested, first thing in the morning, the pair drive out to their family healer to consult.

When it's breakfast time, all the kids gather around on the breakfast table to have their first meal of the day. Today Maya woke up feeling happy and rejuvenated.

When she gets downstairs, she takes her seat before she takes a sip of a steaming cup of coffee that Tumo just placed in front of her, she can't keep the blush creeping up her neck.

"and then wena?" Katlego had to be the one to ask. Maya looked at her and continue to smile.

"is this one of your episode, you feeling over the top today? Please tell me when it's time for your moods to dumpen so I can get the hell out of here" she say before taking a bite of her bacon.

"Katlego please" Kagiso tries to reprimend his twin sister but all she does is click her tongue before taking her food and walking to his room..

Instead of Maya feeling sad, she cracks up laughing. "yazi abanye bantu angeke bashinshe Shane" she took a bite from the toasted cheese bread and chuckled.

Loyiso and Kagiso just looked at each other confused.

Once the table has been cleared, everyone stood up and went to their respective rooms, Maya went to the kitchen to help Tumo with the dishes so he can finish quickly while they kept stealing kisses here and there.

"Haii Nina, stop doing yucky things in the kitchen, and wena" she pointed at Tumo "my dad didn't bring you here to fraternise with his kids tuu, do what you came here for" she clicked her tongue and walked out of the kitchen, the pair just chuckled and took the plate that Katlego just brought and washed it. After the kitchen is cleaned and dishes are done, Tumo goes to have a shower while Maya does the same thing.

When she gets to her room, she finds Kagiso on her bed watching TV. "haibo, I have been waiting for you"

"sorry" she said between giggles.

"come, sit here" he patted the space next to him, and like the obedient little sister she is, she crawled over and settled next to

him. He wrapped his arm over her shoulders and brought her closer before placing a kiss on her forehead.

"I didn't know that dad would react like this, I'm sorry" he apologized, sincerely.

"it's not your fault, Vusi is sick, I know that" Kagiso chuckled at this.

"he's still your father, no need to call him by his name"

"haibo! Whose father? Until the day he acts like it, ngizo mubiza ngegama lakhe Mina"

"okay" and like that, silence consumes them, still in that position they continue watching TV and sleep crawls over and consumes them.

EVERYTHING SHE NEVER HAD

No one, in fact. No king ever wants to hear that their kingdom is falling, ever. Immediately when they got to their healer, he stopped them from getting inside his yard. He pointed at them and said “abokhokho badanile Mahlangu” he shouted from the top of his lungs “a good conscience is a soft pillow, uyazi kungani ophupha lokho, uyazi nawe kuthi kucale nini futhi.” He walef closer to them at the gate, chuckling bitterly. “bathi a calm sea does not make a skilled saloir, your kingdom will fall if you don’t stop”

He was speaking in proverbs, not making sense, or so Maureen thought. Vusi didn’t want to allow his mind to ever think what he’s thinking, dare his thoughts be true. Seeing this, the healer shook his head “unenkane Mahlangu, ufuze wena nco, kungakho ezokubidliza, you’ve bit more than you can chew, engane yobabakhe” then he turned and never looked back.

“what is he talking about?” Maureen asked, instead of answering, he told the guards to drive Maureen home while he took his car and drove to a place, he never thought he would ever go back to, when he gets to the parking lot, he takes the

emergency elevator taking him to the eleventh floor, he doesn't need to do any admin or anything.

He goes straight to the room and watches as the nurse is busy with the person, "how is she doing the nurse?" turns to look at the man at the door.

"all is looking good Mr.Mahlangu the medication is working alright, although some days are better than others"

He nods his head and proceeds to enter. "please excuse us" the nurse nods her head and leaves the man and the woman alone.

Vusi looks at the woman who can't seem to leave him alone, the last words she uttered to him was he will experience hell, and hell seems to be what is coming to him.

He takes the chair and sits on it and takes her hands in his, her warm almost wrinkly hands, he smiles, even in her current state, she still looks beautiful. He loved this woman, he won't lie, he really did, after all, she is the mother of his first born son, Quinton, and hell, she even gave him a beautiful stubborn daughter, he chuckles when he thinks about Maya, she really is her father's daughter, or maybe in this case, her own mother's daughter. Phumzile is a really stubborn woman, it's been almost sixteen years she's been admitted here and she's still breathing

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he could make things easy and kill her, but he wont be able to live with himself knowing that he killed his children's' mother, they might not know her and already he robbed them off of the chance, he does have a heart after all right?

“you told me that I will get what is due to me” he chuckles
“unfortunately for me, our daughter will be my downfall, she already started” he squeezes her hands and releases a sigh. He stays for a few more minutes before he retires and goes back home.

He needs to check things at his company so he takes out his phone to call Bob and see how things are doing. He tells him that he's coming to Joburg over the week.

MAYA

Just as she was starting to enjoy her time, Vusi pulls up at the drive way and heads straight inside the house, hopefully he doesn't say anything, but how lucky can she be? It was all just wishful thinking, one of the guards comes to call her saying her father wants to talk to her.

She shares a look with Tumo before she disappears inside. She grabs a glass of squeezed orange juice on her way.

She finds Vusi settled on his chair lost in thought, she stands and looks at him. “you called for me?” he snaps out of his train of thoughts and looks at her, a small smile makes its way on his lips. She looks exactly like her mother, the skin colour, the eyes and her chubbiness, Quinton is exactly the same as her, if anything, you would mistake them for twins instead of katlego and kagiso.

“I can’t allow you to be with that boy Hlengiwe” Maya chuckles and takes a sip of her juice.

“is that what you called me here to tell you? Vusi you don’t get to decide who is good for me and who’s not when you yourself are no good to me” she fires back. Vusi sighs, how on earth did he think things would go like he planned with this girl.

“you really are your mother’s daughter you know that?” she froze, he’s never spoken to her about her mother, hell. Why would he when they never have a normal conversation.

“what happened to her?” she asks.

“who?”

“my mother” she retorts.

“don’t worry, she didn’t want you, still doesn’t”

“dad, why are you this evil?” a single tear drops from her eye, “what did I ever do to you to deserve all this” more tears run down her cheeks, you would think Vusi would be moved, but nothing.

“Hlengiwe, hlukana nalomfana if you want us to get along” hearing all this, Maya chuckled before wiping her tears off.

“you not my father, so don’t tell me what to do okay, and I will keep on seeing him until I-get to decide it’s enough”

“what do you need me to do to convince you otherwise the boys father raped you damnit” he banged the tabl with his hands before standing up.

“what are you talking about?” she asked dumbfounded .

Rounding the table, Vusi stood in front of her, with rage in his eyes.

“Richard took your innocence maya, what the hell are you saying?”

“I don’t know what you mean” she acted dumb, infuriating Vusi even more.

“God damnit Hlengiwe, I saw the test okay”

“I don’t know what you talking about, Richard did nothing to me”

“I will have him arrested” Vusi said.

Hearing all this, Maya chuckled and stood upright facing her father. “well dad, it would be your word against mine”

“I have proof that he indeed did rape you, I have your medical file right here”

Just as Maya was about to say something, someone knocked on the door and walked in. seeing the two in an awkward state, Tumo decided to turn back, but Vusi called him over .

What would you do if you had a father like Vusi?

25

EVERYTHING SHE NEVER HAD

“do you know where your father is boy” Vusi asked, walking closer to the door to lock it.

“n..no sir” the poor boy stuttered, looking from Maya to her dad.

“when you get in contact with him, tell him gore I’m not done with him okay, or you for that matter, get out of my sight”

Without waiting to be told twice, he walked out casting one last glance at his girlfriend who gave him a reassuring smile.

With one last look at her father, Maya took her juice glass and walked out sipping it, as much as she wanted to show her father that he couldn’t break her, she was breaking slowly, it hurt that after so many years, her father is only believing her now, and only because she’s dating Richards son, what kind of a person does that?

The following Sunday morning, everyone woke up to have breakfast, Vusi woke up wheeling his suitcase gaining stares from everyone around the table.

“I will be going to check on the business, I will come back after a week” he announced.

They had their breakfast in silence with only their plates and cutlery making noise.

Few days later

They managed to sneakout, since the day he left, things have been lighter at home, they in a taxi to check on Tumos’ grandmother, the old woman has been in and out of the hospital especially with the sudden disappearance of Tumahole, it didn’t sit well with her not knowing where her grandchild was, especially since she knew that Richard once visited him.

When the pair gets to the gate, they find the old woman and Malita sitting under the mango tree knitting and sharing a laugh. When they saw them

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as old as the mme is, she stood up with the help of mme’Malita and rushed to Tumo and engulfed him, with tears in both their eyes.

Maya and Malita excused themselves and went inside, when they got inside, Maya released an exhausted sigh. “how has she been” she asked the woman who has been keeping her sane for the past few weeks.

“holding it in, she has been worried, even our little lie seemed to not be working”

They sat down on the couch and switched the tv on. “I just hope now she will believe us”

“how did you get him out”

“Vusi is not around” she said like it’s not a big deal.

“and what if he comes back, what now?”

Instead of answering, Maya just shrugged her shoulders, honestly speaking, she didn’t care what her father would do anymore, after she found out that the man has been keeping proof of her getting raped, something inside her died, and she's not sure she wants it back. Rather she lives without whatever it was that died.

They spent the day chatting and laughing, they from the mango tree to roundovel where they light fire, enjoying tea and biscuits, Mme has retired to bed and Ntate’Tomas has joined

them now, telling them stories he was once told when he was still a young boy.

Suddenly a car pulls up at their driveway and panic surges on their face, but they all remain seated on their seats, a registration like belong to only one family, the royal family, it could be that the devil is back and wants them home or-

Kagiso steps out of the car and looks around before Maya stands up from the roundovel and calls him over.

“is he back” that’s the first thing she utters when he walks closer.

“no, but he was in an accident, he’s hospitalized”

Looks like karma is a bitch huh?

EVERYTHING SHE NEVER HAD

Its almost four in the morning when they arrive at len-med hospital, right before Randfontein. They find everyone on the waiting room and they sit too. Katlego is in tears while Loyiso is on his phone, come to think of it, this boy is always, I mean always on his phone, he is the quietest on in the family, but he is the lastborn afteral.

Bob is sitting next to Maureen silent and then there is a man next to him also.

The doctor emergency and assures them that he is fine, nothing was wrong with him, they all relax and go see him. It is quite funny seeing him like this, vulnerable that is. Everyone went in except Maya, Bob and the other guy next to him.

“are you not going in” Bob asked the same time the man stood up and said he was leaving.

“nope. I might just want to finish him up” she said, earning a chuckle from both men.

“easy now, how have you been”

“as I can be” she shrugged her shoulders.

“still butting heads” he asked with a chuckling.

“ah, we way passed that now, it’s more like who is going to kill who first, and maybe, just may-“

“don’t finish that” he interrupted, causing Maya to chuckle.

“what really happened to him”

“Richard came by, I don’t know what went down between them, but when I heard Richard calling my name, I knew something was wrong, I found him lying on the floor with almost no pulse”

“mmh” was all Maya said, the next few minutes passed with silence between them until the doors opened and everyone walked out.

“you not going in?” Maureen asked Maya, who just shook her head no, why would she want to see a man who has been nothing but a nightmare her whole life.

With the nearing to the end and Vusi back to normal, Maya gets convinced each and everyday that he is planning something, he can never just let things be

it is December sixteen and Tumo is back there working like nothing ever happened, the day after Vusi got out of the hospital, he called for Tumo and told him that he apologises for treating him like that, so to show his remorse, he gave him permission to date Maya and also called him back to work, ofcourse Maya was not taking it, but Tumo was convinced that he was sincere.

They are having a braai at the royal house and all the friends and families are present, Vusi even took the liberty of personally inviting Tumahole and his grandmother and also Ntate'Tomas and his wife.

“Maya come on, stop all this” she is busy pacing up and down like a mad woman, she refuses that Vusi suddenly changed, feeling herself getting a little overwhelmed, she goes to her drawers and retrieves her medication.

Tumo pulls her down and takes her hands into his.

“stop stressing okay, lets accept your fathers apology and move on, isn’t that what you wanted? Give him a break baby” he says, kissing her on the cheek, then the side on her mouth before he goes straight to her lips.

Maya stands up and goes to lock her room and comes back, standing in front of Tumo, she unzips her dress and it pulls down to the floor, left in only just her bra and panties, Tumo stands up and goes towards her where he claims her lips in his. While working on her bra,

Before long, their clothes and on the floor and breathing heavily while trying to suppress their moans so no one can hear them but the task keeps proving to be difficult when Tumos’ tongue keeps doing wonders on her clit.

Before she can reach her climax, Tumo bends her backwards on all fours and wraps up before taking her from the back, causing both of them to moan out in ecstasy.

He keeps pumping in and out of her in a rhythmic pace while also trying to keep quit, Maya clutches the sheet and buries her head on the pillow before her orgasms takes over and she cries out loud, and Tumo follows right after.

From the first time they started having sex, up until now, it has been nothing short of amazing.

Thought this one was long overdue.

Its Christmas eve, the day for the royal Ball, everyone is invited, it's an every year ball, but the excitement never dies down. If there's one thing Vusi Mahlangu does better is being a king, he meets people's needs, if you didn't know him, you would say he's a very nice man, even Maya can not oppose on that one.

Everyone is excited and getting ready for the ball, the clock is ticking and in just four hours, it is going to start. Maya should be excited, she should be happy that her plan will work, but then that doesn't explain why she's feeling nervous, biting her nails, and going up and down, she stops walking and looks at the papers on top of her bed, as tears well up in her eyes

Her phone pings with an sms, she stops pacing and looks at it the name Richard written in bold capital letters are flashing in her screen. She picks it up and looks at the sms 'SO WHAT DO YOU SAY?' the letters are there, staring at her, she knows this is wrong, she knows it's wrong, her gut tells her that, but the papers on her bed provokes her to type her answer. 'YES' she replies, one word, three letters is all it takes.

Its time, music is blasting from the royal hall, a knock sounds from her door before its pushed open and Tumo walks in, he smiles looking at Maya fixing herself on the mirror, he steps closer and stands behind her "you look very beautiful" then he

kisses the top of her head "i love you" he says making Maya blush. He looks good in his black tux.

"should I wait for you?" Maya stops her makeup brush halfway and shakes her head no. "i will take time, I'll find you there" she replies, then continues with her makeup. Taking one last glance at her, he steps out and attempts to close the door until he remembers something. "where were you on the 17nth?" like a child caught stealing candies, her eyes bulge out and she swallowed nothing.

"why?" she asks.

For a minute Tumo keeps quite and says nothing, keeping eye contact via the mirror, with no one saying anything.

"I wanted to go to see my father, thought you could come with me" he steps further into the bedroom. "but I guess you beat me to it huh?"

It wanst a question, he wasn't asking her anything, but then does she find the need to explain.

"I did go see him"

"why?" he had a stick expression on him, can't tell what he was feeling, and that did not sit well with Maya.

"I wanted his help" with a sigh, Tumo sat down on the bed, almost sitting on the papers, he took them and placed them on the side.

"what kind of help?"

"with you, I wanted him to help me get you out of my father's clutches"

"he isn't all that bad you know" he sees Maya's clocked eyebrow and decided to clarify "your father you know"

"yeah right" she snorted.

"why don't you believe me?" with a sigh, Maya turned around in her chair, and looked at him "because Tumo. A leopard never changes its spots"

"you would know that right?"

"what's that supposed to mean?" Maya asks, confused.

"it means, if your father can't change, mine can't either" he says.

"duh!" she shrugged her shoulders, she never said Richard changed, just because she went to him for help doesn't mean that he suddenly likes him or tolerate him, no, she just wanted him help. They do say, 'stick to the devil you know' In this case, it should be Vusi, but no one is as unpredictable as this man, you can never know him.

"meaning, no matter what, he will always be in love with you?"
like the speed of light, an emotion passed through Tumos' eyes,
pain. If Maya wasn't looking carefully, she wouldn't have seen
it.

"I lost my mother because of that, always, all the God damn
time it was Hlengi this Hlengi that, he is fucken obsessed with
you, but then I understand why"

Feeling her eyes burn with tears, and a painful throt, she said
"you can't blame me for that, I had no idea untill that day, I
swear"

"and I believe you, I just don't understand how you can asj for
help from a man that that is responsible for taking everything
from me, everything I hold dear, and now you on that list"

He blinked his eyes, to prevent the tears from falling.

"and now you know exactly how I feel, he had taken and taken
and now I am left with nothing baby,"

"you have me"

"do I?, you don't see it yet, but I don't have it anymore, I
wanted something of my own, you were mine, Tumo, mine"
she hits her chest to emphasize her words, with tears falling
from her eyes.

"but like always, he takes from me, can't you see that?" now tears were falling like the river of Jordan.

Moments of silence passed between them, both trying to reel down from their anger and pain and also trying to grasp what is happening, are they having a fight? Is this what a fight feels like right?

" what is this?" Tumo picked up the papers that he had shifted on the bed, he is trying to divert from their fight.

"my medical file, something to prove that I actually don't have bipolar"

"what?" He whispered, he stopped scanning the papers and walked up to Maya, and wrapped her in her arms.

"tell me you joking?"

"nope, this is exactly why I will never forgive my father"

"where did you get them?" §

Instead of answering, she stepped out of his embrace and scanned around the room, avoiding eye contact.

"you have got to be kidding me" he chuckled, "him of all people Maya? What if this is his plan to get you?"

"I know, but one thing I know about your father is that he-"

"don't call him that?"

"huh?"

"don't call him my father".

"okay, I'm sorry. But then, one thing I know about Richard, is that he would never lie to me, he doesn't have it in him"

"yeah, I know"

"yes, but just to be on the safe side, we can confirm everything with him tonight"

"dude come on" he threw his hands up and tugged his hair, sending Maya to fly off crazy.

"Tumo you don't get it, Vusi is evil, you just like everyone else, you are blind to him, and if it means working with your father to prove it, then so be it"

"yeah, the same man who raped you right?" like a freeze ball, maya felt her body turning cold.

"get out" she turned and proceeded to finish her make up.

"I didn't mean it like that" she tried pleading.

"yeah, okay, phuma"

"Maya I hate that man okay, with everything I have, and you being nice with him has me in edge okay"

"I am not being nice with him"

"your father is going to flip"

"I know"

"and he will retaliate"

"as usual"

"and I will be caught in the crossfire"

"and that is why I'm doing this, to get you out of the cross fire, don't you see that you and I are dealing with the same situation just different devils?"

" anyway will be leaving in a few days. To see a specialist who can't help me"

"with him?" He asks, trying to conceal his hurt.

"yes."

"don't do it"

"my mind is already made"

"you hurting me Maya, please" the he let the tear drop from his eye. "i know what you want to do is for your own good, just not with him please"

"with who Tumo? Trust me, it's hurting me too, but your father is the only man who can help me"

"you not willing to back out?"

"no"

"not even for me?"

"I'm sorry" she said, trying to swallow her sob.

"then I guess I don't mean that much to you, like I hoped I did" "touche"

With a bitter chuckle, he wiped his tears off and walked to the door. "good luck, I'm out"

Then he baged the door, th same time Mayas tears cascaded down her cheeks. "if loosing you is what it takes to keep you safe, then so be it" she said to herself before picking her phone and the papers and walked out the door also.

.....**The End**.....

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