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1

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

It was raining badly and I couldn't fall asleep. I got off the mattress and shook my mom gently to wake up. "Mama?" she turned and faced another direction. "Mama!" she mumbled something in her sleep but she didn't wake up.

I stood in front of her for a few minutes thinking she would wake up but she didn't. I saw our stepfather, peeling the blankets off his body and I quickly bent, then crawled into our blankets. If he had noticed that I was up instead of sleeping, hell would have frozen! I spoke too soon, someone removed the blanket off me and pulled me by my legs. I shoot my eyes open and came face to face with our stepfather.

“Shhh, get up and follow me.” refusing would just earn me a punishment. I got up and followed him to where we cooked. Our shack was not big, we used a curtain to separate where we cooked and slept. I looked back and hoped mama could wake up. I didn't want to go anywhere with France.

“Why are you standing over there? Come here!” I slowly made my way to him and he grabbed me.

With a knife on my throat and his big hand over my mouth, making sure I do not scream. I was too terrified to scream. My heart was beating so fast, the neighbours could hear it.

“Undress!”

I swallowed hard and pretended that I did not hear him.

“Goitsimedi?”

“Rra?”

“Who is the adult between me and you?”

“It's you.”

“I said undress.”

I had tears down my face but that didn't scare him. I removed the long nightdress I had on, and my panties. One hand covered my vagina while with the other I tried to cover my chest. He picked me up and put me on the small table we had in our

kitchen. I watched him pull down his pants and held his penis. He licked his lips and opened my thighs wider. I closed them and he slapped me.. “what are you trying to do?”

I just shook my head while staring deep into his eyes. “Papa please don't do this.”

“I'm not your father!” he pulled me towards the end of the table, then used his fingers to rub me. He made sure that I do not scream by putting his hand on my mouth...

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Minutes had passed with him still trying to insert his penis... Once he realised that he couldn't insert himself. The little bit that he had managed to shove inside, he kept on moving it in and out of me. All I could do is just cry and pray silently. I wished mama, could wake up and find him.

Judging from the sounds coming from France, he was enjoying himself while I was in pain. He removed his hand and I let out sobs...

I heard faint movement, turning I found Karabo standing by the curtain looking at me. She was only eight years old. I wish she

didn't have to see me like this. I tried to signal her to move but she moved closer. Her teary eyes broke my twelve year old soul.

When my siblings were in pain. I was in pain as well.

“Papa, o dirang?” (daddy, what are you doing?) Karabo, said standing next to me.

France, removed his penis from inside me and grabbed Karabo by the throat.. her little feet dangling in the air. “Why are you not sleeping? Children your age are sleeping at this time!” the rage in his eyes, terrified me but seeing how Karabo was struggling to free herself from his tight grip. I removed my naked body off the table and punched him as hard as I could.

My eyes were closed throughout. I had no idea where my punches were landing. All I wanted was for him to leave my baby sister alone. I kept on punching until I heard Karabo, coughing.. that's when I opened my eyes and ran to where she was.

“Are you okay?”

“I'm so scared,” she coughed twice and her eyes had tears in them. “Goitsimedi.. why was he on top of you, like he always do with mama?”

We watched our stepfather dressing, then walking to us. He had a huge smile on his face. I couldn't understand why he did

what he just did. Our life orientation teacher always told us that no one is supposed to touch us inappropriately. If an adult touches us inappropriately, we should tell an adult.

“If you two open those mouths..” he held his knife and indicated that he would slit our throats. “I will kill your mother and make sure you watch.”

He left us there and went back to the ‘bedroom’.

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It's been a week full of anxiety and fear. I never want to be alone in the house. I don't want my siblings to be left alone with him. I still have not said anything to mama, about what transpired. She might not even believe me.

I was outside doing my homework when Frank, opened the gate with his overall jacket on his shoulder. My heart rate went up immediately by just seeing him. I looked around and saw my siblings playing, two houses away from us. Judging by the creepy smile on his face, today I won't be lucky. There's no way out.

He crouched down next to me and held my face close to his.
“Give me a kiss.”

I looked at him with so much fear. How can a grown man like him treat me like this?

“I said give me a kiss!”

“I.. I... Uhm, I don't know how to.”

“Get up and go to the room.”

He was hot on my heels, as I went to the room. I quickly wiped my tears. I looked down and fiddled with the dress I had on.

“Look at me Goitsimedi.” I looked up and he was undressing. With every piece of clothing that he took off, he walked closer to me and I moved backwards. “If you're thinking of screaming, no one will hear you. No one can come to your rescue today. I'm going to enjoy myself. Now undress Nana.”

I did what I was told, got onto the bed and just lay there.

“Don't forget that if you tell anyone about our little secret you will be the reason why I have to kill them. Do you understand?”

I nodded

I saw him rolling a condom onto his penis. I've never seen one before but I knew it was a condom. He pulled me towards the end of the bed and spread my legs.

“Listen Goitsimedi, if you do as I say it will get better. It's going to hurt a little bit but if you relax, it will soon be over.”

“Okay..”

“Good... Good!”

As much As he said I should relax, the pain I felt once he managed to insert himself inside me. With every thrust, it felt like something was tearing. He kept on saying things I could not understand. I just wanted him to stop.

“Daddy, please stop.”

“Mhmm... I told you to relax.” he spread me further.. spat saliva on his fingers and rubbed me. I didn't understand why he was smiling while I was in pain. “Ohh shit! Mhmm, fuck.”

“Please stop! Stop! Stop...” he slapped me across the face and I bite my tongue and tasted some blood.

“I told you to shut up!” he kept on hurling insults while slapping me around. I tried fighting back, I used my nails to scratch him but that only angered him. Angered him to a point where, I was

very sure that he was going to kill me. "You're fighting back I see."

"Daddy, please stop... I promise I'll relax, stop please." the fists and slaps didn't stop, instead he went harder.

If you had listened the first time, we wouldn't be here!" another slap.

I was grateful that he was not having sex with me but the beating was just as painful. "I told you to listen to what I say!"

"I promise, I will start listening.." he took out his pocket knife and walked to me.. I moved my aching body backwards.

"You can't run anywhere!"

I started screaming my lungs out. I just screamed and screamed, with hope that someone will hear something.

"Somebody help me! Help!" he pulled me by my leg, but I kicked him. Everytime he tried coming closer, I would kick him.. I kicked him until he dropped the knife he had. I jumped off the bed with the intention to run but before I could escape, he grabbed my leg, I tripped and fell.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"Leave me alone!" I tried to crawl" away but he didn't let go of my leg.

“The only way I'm leaving you alone, is when I'm sure you're dead.”

After he said the word “dead,” I knew that he was going to kill me. I had to do something fast. No one was going to help me out. I looked around and I noticed that the knife was by the corner of the bed.. if I crawl there, I could take it and stab him.

We looked at each other for a while then I launched my body towards the corner of the bed, he noticed the knife as well.. we both wanted the knife.

He was bigger and stronger, he dragged me from the knife and took it then came to me. I closed my eyes as he raised his hand up.. I heard a loud thud on the floor... Opening my eyes I saw Frank, laying on the floor and Karabo, standing next to him. She hit his head with a half brick a couple of times then stopped when he didn't move.

“Are you okay?” she asked me

My focus was on Frank. “Is he dead?”

“I don't know!” she shrugged her shoulders and sat next to me.

“Am I going to jail because I killed him?”

“No, you won't go to jail.. you were only trying to protect me.” I ignored my sore, aching body and gave her body a tight hug. “O tlogetsi Lesedi kae?” (where did you leave Lesedi?)

“She's with Samantha.”

We both just sat there waiting for Frank to open his eyes but he just lay there. We heard Mama's voice by the gate and we looked at one another. We had no idea how she was going to react. I was still naked and had some blood stains on my thighs. Dried blood. I could feel my face tingling.

She started screaming once she walked into the room. She ran to Frank and touched him. “Yoh!” she turned and looked at us, she was so angry. “What did you two do! Why is he like this?”

I wrapped my arms around myself and looked down. I tried to speak but I just cried instead. I could not say a word. She pulled me up and looked at me, up and down. “Why are you naked? Why do you have bruises? Bua Goitsimedi!”

“Stop shouting mama, she's scared!” Karabo said holding my other hand. She had always been bold for her age.

“Daddy, has been forcing me to sleep with him.”

“Huh?” she looked at me with confusion. She walked to the bed and noticed the blood stains then looked back at me and Frank. “When did he start forcing you to sleep with him?”

“Last week... At first he would just touch me and ask me to touch him as well. He would also ask me to.. to.. to suck his thing.”

“It's fine I understand.. I understand my baby, come here.” It felt good to be in her arms, I cried and she held me while comforting me...

2

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

Ten years later

“Karabo, tlhe keep the volume down I'm trying to study.” she lowered the volume and walked to me. She looked at me for a while before sighing. “Keng?” she just shrugged her shoulders. “You know you can talk to me about anything.”

“I know.”

“Now what's eating you up? Talk to me.”

“Kyle, is cheating on me.” she spoke with a shaky voice.. I could see that she wanted to cry. Karabo is strong, she's not the crying type.

I got off the floor and went to her. "Don't cry you will scare me. I'm the cry baby here." we both laughed. She lightly punched me. "Did you find him with another girl?"

"Yes... He didn't even care that I found him in bed with someone."

"What!"

"He said that he wanted me to find him in that position."

"Huh?"

"I don't fit his standards."

"Masepa!" (bullshit!) "When he asked you out, did he not notice then, that you're not his type?"

"I was an idiot to think that someone like him would date a girl like me."

I grabbed her arm and looked at her with disbelief. "Wa reng?" (what are you saying?)

"Let's be honest, our relationship was doomed from the beginning."

"Excuse me? What's wrong with you KB?"

"I'm not rich." she shrugged her shoulders.

"So what? Poor people don't deserve love because they're poor? Wa reng naare?" (what are you saying exactly?)

“Well Kyle said that...”

I stopped her from going any further. “Masepa a ga Kyle! Him and I better not meet anywhere because if I see him, hell will freeze. Bullshit!”

“Bathong GM.”

“Don’t laugh wena. Why couldn't he break up with you like a normal person? Sies.”

“Thank you I feel so much better.” she said while laughing.

“Who does he think he is bloody swine!”

“Okay who got you all worked up because it can't only be kyle.”

“I’m just annoyed that I really thought you two had a chance.”

“It’s not the end of the world, I'm still young and I'll meet other charming people.”

Terrence Ndlovu

I removed my coat and stethoscope before sitting down. I just needed a few minutes to breathe. Just when I was about to lay down in the on call room, my phone rang, it was my wife Rachel. I let it ring... How did we get here, Rachel? We were always very happy. Everything changed after she had three

miscarriages. It's as if she was obsessed to get pregnant. The door opened, Jenifer walked in and closed the door. "What do you want Jen?"

"Someone is in a bad mood. Don't worry I'll help you calm down." she locked the door and had her back against the door.

I couldn't help but look at her smooth yellow thighs in her short nurse uniform. I never thought I would cheat on my wife but it happened and I thought it was a once off thing but six months later and I'm still sneaking around with Jenifer.

"You do know that you're playing a dangerous game, Jenifer?"

"I like danger daddy. It gives me the rush I need." she said removing her uniform. I looked at my ringing phone and switched it off. She had on this expression on her face that showed that she is about to get what she wants. "Don't think too much about what we're doing, daddy. Just enjoy yourself and have fun."

"This is wrong! I'm a married man."

"I told you this already, I'm not interested in your marriage. I'm not hoping that you will marry me some day, I just want us to have a little bit of fun."

She walked to the empty bed and sat on it with her legs wide open. I swallowed hard when I saw her glistening coochie. I was

not the only one excited, Gatsheni, in my pants was just as excited.

“Jen...”

“Yes daddy?” she rubbed her coochie up and down, teasingly. Jen, raised her head a bit and looked at me with eyes full of lust. I watched as she inserted two fingers into her coochie, then removed them and licked them clean.

“I know you want me daddy.” her thumb teased her clit a few times. Her soft moans made things more difficult.

I pulled my pants down, rubbed myself against her wet folds and the feeling was out of this world. I slowly inserted myself and watched how her coochie welcomed me in. Due to how wet and ready she was for me, I stood on my toes for a while.

“Fuck Jen!”

“Fuck me daddy! Do whatever you want with me. Just don't tease me.”

My thrusts were slow in the beginning but once I got my blood rushing to the right places. I upped my pace. “Ohh.. yes.. yes, daddy!”

“Not too loud, you want the entire hospital to hear you?”

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“Uhh

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yes daddy.. ahh.” I gave her a few thrusts then we both climaxed. I stayed buried inside her until my breathing was back to normal. I looked for wipes, then wiped us clean and wore my pants.

“Get dressed and leave Jenifer. I also need to attend some of my patients.”

“You're such a boring human being.”

“Yet here you are!”

“Whatever!” she picked up her uniform and got dressed. I saw her underwear at the corner of the bed.

I picked it up and dangled it in the air. “I think you're forgetting something?”

She stood by the door and looked at me, “you can keep it.”

“To do what with it?”

“If you miss me a lot, let it remind you of me.” she unlocked then left.

I went to the bathroom to wash my face before attending my patients. At least today it was calm. “Please stop the lift!” I ran inside and looked at the beautiful stylish lady inside. “Thank you.”

She just nodded and kept herself busy with her phone. We both got off at the trauma ward and it looked as if we're heading to the same direction. I noticed how other nurses and doctors looked at her with so much respect, I turned and looked at her thinking I would recognise her from somewhere.

“Stop staring it's creepy.” she said without looking at me.

“I'm sorry, it's just amazing to see how people are looking at you with so much respect.”

Matron Ndou, came to us with a huge smile on her face. “This woman never smiles,” I mumbled to the mysterious lady walking close to me and she let out a beautiful laugh, I had to stare.

“Dr Puoentle Morolong, I'm so glad you could make it.” matron Ndou, looked at me. “Dr Ndlovu, this is the therapist I was telling you about.”

“Nice to meet you, doctor.”

“The pleasure is all mine, I hear that Robinson has you under her wing.”

“She’s the best.”

We talked some more as we went to see a patient, who was badly beaten and raped. Left on the street to die.

“Tell me more about this patient..”

I let out a sigh. “Where do I start? You have read her file. She was badly beaten! The penetration was very rough, we had to stitch her up. She has broken ribs and had a miscarriage.”

“The world we live in. Has she said anything yet?”

“Not a single word.” we opened the door and saw her standing by the window looking down.

“I’ll take it from here Dr Ndlovu.” I nodded and closed the door.

Goitsimedi ‘GM’ Tholo

KB and I were cooking supper when my phone rang in the other room. I used the dish cloth to wipe my hands then ran to answer it. Mama?

“Hello.” I said and returned to where KB was.

“How are you Bunkie?”

“I’m okay mama, and you?”

“Work has me busy but I can't complain.”

Same old excuses. I already knew the reason for this call.

“Let me guess you won't be able to see us this week?”

“Don’t be like that Goitsi. You know if I could...”

I interrupted her from going any further. “Don’t bother explaining yourself.”

“No.. listen Bunkie, I'll try my best to come.”

“Okay.”

“Tell your sisters that I love them okay.”

“Mhmm.” she said her goodbyes then hung the call. KB pretended that she was stirring the pap. I know how she badly wanted to tell me that I gave our mother way too much credit.

“Don’t you dare say anything!”

“Not planning to.”

I sighed and sat in the couch, “I don't understand your mother KB. Why does she keep on hurting us like this? What did we do to her?” the tears were blinding my vision.

“Ahh Goitsi, mma, don't you get tired of crying for her..?” by ‘her’ she meant our mother.

“I’m not like you KB, I can't just cut people out of me life that easily. I just can't.”

“Thank your lucky stars that dating is the last thing on your mind, or else.. you would be needing a heart transplant as of now.”

“Say’s someone who was just crying for a boy not so long ago. Please, girl, stop tripping.” she threw a small onion my direction and stuck her tongue at me.

“The food won't be ready on time with you two throwing each other with onions.” Sedi said standing by the door frame. KB and I, shared a look then we threw onions at her as well. We giggled while doing so.

“You two must stop being childish tlhe!” she said running outside.

Rachel Ndlovu

I tried calling Terry, but his phone was off. Ever since he found out that we're expecting again, he has been different. I don't know if our marriage has reached its expiring date. I tried him one more time, same outcome.

I walked around the dining area and switched off the candles. I wiped off the make up I had on and switched off the candles in our room as well. I sat on the bed, rubbed my small baby bump. "I hope this time around I will be able to carry you full term." I felt a faint kick, I wiped my tears and smiled. "Kick again my baby. Kick again." another kick.

"I wish your father was here to experience this with us muffin." I continued to rub my tummy while calling my mother.

"Rachel, ngwanaka."

"Hello mama."

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, just checking if you're fine."

"I'm your mother, I can tell if something is wrong."

“Mama, my husband is drifting away from me! I don't know what to do anymore. Is this my karma?”

“Huh..? Karma ke mang?”

I found myself laughing while crying. “No one, just thinking out loud.”

“I will pray for you this side.. this time my grandchild will be born.”

“I hope so mama. I don't think I'll be able to survive if I lose this baby as well.”

“Ohh, ngwanaka... Just pray my baby, pray for your well-being, pray for your baby and family.”

“I'm tired of praying mama. I have lost three babies, three!”

“Anger is not good for a pregnant woman. Calm down.”

“Will the wedding still be in Johannesburg?”

“Didn't they tell you that they're no longer having a white wedding?”

“No.”

“Your cousin! Well they've decided to have a traditional wedding instead, here in Limpopo.”

“Okay, maybe she forgot to tell me

Planning a wedding is too much work and stress. Mama, I'm tired we'll talk some other time.”

“Good bye.”

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A nightmare woke me up. I stood up quickly and felt a excruciating pain, on my back. I did a few breathing exercises to calm down and I felt so much better.

I put on my robe then went to the kitchen to make myself chamomile tea. Just as I turned, I saw Okuhle, holding a baby.. the dress she had on was full of blood.. the baby was wailing.

I dropped the cup that had the chamomile, and started screaming. “You're dead! You're dead Okuhle. Leave me alone.”

She walked closer, with every step she took, she bled more. Another baby appeared, a bit older but still very young. “Leave me alone! Stay away from me.. please, I'm sorry.”

I kept on screaming and asking for forgiveness. The more I screamed, the more I felt the back pain returning. I put my

hand on my abdomen. "I can't lose you as well my baby.. Okuhle please forgive me."

I heard the gate open, as I turned Okuhle was gone. I looked behind and she was not there. Am I losing my mind? I looked around but I couldn't see a thing. Not even the blood stains. The door opened and Terrence walked in.

"Baby, why are you up at this time?"

"Huh?.. Uhm, I couldn't sleep I came to make some tea."

"I'm sorry I didn't let you know that I'll be coming late." he gave me a kiss.

It's okay, I know how busy hospitals can be."

He sipped the chamomile tea then spat it out. "Babe, how do you drink this tea? It's really tasteless."

"My love, where did you get that cup?"

"I don't understand.. when I came in, you said you made yourself a cup of tea."

That cup broke, I saw it with my own two eyes.. I mumbled.

"Are you sure that you're okay?"

"I'm fine it must be lack of sleep. Let's go to bed." I held his hand as we went up the mini stairs. I heard someone call my

name, I turned to look and it was Okuhle. She was holding three babies. I let out a scream.

“Baby, yini manje?”

I shook my head. “Nothing.. let's go.” I missed the last step and rolled down.

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Waking up I heard beeping sounds around me. I looked around and I was in the hospital. I sat upright then touched my tummy, the door opened.

“Mrs Ndlovu, you're up.” the doctor checked my vitals then write down something down.

“Doctor, is everything fine with my baby?” Terrence walked in and stood next to me. I looked at the doctor again. “So?”

“You didn't have a miscarriage if that's what you're asking.”

I let out a sigh.

“But your blood pressure is way too high and that's not good for a pregnant woman, especially you. I'll keep you here for observation.”

Once the doctor had left, Terry, sat next to me on the bed.

“Baby, don't you ever scare me like that again.”

“I'm sorry I didn't mean to

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I missed a step.”

“It's good.. shhh, it's okay. Our baby is also fine.”

“For a while I thought you didn't want this baby.”

“How can you think like that? How can I not love our baby?”

“It's just that you have been so distant, I thought...” he shut me up with a kiss...

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

Goitsi, ngwanaka I spoke to my boss and I won't be able to make it but I will send money for her party. Tell her that I love her.. -Mama

I read the message over and over again. I couldn't believe this woman. I looked at Lesedi and brushed her hair.

The door opened, KB, walked in. "I know it's late I'm sorry." she removed her shoes then sat next to me.

"It's fine I got your message but I don't like it when you're not home at this time."

She looked at me and smiled.

"What?"

"Have I ever told you how much I love you?"

I pretended to think. "I don't think I've heard you tell me that you love me."

"I'm being serious now... I really love you GM. Sedi and I, are so lucky to have you in our lives. I wish everyone had a big sister like you.. you always put us first, no matter what."

I gave her a hug and a kiss on her forehead, "I love you a lot! No matter what happens out there, know that I love you and Sedi, a lot."

"We know that you love us. One day this will just be a memory."

I breathed out, "your mother said she won't be able to come this weekend."

“What's new GM? Why do you have so much faith in that woman? She left us when you were fifteen, I was only twelve!”

“Shhh! Calm down, we don't want to wake Sedi, up.”

“I'm sorry but I don't have a mother.”

“Don't say that KB. Give her some time she will come around. Maybe she's still getting over the Frank issue.”

KB, quickly got off the bed, folded her arms and looked at me. She scoffed. “She can't get over what? Are you listening to yourself GM? You went through the trauma.. you! What is she getting over?”

KB, had a temper. She easily got angry, she's always been like that ever since we were children. Me being the first born, I learnt to not scream when she screams or starts getting overwhelmed. I leave her to come back to her senses. She was pacing around in the room. I laid back on the pillows and browsed through my Facebook.

Minutes later, I could feel that she has calmed down. She was sitting on the floor, rocking herself back and forth.. I got off and went to her to hug her. “Are you okay now?”

“I'm sorry, I didn't mean to shout at you.”

“I know you didn't mean to, that's why I let you calm down first.”

“I really hate her! I hate her GM!”

“Don't let anger control you, ngwana ko gae.. be angry that's fine but don't let it control you.”

“I hate her! I hate her! I hate her!” she cried badly, all I could do is hold her and brush her back gently.

“Shh... Shh.”

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When my alarm woke me up, I was so tired. We slept a little bit late because KB, was in her feelings. I feel sorry for her because she has to go to school.

I made them both sandwiches to take to school and packed some fruits. The only good thing my mom's bosses were doing, is paying our fees. Even though, we live in a backroom, that has two rooms and have to share the bathroom with other people.. it's better than the shack. This backroom is more spacious, we

don't use a curtain to separate the bed and where we cook. It's more decent and there's no Frank here. Just me and my siblings.

I watched them both get ready for school. Mornings were always chaos but we made it work. Lesedi and KB, are always bickering and I have to play peacemaker between them but I would never trade their bickering for anything.

“You two, keep it down now! If you don't stop that bickering, you will leave without having breakfast.”

“It's not me mummy, it's KB!” she started sulking and looked adorable.

“What did I do? Sedi, you're being unfair right now. All I said is that you should tell GM to sign your school trip form.”

“Wait, what school trip? I know nothing about a school trip.” I looked at them both, waiting for an answer.

“Well the grade 10 students are going on a school trip. They're going to the aquarium to teach them about.. actually I don't know.”

“Why didn't you tell me Sedi?”

“I forgot to tell you but don't worry about the money, it's already been paid.”

“I see. Bring those forms let me sign them.”

I looked at KB eating her breakfast, she looked better than last night. “Are you feeling better today?”

“Yes but I still have to see Kyle today.”

“Forget about that idiot! Just a few more months and you will be done with high school.”

“I can't wait!” once she was done eating, she washed her bowl.

“Why are you not getting ready for college?”

“I'm only going later.”

We heard their transport driver, honking outside.

“Lesedi, our transport is here!” she grabbed her school bag then ran out.. she returned again only to kiss my cheek. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Lesedi, gave me a kiss as well before running out as well.

I didn't have much to do after the girls had left. I went back to sleep. I still had time...

Sebaga Trinity Tholo

Working at the Swanepoel, household was a blessing. They were not racists and they paid me well, even my children's school fees. They only had one child but now he is all grown up and has his own family.

I sat on the bed and looked at the girls pictures, how I missed them only God knows. They probably hate me for leaving them all alone at that young age but I felt so guilty for what had happened to Goitsi, that when I saw the opportunity to work for the Swanepoel household, I grabbed it with both hands. I didn't think twice.

“Trinity, when are you going home to see your girls?”

“Madam, I can't.. I told you what happened.”

“After all these years you still call me madam? I told you to call me by my name.”

“Madam... I'm sorry, I mean Linda.. I just can't go home and expect them to welcome me with open arms?”

“Maybe if you stop being selfish and think about how your children must have felt when you left them. Goitsi, was only

fifteen! You made her a mother at only fifteen. She is the one who was abused, not you.”

“I understand that Linda. She was abused by my boyfriend! If I was not with him, all of this could have been avoided.”

“Well, you can't turn back the time, you have to soldier on and be a mother to those children.

“It's too late now.””

“It's never too late Trinity! If you genuinely apologize and tell them why you left, they will understand.”

“Maybe Goitsi and Lesedi, would understand and try to forgive me but not KB, she's always been a stubborn child.”

“Just like you. Did you tell them about the breast cancer?”

“Linda, I need to make this bed and go fix the guest bedroom.. you said your son will be spending the night?”

“You need to tell them, you need them.”

“What do you want me to cook tonight? Maybe a nice lamb potjie and fresh baked bread?”

“Lesedi, is going on a school trip this week.”

“Thanks for telling me, I'll pay the money tomorrow.”

“Jy maak my mal! Wat is vout met jou?” (you make me mad! What's wrong with you?)

I ignored her and continued cleaning their room.

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I poured myself a glass of wine and sat on the barstool thinking about my conversation with Linda. I know what she was saying was coming from a place of love but I was not ready to face my children, especially to tell them about the cancer. I'm grateful it was caught early before it spread all over my body.

Mr Swanepoel, came from the garden holding tomatoes and spinach.

“Trinity, will this be enough for the potjie?”

“Mr Swanepoel, I told you that I will go and get those myself!”

“I wanted to help.. you know I can't sit and do nothing.”

“Go and read those thick lawyer books of yours.”

“My brain needs to rest. I've been reading from varsity, became an advocate and still the reading didn't stop. I'm tired now.”

“Take Linda on a trip then?”

“She's still busy with her charity organisations. Afterwards.”

“You two deserve the break.”

“When will you take that break Trinity?”

I gulped down the wine while looking at Mr Swanepoel. Him and his wife are the same.

“Why are we talking about my personal life?”

“One day those children will be grown up and you will be all alone.”

“Sir, please leave me alone and go rest.”

“Don't say we didn't warn you. One day me and my wife will no longer be here.”

I dropped the knife and looked at him. “Are you dying? Linda never said anything to me.”

“I think we both can see that I'm not a spring chicken! I'm a madala.” (old man.)

We both laughed hard. “You can't scare me like that!” I hit him with a dishcloth.

“I'm just being honest.. it's never too late to apologize.”

Rachel Ndlovu

It was good to be home, in my own bed. There was a note on the dresser;

Sthandwa sami, don't panic I went to buy groceries.. I love you.

Maybe me missing a step was a good thing. Things have been very good between Terry and I, so good. I rolled to his side to inhale his smell, then called him.

“Baby.”

“Are you still grocery shopping?”

“I'm almost done. Did you want something?”

“Your baby is craving for some white bread with cheese and peanut butter.”

“Ini!”

“Just buy white bread, peanut butter.. smooth peanut butter and cheese.”

“Okay, anything else?”

“Get me pineapples and grapes as well. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

After our call I went to have a bath and did some ironing. Anything to keep me busy from sleeping. I was tired of seeing Okuhle's face. I was tired of hearing wailing babies. She followed me everywhere, closing my eyes meant seeing her. If anyone could know what I did.. that would be the end of me and my marriage.

Flashback

Five years ago

"Rachel, do you think the abortion that I had, when I was 16 is the reason I'm struggling to get pregnant?"

"Why would you think like that?"

"Me and Terrence have been trying for a baby for a while but I'm not falling pregnant. Maybe it's the miscarriage as well."

"Stop pressurizing yourself babe, you and Terrence just got married what's the rush? You're only twenty-one. You two are still young, you just had a miscarriage.. allow yourself to heal."

"That miscarriage was months ago!"

"Wena, what's the rush? Focus on your music career."

“You wouldn't understand, my love.”

“Because I'm not married? Terrence love's you

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everyone can see that. That's why he married you.”

“He married me because my father forced him to marry me.. I was pregnant remember?”

“Yes, but Terrence was going to marry you either way.”

“You think?”

“He loves you babe.”

End of flashback

I switched off the iron and went to the guest bedroom, locked myself in. I climbed a chair then opened the ceiling where I hid a plastic.

“I'm really sorry Okuhle.. please find it in your heart to forgive me.” a tear dropped onto the picture I was holding. “Please forgive me..”

I put the plastic back but before I got off the chair, I saw Okuhle, sitting on the bed. This time around she was not aggressive, she was calm... A calm ghost.

“Kuhle, what do you want from me?”

“Are you really going to ask me that Rachel?”

“Why can't you let me be? Have I not suffered enough?”

“Suffer? You know nothing about suffering Rachel! I'm the one who suffered.. you're living my life now.”

“I've lost three babies Kuhle, three! Have I not suffered enough?”

She got up and shook her head. “You have not suffered Rachel! You're still going to see flames. You played God with my life! How many babies did I lose?”

“I didn't mean to... Please stop tormenting me.”

“Until you confess, you will not know peace! Confess!”

“No.”

“We will see.” then she vanished. I looked around and there was no sign of her.

“Kuhle?” something tapped me on the shoulder, turning I saw writing on the mirror. ‘Confess’ in bold letters was written on the mirror with blood. No.. no.. no... I moved backwards and

bumped into the closet. I screamed when I saw a bloody handprint on the closet.

I ran to the door but the key was not by the keyhole. I looked around but there was no key.. am I losing my mind?

I did not have my phone with me, the key was missing and I was hungry. All I could do was wait for my husband.. laying on the bed, it felt like someone was laying next to me. I swallowed then touched the empty space, my hand had blood. "Kuhle, please stop playing mind games." I tried to stand up but something was holding on to me.. I had no idea what I was fighting against, but it was strong.

"Are you going to confess Rachel?"

"Leave me alone! Let me go.." I could feel my heart racing and my abdomen was on fire. "Kuhle, please open the door.. I don't want to lose my baby."

"How can a ghost open the door?"

"Stop it! Just stop. Ahh! Ahhh." there was a wet substance down my thigh. Pulling the dress up I saw blood. I shook my head, "Kuhle please. Help me." another pain on my abdomen, I couldn't hold it in I held onto the bed and cried. There was still no sign of Kuhle anywhere...

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I got off the taxi and harshly closed the door then walked home. With every walk that I took, I felt my anger getting the better out of me. "Lesedi! Lesedi?"

Opening the door KB, was sitting on the couch with headsets on. I removed them then looked at her. "Lesedi o kae?"

"Hello to you too GM."

"I don't have time for games, where's Lesedi?"

"O ko spaza, there's no milk." (she went to the tuck shop)

"Where were you when she was fighting?"

KB, stood up with her hands on her waist. "Wa reng?" (what are you saying?)

"I had to leave my lessons because I had to go to your school because Lesedi ke Rambo."

She burst into laughter... "Who?" she started laughing all over again until she let out small farts. I joined in.

"Sies, ebile wa phinya." (you're even farting.) I went to our room and left my bag.

"How come I didn't hear anything about a fight? I know everything that happens at hoerskool Randburg."

“Looks like you're losing your touch.”

“Whatever!” she threw a pillow at me. “Why were you called, Trinity is still alive?”

“Well, apparently, her phone number is not available.”

“Nothing new there.”

“Kgante mama, ke motho o ntseng jaang?” (what kind of person is Mom?)

KB looked at me then went to pour herself and I water. “Do you want me to give you an answer?”

I heaved a sigh before gulping the water.

“Your mother is selfish! Was she that busy, to not be able to attend her last born’s school meeting?”

“I'm really tired now.. what if I was writing?”

“How many times have I told you to stop taking her serious? When I say she's selfish, what do you say?”

“Fine! I get your point. Let's call her and find out what her excuse is this time..”

“Goitsi?”

“Mama..” I let out a loud sigh. “Why do you keep on hurting us like this?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Do you know that your baby, Lesedi, got into a fight at school?”

“Huh?”

“Yes.”

“I don't understand.. Lesedi is not a violent person, if you said Karabo, I would understand.” Karabo, laughed out loud. “Hello Karabo.”

“Dumela Trinity.”

“How are you?”

“Maybe if you come home, you will see for yourself.”

“Goitsi, o kae Lesedi?”

“I don't know mama.. I'm tired of you giving me your responsibilities. When will I get a break?”

“If I don't work...”

I cut her short before she continued... “Mama don't you dare tell me about how you have to work to be able to send us to school. I've heard that excuse and I'm tired now. Be a mother just this once!”

“But, Goitsi...”

“Ke lapile motho wa modimo! From now on I won't bother you with anything.. send the money don't send the money it's up to you.” (I am tired..) I cut the call and looked at KB, “don't you dare say a word!”

“I was not going to.”

An hour later still no sign of Lesedi. We have cleaned yet she is not back. “Did Lesedi go to a farm to milk the cow?”

“I'll go outside and look for her. Don't be too hard on her.”

“Have I ever been too hard on you two?”

“Nope but you're angry. Anger makes people say and do things.”

“I'll try and be calm.”

“Good. I'll go look for her then, it's not even 16h30.”

Terrence Ndlovu

“Baby? Rachel, where are you?” I tried her phone but it rang on the kitchen counter. She never leaves her phone. “Baby?” I put the plastics down then searched every single room. I tried opening the guest bedroom but it was locked.

“Rachel, are you sleeping in there?” I kept knocking but no answer. This was not a good sign, I ran down the stairs to find the spare key. Where is the damn spare key when you need it!

I heard something fall in the pantry.. my heart was stuck in my throat opening the pantry. I switched on the light and saw the key on the floor. This didn't make sense, how did the key get here?

With lightning speed, I ran to the guest bedroom and unlocked the door. I was not prepared for what was waiting for me. Rachel was laying on the floor and there was so much blood.

“Rachel?” I walked to her and checked her pulse. “Baby, wake up!” I tried to see where the blood was coming from but I kind of knew she was having a miscarriage. “Not this again!”

If I called the ambulance it would take it's time. I picked her up and ran to the car, put her at the backseat then reversed the car. On our way to Louis deWet private hospital, I called her OBGYN, to let her know that we're on our way.

“Stay with me Rachel. I can't lose you as well. Please don't leave me as well.”

On our arrival, we found her doctor waiting for us at the emergency. “Doctor please, help her.. I can't lose her.”

They put her on a stretcher bed and rushed her to the ER. They stopped me from going in with her.

“You don't understand I'm a doctor, I can help.” a nurse held me from going in.”

“Sir, we understand that you're a doctor but right now you're a husband not a doctor.. calm down.”

“How do I calm down when my wife is laying in there and I can't do anything? Please let me in.”

“I'm sorry sir, let the doctors do their job. Go to the waiting room, and be patient.” she went inside the ER and left me standing outside the door like an outsider. I dragged myself to the waiting room.

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It's been an hour of me waiting for news. No one has come to tell me anything. This was frustrating... This is a private hospital, they can't treat us like this. My phone rang and it was Rachel's mother.

"Hello mama."

"Terrence, how is my baby?"

"I don't know mama.. I've been waiting but nothing."

"Don't worry everything will go well my son. The Lord will intervene. Put your trust in him my son."

I didn't mean to scoff but I did. "You have so much trust in this Lord of yours mama."

"I'm nothing without him. Just have faith and all shall be well."

"I wish I had your faith mama.. I wish I did."

"It's okay my son, if you hear anything call me."

"I will do so." we said our goodbyes

I walked to the reception to find out what's the delay but she had nothing. This was just frustrating. I went to the bathroom to wash my face then went to the vending machine and bought some water before I went out to get some fresh air.. I don't understand how this can happen again. Everything has been going well. Her doctor was so certain that our baby would live.

We did everything right.

I continued to walk at the hospital to clear my head but I bumped into someone.. or someone bumped into me. "Sorry." I extended my hand to help her up. She was rubbing her knees in pain. "I'm really sorry ma'am." she took my hand and got up.. her braids were all over her face, she removed them and golden brown irises pierced my black ones. I smiled at her and she had an annoyed expression.

"Keng ka wena! Sheba kwa oyang teng." (what's wrong with you! Look where you're going.) She dusted herself and looked at me again with annoyance. "Why are you still here?"

"I said I'm sorry, why are you full of so much anger?"

"You bumped into me and I'm in a hurry!"

"Manje yini ngomsindo? Ngithe Ngiyaxolisa.. by the way we both bumped into each other." (what's with the noise? I said I'm sorry...)

“Tswa mo tseleng yaka rra!” (move out of my way sir!..) she tried pushing me but I didn't move an inch and that frustrated her even more. “Naare motho wateng ke Brock Lesnar?” (is this person Brock Lesnar?..) I let out a soft chuckle. “What's funny?” she asked.

“Why don't you ask me nicely to move? ”

“Is this your pavement, for me to ask you to move? Wa tsenwa! Move!” she bumped into me then left.

I watched her run into the hospital and shook my head. Before I could turn to leave, I saw an access card on the pavement.. I picked it up and Ms golden brown irises, was on the access card... “Goitsimedi Rainbow Tholo.” the names read.

I walked to the reception and left her access card there before going back to the waiting room. Ntombikayise and Lindokuhle ran to where I was.

“Bhuti, are you okay?” Ntombi asked while hugging me.

“I'm okay, what are you two doing here?”

“Haibo, what kind of question is that?” Lindo

“Still no answer?”

“Nothing.”

“You must be tired I brought you some chicken mayo sandwiches and I'm not taking no for an answer.”

“Kodwa Ntombi.”

“Please let's not argue during the people.” Lindo

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

I immediately rushed to the hospital once I got a call from Mrs Swanepoel, that my Mom was rushed to the hospital. Yes she annoyed me but I couldn't bring myself to hate her. KB and Sedi

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couldn't come. They have to go to school tomorrow. Before entering the hospital I stopped running then dusted my knees. I turned thinking I would see that rude man again but I didn't. I smiled while shaking my head then went to the reception to enquire about my mother. I was told that she was in room ten.

I used the elevator and got off at the second floor. I looked around for a room ten, until I saw Mr and Mrs Swanepoel. I swallowed before going to them.

I didn't know much about them.. all I knew is that they overworked our mother as she says but they paid our school fees.

“Good evening.”

“Hello, Goitsi..” Mrs Swanepoel hugged me.

“What's wrong with my mom?”

“We also don't know baby, she complained about a pain underneath her left boob. I told her to go and rest. When I went to check on her.. she was struggling to breathe.” Mrs Swanepoel

“Is it too serious?”

Mr Swanepoel, put his hand on my shoulder and squeezed a bit. “Moenie baie bekommerd wees nie.. die dokters weet wat hulle doen.” (don't worry a lot.. the doctors know what they're doing.)

I heaved a sigh then sat down. I looked at the Swanepoel's and they looked so in love holding each other's hands. I couldn't understand how could two people so in love, refuse a mother to see her children.

“Are you okay, Goitsi?”

“Huh?”

“Do you have something to say?”

“No why?”

“It's just that you were looking at us like you have something you would like to say.”

It was now or never. I breathed in and out. “You two look like you're madly in love.”

Mrs Swanepoel and her husband smiled, “we're very much in love. Very much in love.”

“What I don't understand is why my mother never comes home on weekends or our birthdays? You're a mother yourself why would you stop another mother from seeing her children?”

“Your mother said we're the reason she never went home?”

“Yes!”

Mrs Swanepoel, stood up and looked at my mom's room then shook her head. “Jou ma lieg vir jou my kind.. that's all I'm saying.” (your mother is lying to you my child..)

“I don't understand.”

“Even though Trinity lied using our names, I'm not going to throw her under the bus. You will ask her why she lied, yourself.”

“Why would she lie?”

“Goitsi, just wait for her doctor to come out then you can see her.”

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Mr and Mrs Swanepoel, dropped me off at home. “Thank you for the ride.”

“It's okay, don't worry about your Mom.. you will see her tomorrow.”

“Okay.”

“Before you leave, send me your banking details, I'll send you money to buy anything that you need in the house.”

“No sir, it's fine we have all we need.”

“I insist..”

“Okay.” I sent my banking details then went inside the house. KB jumped from her chair and looked at me.

“You scared me!”

“You should've locked the door then..” my phone beeped twice. I blinked twice at the amount Mr Swanepoel had sent.

“GM, close your mouth before flies get in.”

“Twenty thousand!”

“E dirang twenty thousand?”

“Mr Swanepoel sent me R20 000.”

“We're rich!” KB screamed and jumped up and down.

“Rich, ka twenty thousand? Please be real.”

She rolled her eyes. “Can a girl pretend just this once? Jeez.”

“Where is Sedi?”

“Studying in the bedroom. She's still terrified that you're going to hit her.”

It was my turn to roll my eyes. “When have I ever put my hands on her?”

“Don't shoot the messenger!” she raised her hands then went to the microwave and gave me my food.

“Thanks.”

I ate in silence, once I was finished I washed my plate then went to the room but I found Sedi sleeping. I slowly closed the door.

“She's sleeping.”

“Or avoiding you.”

“Did she tell you why she was fighting?”

“She said nothing! I've asked my friends but they also don't know.”

“Do you think she's being bullied?”

“Sedi? Bullied? We might treat her like a baby because she is our baby sister.. but she's strong! She can fight for herself.”

“I guess I'm the only weak one in this family!” I threw myself on the couch.

KB, held my hand and rubbed my shoulder. “You were just a kid GM, how were you supposed to defend yourself?”

“Were you not a child yourself when you hit him with that brick?”

“Yes I was.”

“You see..”

“No listen. I was a child but I came from behind that's why I could hit him on the head. Plus he had bended a bit making it easier.”

“That man ruined my life KB. He took my innocence away from me. My life changed completely after what he did. Sometimes I get nightmares of that night.” I wiped my tears.

“Why didn't you say anything? We don't keep anything from each other.”

“I didn't want to burden you with my problems.”

“Nonsense! We always burden you with our problems and you don't mind.”

“I'm your older sister, it's my duty to protect you. Plus you're in matric nothing should derail you.”

“Don't be too hard on yourself GM.. you have done good for yourself, don't sell yourself short. Some people would have committed suicide, pushed everyone away.. be an angry person but you're not. You're full of love and patience! So much strength, I'm strong because you're strong. You became our mother when we needed one. You never complained about the responsibilities.”

“That's because I love you.”

“I love you too. Don't let Frank, sneak into your peace and try to snatch it.”

We shared a hug, when we turned Lesedi was standing by the door.

“Sedi, how long have you been standing there?”

She ran to me and hugged me tight. “I'm really sorry ausi Goitsi.. I'm sorry for fighting at school.”

“It's okay Nana... Shhh” I rubbed her back as she sobbed on my shoulder. “Don't cry Sedi. You will tell me when you're ready why you were fighting...”

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

It had been a few days since our mother was hospitalized. I have been trying so hard to get the girls to see her, with no luck.

I looked at them sleeping peacefully then got up to make breakfast... I cleaned while making our breakfast, I mixed some ingredients to make banana muffins as well.

“Something smells nice.” KB, said rubbing her eyes.

“You're up early.”

“We usually go to school on Saturdays, so I'm used to getting up early.”

“Sit down, I'll make you coffee.”

“If this is your way to convince us to see Trinity, you don't have to.”

“I'm not trying anything.” I gave her a cup of coffee and sat next to her. “Listen, KB..” I held her free hand. “I can't force you to see mama. That's your choice. I know and understand why you don't want to see her. I really do.”

“It's fine, I'll come with you.”

“Really?”

“Don't make me change my mind.”

“Okay! I made muffins as well.” I stood up to remove the first batch of muffins.

“I'll eat them later.. right now I need that bacon that I'm smelling and those eggs.”

Lesedi, walked in holding my ringing phone. “It's Mrs Swanepoel.” she sat next to me.

“Hello Mrs Swanepoel.”

“Good morning Goitsi. Are you well?”

I'm okay. Is something wrong?”

“Oh, no, cupcake.. I just called to let you know that we won't be able to fetch you today. My husband is not well.”

“It's okay, I understand.”

“I'm really sorry.”

“Don't be.. we'll just use taxis.”

“Do you have enough money?”

“Yes.”

“If there's anything that you girls need.. just call.”

“Will do.” we said our goodbyes before she hung up.

We had our breakfast in silence. Everyone was lost in their thoughts. I cleared my throat while looking at Sedi. She raised her brow. “Keng?” (what?)

“KB, has agreed to come with me to the hospital.”

She turned and looked at KB. “Now that's new.”

“There's no harm by just going to see her.” KB got up and took our empty plates.

“Do I have to come?” Sedi asked looking at me.

“If you don't want to come, it's okay.”

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I tucked in my plain white tee but it was too tight and showed my belly. Out of frustration, I removed the t-shirt then sat on the bed. “I had to be the fat one, didn't I?”

“Are you talking to yourself?” KB sat next to me.

“Struggles of having more meat on my bones, I can't find anything to wear.”

“You and drama! You're not that fat..”

“I'm still fat.”

“Let's be honest, the big issue here is your belly right? Everything is fine. You have a nice round, juicy ass. You have cute boobs and a beautiful heart.”

Some days I feel like I'm too fat. I wish I had your body and height.

“Who are you kidding!” she lightly shoved me. “Men like short girls, who have an ass.”

“You also have an ass.. you have cute boobs as well, you're not that tall but you're not short as well.”

KB, stood up, went to our closet then returned with her high low, sky blue crop top. “This will look great with that jean you're wearing.”

“Why would I want to show my stretch marks?”

“Just wear the top. You need to start wearing like a young person. Next time you go shopping, I'm tagging along. You need a new wardrobe.”

“I don't think I'm ready to wear booty shorts or tight, short dresses or anything revealing.”

“Well you better get ready.”

Forty-five minutes later we arrived at the hospital, mom was in. We had not went in yet to see her. We just sat outside debating on whether to go in or just go back home.

“Why did we come here if we're going to sit outside her room?” Sedi asked looking at me and KB.

I stood up, “okay fine let's go in then.”

We opened the door and our mother was watching TV. The perks of being in a private hospital. You get to relax and unwind.

“Look at you Trinity, living your best life!” KB said looking at mama with so much anger.

“Girls, what are you doing here?”

“We obviously came to see you.” Sedi said with her arms folded.

“When were you going to tell us about your cancer?” I asked her.

“How have you girls been?” she tried to touch Sedi, but she moved backwards. She looked hurt with what Sedi did but she can't blame her. As for me

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she couldn't look me in the eyes. She looks everywhere but not at me. It seemed like she didn't want me next to her. It hurt because I'm the one putting in the effort.

“Mama, can we continue were we left off the last time I was here?”

“I'm tired Goitsi. I think I should rest now.”

“Yah! Bophelo ke unprepared speech.” KB clapped her hands before she stood up and looked at mama. “We came all this way and you can't even pretend to be happy to see us? O motho sentle mara!” (are you a normal person...)

“KB!” I tried to hold her but she yanked my hand off. “There's no need to be rude.”

“I knew it was a bad idea to come here! I only did it for you.” she pointed her finger at me. “I hate seeing you sad, that's why I came but I wish I didn't!” KB was fuming! She looked at our mother one more time while shaking her head. “From today

onwards, I don't have a mother!” with that said she stormed out.

Lesedi, jumped from her chair as KB, banged the door on her way out.

“It's fine you can go after her, I'll stay here with her.” Sedi, said fiddling with her backpack.

“Are you sure?”

“Don't be long.”

“I won't..” I squeezed her hand then went out to find KB...

Terrence Ndlovu

I looked at Rachel as she slept peacefully. I don't know how she has managed to keep it together after all the loses we have had. Maybe we were not meant to have children. Or I'm the one who is not meant to have children. First it was Okuhle, now it's Rachel. My phone beeped, it was a message from my mother asking how we're coping. I didn't even know how to reply her. I felt so empty inside.. the last time I felt like this was when I lost Okuhle and our twins.

Every single time, when I'm about to be happy, something happens. It's as if I was cursed. I stared at my phone for a few seconds.. wondering if I should call, Mkhulu Ngonyama... He was our family traditional healer.

I looked at Rachel then called him. "Please pick up.. please pick up..."

"Thokoza!"

"Thokoza, mkhulu."

"Khuluma nami Gatsheni."

"Ngine nkinga mkhulu.. I really need to see you."

"Kubi Gatsheni! I only see darkness surrounding you and your wife." mkhulu, started doing his weird chants and burping non stop. "Your wife has a deep dark secret that's eating her up. Tell her to confess!"

"What secret mkhulu?"

"Abaphansi, are not allowing me to tell you... She needs to be the one to tell you."

"Thokoza mkhulu!" I hung up and I was more confused then ever. What could the secret be?

I walked to Rachel's bed, held her hand and rubbed it softly. She moved then opened her eyes. I smiled at her and she returned the smile.

“You're awake.”

“Can I have some water?” I poured her some water and helped her drink.

“Are you comfortable?”

She nodded and touched her stomach. I saw tears in her eyes.

“Baby I'm sorry.. I'm really sorry, I know it can't be easy to lose another baby.”

“I'm the one who should be apologizing. This is all my fault.”

“Don't do that to yourself baby! It's not your fault.. maybe we're cursed.”

“Cursed?” she looked uneasy.

“Yes. Maybe once you're better we could go and see mkhulu?”

Rachel, said nothing. She just looked at me with a blank face.

“Baby, did you hear what I just said?”

“I heard you but who would want to curse us? Maybe we should stop trying to conceive and let it happen?”

Rachel was definitely hiding something. It must be big. “If you say so.”

“I'm tired let me rest a bit.” she pulled the cover up and faced another direction.

“Okay.”

I stood by the door and looked at her for a while before going out.

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I walked around the hospital garden, admiring their flowers. I smiled looking at the yellow roses.. they reminded me of Ms pavement. I shook my head remembering her annoyed face when she looked at me.

Her eyes, her beautiful face. I couldn't remove her out of my mind. The garden had a few patients, I walked to the back where they had a few swings and benches under the tree.

I was on my phone when I bumped into someone. I lifted my eyes from the phone and my heart stopped beating for a

second. She folded her arms and looked at me, from head to toe. “Wena gape!”

“At least you didn't fall this time around!” I smiled a bit and she returned the smile. I did a mini kwasa kwasa internally! She just smiled back!

We both looked at one another without saying a word. It's as if we wanted someone to break the ice. I cleared my throat. “Do you work here?”

“No, my mom was admitted here. What about you?”

“My wife was also admitted, miscarriage..” she looked at my hand—

“You're married?”

“Yes.”

“I see... I'm sorry about your loss.”

I held her hand to stop her from leaving. “Where are you going?”

“I was actually looking for my sister but she's not here.” she shrugged her shoulders.

“Maybe she needs time to cool down? Do you mind if we go sit over there?” she looked at me for a while, then she bit her bottom lip.

“Okay, a few minutes...”

We sat under the tree in complete silence. I would slyly look at her when she was not looking. We didn't say anything.. just sat down and enjoyed the quietness. It was peaceful.

“Don't you find it strange that we don't know each other's names?” I turned to face her. Okay that was a lie I knew her name but I wanted to hear her voice.

“If I wanted to know your name, I would have asked.”

“Okay. Let's start over then?” I smiled.

She rolled her eyes then looked at me. I got lost into her eyes. I don't know what was it with her but she made me feel calm, I just wanted to be close to her.

“I'm Terrence Ndlovu..” I extended my hand.

She looked at my hand for a while before holding my hand.

“Goitsimedi Tholo..” she stood up and smiled at me. “It was nice to meet you Brock Lesnar.” we both laughed.

“Brock Lesnar?”

“I'm just joking!” she lightly punched me and I shook my head.

“I really have to go now.”

Goitsimedi, turned to leave but she tripped over her feet and nearly fell but I caught her in time. Our eyes locked and I could see her chest rising and falling. The sun pierced her skin and it sparkled.. her skin was smooth. She tried to wriggle out of my hold. "Oh, sorry." I let go of her.

"It's okay, thanks for catching me before I fell and embarrassed myself. Bye."

I watched her walk away and it felt like a part of me left with her. What's wrong with me! My wife needs me and I'm spending my time with a stranger?.. a beautiful stranger.

I took another direction and went inside the hospital.

Lesedi Sedi Tholo

Thirty minutes had passed and mama was still not back. I looked at the woman who was apparently my mother and felt nothing for her. Not even a little bit of affection.

She has not said a word to me. All she does, is stare at me with a smile then pretend as if she was not looking if I lifted my head up.

I wanted to ask her questions but she was a weird person. I needed to know but I had no idea how to start the conversation. Unlike KB, I'm not really that bold. I'm not a pushover but... I moved my chair closer and cleared up my throat, then looked at her. "Why?"

She sat upright and looked at me. "Why what?"

"Why did you leave us?"

"You wouldn't understand, you're still a child."

Now I understood why KB, got so angry when angry we mentioned her name. "How can you abandon us, then refuse to tell us the reason? Do you hate us that much?"

“I don't hate you.. I don't but you're way too young to understand.”

“Just stop it! Stop with your excuses!” I didn't want to raise my voice but I was getting angry. “Can't you be a mother just once.. once in your life?”

“When did you become disrespectful! Don't talk to me as if I'm your friend! I'm your mother don't think I won't get up from this bed to slap you.”

“Mother?” I scoffed. “The only mother I know is Goitsimedi. She's my mother not you. I don't know you. I feel nothing for you, I don't remember your smell. You're a stranger to me.” I wiped my tears and walked to the window.

“One day you and your sisters will understand.”

“Understand what! Understand that our mother left us alone? Left us to take care of ourselves? Understand what!”

“Stop raising your voice at me Lesedi.”

“Why is it so hard for you to love us? Don't you think we needed you.. still need you? You keep on hurting us instead of loving us.” I looked at her expecting her to say something. I hoped that she still had a bit of feelings inside her. I expected way too much. She said nothing! That made me cry more.. I don't usually cry but it felt right to cry at that particular moment. My heart was heavy, full of sorrow.

I sat on the cold floor and wept. Out of all my sisters, I don't know any of our parents affection. I don't even remember my own mother's affection. I don't know how her hugs feel like. I felt like a dirty tissue that was thrown into a trashcan.

“Lesedi, please don't cry. I don't want you to cry because of me. Please my baby.”

I ignored her and continued to cry. I was done talking. I just wanted to cry in peace. “You never bothered to come to our birthday parties. You never called unless we called. All you do is send money thinking that's enough.”

I don't know when she got off the bed but she was standing in front of me, with her hands stretched out. “Come here, let me give you a hug.”

“I don't want your hugs! What's wrong with you? Have you not been listening to a word I was saying!”

“I just want to give you a hug.”

I stood up from the floor and looked at her for the longest time. “You will never change. I don't know why we keep on trying when you can't meet us halfway.” I grabbed my phone and backpack. “I'm leaving.”

Rachel Ndlovu

A week later

I tossed and turned before waking up. The time read 03h00 in the morning. I looked at Terry, sleeping next to me, the guilt swallowed me whole. I wish I could tell him what I did but I can't risk our marriage like that. I just can't.

I slowly got off the bed and went to the kitchen to make tea. As usual I looked around for Okuhle.. she was nowhere or that's what I had thought.

“I see you're back from the hospital my best friend.”

I slowly turned my head and listened to where the voice was coming from. I got off the barstool and made my way to the pantry, I slowly opened then switched on the light. There was still no sign of Okuhle. I rushed out of the pantry and returned to where I was seated.

“I told you that you will pay!” the voice said behind me.

My heart was racing, I swallowed hard and put the cup down.

“Okuhle, you need to stop what you're doing. Stop with the mind games.”

“Confess! Confess! Confess! Confess!”

“No!” I screamed with my hands covering my ears.

The tea in my cup changed its colour.. it went from a green to red. I let out a scream and fell from the barstool. I quickly got up but something held me from running away. “Leave me alone!”

“You will never rest until you confess. Everyone will know the type of person you are. You won't get away with what you did to me. Never!”

“How many times must I apologize? Please stop torturing me? It's enough.”

“You don't get to tell me when it's enough. I will know when it's enough. You will suffer until the day you take your last breath. I will make sure you lose your mind! You will see your husband slipping away from your fingers.”

“What are you talking about?” Okuhle, started laughing. Her laughter filled the entire kitchen. I couldn't pinpoint where she was.

“Your life is in my hands and I'm about to give you nightmares! You will not know sleep.”

“We were once friends.. best friends. Why are you doing this? Did our friendship mean nothing to you?”

“You're such a hypocrite Rachel. Are you not the one married to my husband? Who stabbed who in the back?”

“Are you not glad he is married to me instead of a random female? You can trust me.”

“Trust you?” she started laughing again. “I have no problem with Terry moving on.. I really don't.”

“Then why are you torturing me?”

“Stop trying to act like a victim Rachel! I'm the victim here. If I had died naturally, I wouldn't care that you and him are together.”

“It was an accident.”

“That is the reason I will keep on torturing you. I'm going to enjoy watching your world crumble down. I'm going to enjoy you losing your sanity. You will hear my voice and laughter everywhere you go and there's nothing you can do!”

“Okuhle! Okuhle?” I felt someone tapping my shoulder. I jumped and screamed, “Okuhle please leave me alone it was an accident! Please stop it.”

“Baby, who are you talking to?” Terry asked coming down the stairs. I ran to him and held him tight. “Baby what's going on?”

“Just hold me and don't let go.”

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My ringing phone woke me up from a terrifying dream. I held my chest and did a few breathing exercises. I tapped the bed looking for my phone. "Hello?"

"I need to see you."

I sat upright and looked on the other side and Terry was not on his side of the bed. "What do you want I don't owe you anything?"

"It's about Okuhle."

I got off the bed, tiptoed to the door and opened. I heard no movement, I moved back to the bed. "Why now after all these years?"

"I think we both know why. I need twenty thousand."

"Where will I get that money from?"

"Stop being selfish! You're married to a doctor

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you have the money.”

“If I don't give you the money?”

“Do you want to play such a game with me, do you?”

“We had a deal Kevin.”

“Just make sure you give me my money before I start talking.”
he hung up.

The door opened, Terry walked in drenched in sweat. “You're awake?”

I smiled at him. “Are you hungry?”

“Rachel we need to talk.” he disappeared into the bathroom.. I heard the shower water. He didn't look happy.

I made the bed then went downstairs to make us something to eat. Terry came down wearing shorts and a vest. I looked at him with lustful eyes. “Breakfast is ready my love.”

“Thank you.”

We sat down and ate in silence. I didn't like the silence.. we have been getting along well. Is this what Okuhle was talking about?

“Rachel!”

“Huh? Did you say something?”

He shook his head and drank his apple juice. “I think it's time you see someone.”

“Someone?”

“A therapist. You're not coping and I don't want you to lose yourself.”

“Baby, I'm fine. I'll be okay, I promise.”

“How do you explain you walking around in the middle of the night, talking alone?”

“I was not talking alone.”

“Rachel, you're not coping and it's taking a toll on you. You need to see someone... Ever since we got back from the hospital, you mumble in your sleep. You keep on mentioning Okuhle.”

I spat out the tea and coughed badly. “Okuhle?”

“Listen baby,” he stood up and crouched next to me. “You don't have to pretend to be okay, I know that you're not fine. You have not been okay for a while now. We both need therapy.”

“Can I think about it?”

He nodded and went back to his chair...

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

I had finished typing my CV when my phone rang. I let it ring but the person didn't stop calling. I looked at the phone and it was an unknown number.

“Hello?”

“Hi, it's Jacob.”

“Uhm, I don't know anyone called Jacob.”

“Jacob Swanepoel?”

“Mrs Swanepoel's son?”

“Yes.”

“How can I help you sir?”

“My parents are old and sick, they can't be stressed out by your mother as well.”

“I don't think I understand sir.”

“Listen to me carefully... You need to find a cheaper school for your siblings and you need to do a course that will bring in money.”

“Your parents said I could study anything that I want and they will pay for my fees. What do you mean by I need to find a cheaper school for my siblings?”

“Your mother was at an expensive hospital for four days! Do you know how much private hospitals cost? Do you!”

“Well maybe you should have this conversation with your parents Jacob.” I cut the call. I stared at the phone for a while, while shaking my head. I had the urge to call Mrs Swanepoel, to ask her what Jacob, was talking about but decided otherwise.

There was a soft knock on the door. I put on my sleepers then went to open the door, it was Thapelo. My palms began to sweat and my heart was racing.

“What do you want here?” I wiped my sweaty palms on my leggings.

He smirked while licking his black lips. “Are you alone?”

“I asked you a question, what do you want here, Thapelo?”

He moved closer and tried to touch me but I quickly moved back and tried to close the door but his shoe blocked the door from closing. “I'm here for what's mine!”

“Thapelo, please leave! Just go and leave me alone.” before he could try anything, the door from the main house opened,

Thapelo's friend came out. I let out a sigh of relief and took the chance of closing the door. I could feel my heart beating in my throat.. Thapelo, was someone I wish I didn't have to see. If I had the guts, I would strangle him to death...

Terrence Ndlovu

The hospital was a mad house today. A bus that was transporting people to a wedding, crashed into a truck. Parts of the bus caught flames, causing people to panic, four people died. There was no time to eat or sit and catch a breather. After checking on the last patient from the accident, I went to the break area; more like a medicine library—hoping to catch a break but the door opened, Jenifer walked in. I folded my arms and looked at her as she cat walked towards me.

“What are you doing here Jen?”

“I've missed you daddy, it's been a while.” she sat on the table and pushed her skirt up a bit, exposing her smooth thighs. The devil was not going to test me today. Ever since the last time, I have been avoiding Jen. The guilt was too much for me.

“I can't do this anymore Jen. We can't do this anymore.”

“We've already been through this. I told you, I'm not interested in having a relationship with you.”

I pushed my chair back then stood up. “Listen Jen, I shouldn't be sleeping with you. I'm married!”

“Terrence, are you really doing this?”

I tilted my head, because Jen, has never called me by my name. She's getting too comfortable. “Jenifer, I'm going to say this once..” I made sure there was no space between us hoping she hears me clearly. “I made a huge mistake by sleeping with you. We work together and that's how things should remain. I would like to believe that we both worked way too hard to get where we are, right?”

“Yes.”

“Now please leave and let's pretend like we've never crossed any lines.” I walked to the door and opened it wide for her to leave. She took her time then she finally left.

As soon as she left, I slammed the door a little bit harder than I had intended. I was more frustrated with myself than with Jen. I should've never let my emotions get the best of me. I should have been in control but it's too late now for the; ‘I should've’. Way too late. I still don't know how Rachel is going to take the news. I have to tell her, there's no way I'm not telling her.

I sat down, opened my wallet and removed the ultrasound scan that I kept in there. A tear dropped onto the scan. I could feel more tears burning to be lose but I didn't want to cry. I didn't

want to feel the loss. I was just way too tired to want to feel. I could feel my chest tighten and I did breathing exercises. I was too familiar with my chest tightening, I didn't need this right now.

Just when I was about to close my eyes and rest for a few minutes, the door opened.

A smile crept to my face once the door opened and a ray of sunshine walked in. I quickly stood up and wiped my sweaty palms. I wondered if my eyes showed that I was kind of crying.

She walked with so much grace, one would wonder if her feet touched the ground as she walked. This woman was so perfect.

“Dr Ndlovu, I hope I'm not disturbing? They told me I would find you hiding in here.” she said with a gentle soothing voice.

“Dr Ndlovu!”

I snapped out of my thoughts and smiled at her. “Not at all Dr Morolong. You can sit down.”

She looked at me for a while as if I was a case study, then she cleared her throat. “Please call me, Puoentle. I insist.”

“Okay Dr, I mean Puoentle... What brings you here?”

“I was here to see Gugu.”

“Any progress?”

Dr Puento, leaned back and looked deep in thought before she leaned forward. "I would like to believe that there's progress. Slow but there's progress. She's also being discharged tomorrow."

"That's fantastic! I hope she gets justice, I really hope she does." there was a moment of silence. "Where are my manners! Would you like anything to drink?"

"I'm okay, are you okay?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You look tense and your eyes are puffy."

"Uhm.. maybe it's just lack of sleep."

"You know we could do this the whole day? But I won't push you." she stood up, brushed her pencil skirt then picked up her handbag. "It was nice to see you Dr Ndlovu." we shook hands then she walked to the door...

She stood by the door and looked at me. "Gatsheni, it's okay to not be okay. Cry if you have to but don't ever box in your emotions. It will do more harm than good." with that said she left.

I wore my coat then went to do my rounds. I could still hear Dr Puento's words ringing in my ears. I passed Jen, by the

corridors flirting with a male nurse. Jen, was a woman who went after what she wanted.

Goitsimedi (GM) Tholo

Ever since Thapelo, came here I have been very jumpy. I'm always looking over my shoulder wondering when he will come and disrupt my life again. I know he will be back when I least expect to see him. That's just how he is, unpredictable!

I had a lot on my plate. If it's not Mrs Swanepoel's son, calling me.. I'm stressing over Thapelo. There is so much one can take in. This is too much for me.

As I got off the taxi

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my phone rang. It was Olivia, whom I was paired with today. I already knew what she wanted to say. "Hello, Olivia."

"You know you messed up today?"

"I know and I'm sorry. I was not feeling well today."

I heard her sigh and waited for her temper tantrum. "It's okay, I managed to twist chef Sean's arm. He said he will give us a

second chance to cook again. Please be prepared this time around, Rainbow.”

I flinched when she called me Rainbow. It's very awkward when someone calls me by my second name. “I promise, I'll be prepared this time around. When do we have to cook?”

“Monday.”

“Okay, no problem. I'll work on my dish this weekend.”

“Rainbow, Monday evening.”

My heart sunk. How was I going to get home, if we're cooking in the evening? I stopped by our spaza shop and stood under the shade.

“Rainbow, are you still there?”

“Uhm, yeah. Okay see you on Monday then.” I hung up.

I bought bread and airtime. Before I could leave I remembered that we had run out of milk. I bought some milk as well. We need to go grocery shopping, I said to myself. I felt the hairs on my neck stand as I walked through the passage. I looked back, Thapelo was standing there, holding a bottle of black label. I upped my pace and he ran after me.

I put the plastic that had the bread and milk on the ground to try and unlock the door. Before I could even push the door open, I knew that he was standing behind me. I didn't have to

turn around to know that he was there. My racing heart knew that he was there. I slowly turned and the bastard stood there smoking his cheap cigarette.

“Did you really think you can hide from me, forever cupcake?” he touched my face with his dirty hand and licked his bottom lip.

“Just leave me alone!” I removed his hand from my face but Thapelo, was stronger. He grabbed me by the waist and tried to kiss me. I moved my face left and right, just so I could avoid his lips and black label, smelly mouth.

“You're mine, Goitsimedi. Mine!” we kept on shoving one another in front of the door. Somehow, I managed to push him away... He wobbled and that's when I ran inside and closed myself in. He kept on knocking like a mad man but I was not going to open.

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A loud knocking, woke me up from my nap. I looked around then realised that it was KB and Sedi. I got off the couch and unlocked the door. KB, was very pissed. It was raining outside.

She furiously marched to the bedroom and slammed the door. Sedi and I, looked at one another.

“How long have you two been standing in the rain?”

“We just got here.”

I knew Sedi, was lying. Their clothes were wet!

KB, came out of the room and went straight to the bread bin. “There’s no bread?” she wasn't looking at me but I knew she was talking to me. I remembered that when I ran inside the house, I didn't come in with the bread. I quickly ran out but there was no plastic. That piece of shit must have took the bread and milk.

“Uhm, I forgot to buy the bread and milk.”

“Great. Just great!”

If I could avoid going to the spaza shop right now, I would but I can't expect KB and Sedi, to go to the shop after they stood in the rain. I wore my flip flops and took an umbrella.

“Where are you going?” Karabo asked.

“To buy bread.”

“In this rain? It's fine, we'll eat last night's left overs.”

“Are you sure, KB?”

“Yeah.” she sat on the couch and looked into space.

“KB, are you okay?”

“I'm fine.”

I was not convinced but I was not going to push. KB, doesn't like being cornered. I opened the mini fridge and removed the two slices of cake that I had kept for them. Olivia, made the cake— it was rich, moist and creamy. “Sedi!”

“I'm coming.”

“Surprise!” I waved the slices of cake in the air. KB and Sedi's faces lit up like a Christmas tree. Not that we have had any Christmas tree.

I watched them eat the cake while making weird funny sounds. This is what I lived for. Just seeing their happy faces made everything fine.

They looked up from the plate with faces full of chocolate sauce and gave me a thumbs up.

Rachel Ndlovu

(A month later...)

With my eyes closed, I switched off my alarm. I just laid in bed for a few minutes then finally woke up.

Terrence, was laying next to me. Even in his sleep, he looked very tired. He did the double shift yesterday. Today my leave was over, I had to go back to work. Something I was not looking forward to.

I got off the bed and went straight to the bathroom. As I showered, the showerhead made some weird noises. It sounded as if it was blocking the water from coming out. Last night it worked just fine. I got out of the shower, opened the tap by the basin and it worked. I closed the shower tap and opened it again... Nothing could have prepared me for what was waiting for me. Bloody water came out, I screamed and tried getting out of the shower with no luck. The door was jammed. I didn't want to wake Terrence, up but I had no choice. I kept banging on the glass door and shouting his name.

“Terrence! Baby, please come and help me.” I kept on banging with no success. The jammed up door was not freaking me out, it was the bloody water. At first I just thought it was muddy water.. I closed the tap, opened it again this time around the water was bloody red. It smelt like a butchery in here. I tried using the showerhead, to create some sort of crack on the glass door, which did not work. The water temperature kept on rising; I could feel the little splashes touching my skin.

“Terrence!” I looked around hoping to see Kuhle. She has started with her mind games. I should've known that she would do something like this. I was a fool to believe that she would just let me be.

“Baby!” I didn't stop with the banging. I was not dying in here!

The glass door suddenly opened, Terrence looked at me with a frown. “Why are you screaming my name?”

I could not understand how he could ask me such a question. I looked around and I could still see blood stains. “Babe, the door was jammed, I couldn't get out!” I spoke with a trembling voice. “Can't you see these blood stains? Why are you staring at me, as if I have lost my mind?”

“There’s no blood stains here Rachel. What are you talking about?” he gave me my gown. I looked inside the shower, it was spotless! One would swear I was not in there a few minutes ago. I couldn't understand what was going on.

“Look Terrence, I know this sounds crazy but I swear on our unborn babies, there was blood coming from the showerhead! I'm not seeing things. Please say you believe me?” I sounded desperate right at that moment.

“Do you see why I say we need to see someone? Baby, you're not coping at all.” he held my hands as he stood in front of me. “Let’s try therapy?”

I yanked my hands then marched to our room. There was no way I was seeing someone. If the truth comes out, I'm doomed! There's no way Terrence, would forgive me. “I’m fine Terrence. I'll be okay.” I wore my lacy undergarments then walked to the closet to look for something to wear. Terrence, was following me. He turned me around then shook his head.

“Babe...” he let out a sigh then walked out.

I opened the closet, grabbed a pink blouse and a black high waist skirt.

“More is yet to come.” Kuhle’s voice said behind me. I turned and she was laying comfortably on my bed. Right at that moment I just wanted to scream! I needed to scream. “I love the blouse, baby.” she said waving her hands in the air.

“Don’t you get tired of these games?” I walked closer to the bed with my hands on my waist. “Just leave me alone.”

“Get tired you say? Ghosts don't get tired. What could tire me out? I have all the time in the world.”

“You won't get away with this. I swear Okuhle! I will fight with everything that I have.. you know I never back down from a fight.” I had on a brave face but my insides were trembling.

“Such a brave girl.” Kuhle, sat upright then looked at the door and back at me. “You think you're smart Rachel. Sooner or later your husband is going to think that you're mad. He might send you to a mental institution and I will enjoy torturing you there.”

I chose to ignore Okuhle. I got dressed then went out to have breakfast. It was no use waiting for Terrence, I had to get to work. I had houses to sell!

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I didn't know that finding a job, with just matric was this hard. I have been printing CV's and dropping them everywhere! I don't think there's a place I have not placed my CV at.

I needed to find a job ASAP! I have not been comfortable after my call with Mrs Swanepoel's son.

In this life you can't actually put your trust in someone's hands. I couldn't even trust my own mother

how could I trust a stranger?

No one knew what was happening in our mother's head. She has not called ever since we saw her at the hospital. She sends some money and that's it! I have stopped trying to reach out. I have my own problems to deal with. I can't be worrying over a grown woman as well!

KB's matric dance is approaching and I was very excited. I didn't attend my own farewell, she didn't want to attend but I begged her until she agreed. The matric dance, was a once in a life situation. There was no way she was missing hers. I regret not attending mine but there's no going back now. Forward we go.

I still walked in fear knowing that Thapelo, could just show up any minute. This was not how I imagined my life would be like as a young girl.

I always had dreams, dreams that one day I would be a rich woman taking care of my mom and siblings. This is not how I had imagined things would be like. I bought some ice cream at the spaza shop then continued with my destination. When I got to the passage, I ran! The passage was long and looked creepy. I didn't want anyone to find me in it. I let out a sigh of relief once I had passed the passage.

I was four houses away from home, when my phone vibrated in my jacket pocket. It was a WhatsApp message from KB, notifying me that she and Sedi, had extra lessons and they would be a bit late today.

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The door opened, KB and Sedi, walked in looking tired. I closed my textbook and smiled at them.

“My babies!”

Sedi, ran to me and gave me a hug. KB, just rolled her eyes then sat next to me.

“I’m so tired GM. I can't wait to write my finals. I'm tired of school, ke lapile!”

“Ausi Goitsi, when you go grocery shopping Saturday, please buy me some activated charcoal.” Sedi, said disappearing into the bedroom.

I couldn't stop smiling this was the second time, Sedi, is calling me ‘ausi’. I looked at KB.

“Keng?” KB, asked whilst shrugging her shoulders.

“This is the second time Sedi, is calling me ‘ausi’.”

“I told you that she's growing up. She's finally understanding that you're her sister and not her mother.” KB, gently shoved me. “You’re not sad are you?”

“Not really, I'm relieved actually. Not that I mind when she calls me mom, but I need her to see me as her sister not her mother.”

Sedi, came from the bedroom then sat on top of me and KB.

“Do you know who our new neighbours are?”

“Neighbours?” I looked at them both. “What neighbours?”

“Sister all I can tell you is that ke monna wa go khuluma!” (a man who speaks isiZulu.) KB, had this smirk on her face.

“Karabo Destiny Tholo!”

“Ask Lesedi..” Sedi, also had a smirk on.

“What I need to understand is why are you two smirking?”

Sedi, excitedly got off me and KB, then looked at me. “Promise me that you won't freak out?”

Now that had me freaking out. “Don't tell me that he asked you out?” I furiously stood up. “Did he do something?”

Karabo, noticed how freaked out I was.

“Relax GM, he didn't say or do anything. He didn't even speak to us.”

I looked at them both. “Okay. How about we make mince bunny chows for dinner?”

“With lots of chillies!” KB.

Rachel Ndlovu

Walking into the house felt like I was taking a walk at the graveyard. It was too quiet.

I switched on the lights and looked around, the house was clean but the silence was too much for me. This silence was an easy access for Okuhle. I removed the heels I had on and walked barefoot on the mini stairs, to our room.

“Baby?” I slowly pushed the door open but there was no sign of Terrence. “Lovey!”

I dropped my shoes and bag on the floor and peeped into our bathroom, he was also not there. I had no clue where Terrence, could be at the moment especially after our conversation this morning. I looked at the calendar and it was his day off today.

I quickly changed into sweat pants and a tank top then went to the kitchen to start cooking. Back then, Terrence, would be here holding onto my waist, dancing to the music playing on the stereo. We would be sipping on wine while he helped me chop the vegetables. I missed my husband so much. Just when I

think we're reconnecting, something happens. Maybe this was my karma. Who gets married to their best friend's husband?

Only God, knows how much I love Terrence. I tried his phone but it just rang and rang. I could try his younger sister but decided not to. Ntombikayise, only tolerated me because I was married to her brother but I knew she didn't like me. Not that I blame her, she finds it weird that I got married to her brother especially because I was Okuhle's best friend.

Just as I was about to put the potatoes and chicken breasts into the oven, my phone vibrated on the kitchen counter. I put the tray in then washed my hands before picking up the phone.

It was a message from Kevin. Reminding me to pay him his money. Kevin, was becoming a pain in my ass and I didn't like it one bit. I was tired of him and his demand for money I didn't have. He had to go; he had to!

I went outside and sat on the patio, sipped my chamomile tea then called my older sister, Mokgadi. She helped put me in this mess, she had to help me out. I hope she was not drunk wherever she was. No one could separate Mokgadi and her shake shake, (chibuku). They were finger and nail!

“Hallo!”

Judging from the noise in the background, she was at the local pub, surrounded by other women and men who lived for alcohol. “Mokgadi, Wankwa naa?” (can you hear me?)

“Ngwana bo mama!”

“Mokgadi, move from where you are, akegokwe!.” (I can't hear you..)

“Hello Rachy-Rachy.. Mokgadi went to dance she'll call you later. Bye-bye.”

Unbelievable! I tried calling again but it went straight to voicemail. I still didn't understand how my sister who was once a nurse. A loveable nurse, turned into a drunkard. No one gave me answers when I asked them what happened. Not even my mom.

The annoying thing is that Mokgadi, might not have her phone tomorrow morning. She's very much capable of selling her phone for chibuku.

Terrence Ndlovu

I found myself at a bar in Johannesburg, CBD. I had no desire of being at home. I was not much of a drinker but today felt right to drink until I passed out. For someone who is a doctor I was being very careless but today I was just Terrence Ndlovu, not Dr Ndlovu. The place looked very shady and hygiene was not their first priority.

My phone was ringing non stop, I switched it off. I had lost count of the amount of Windhoek's I had drank, yet I was not getting drunk.

I ordered a plate of food and more Windhoek's then went to sit at the back where no one could spot me easily. Not that I was expecting to see someone I knew at such a shady place. Everyone here was minding their business. Dancing to songs I didn't know. Someone shaking their ass on a strip pole. I laughed and shook my head, realising that for a man my age I have not been to a strip club. It made no sense. As a med student, I always tried to balance medicine having fun and my relationship. I didn't go out much.

Someone wearing a very, very short skirt stood in front of me holding what I hoped was my food. She didn't look bad, her smile was very tight. More like she didn't want to be here but bills had to be paid. I smiled back and she loosened up.

“Your order sir.” she bent over to put my plate down; men started whistling. She looked embarrassed so I looked down to not put much pressure on her.

“Thank you.” the food looked decent, I hoped my little adventure would not give me any diarrhoea. I was not planning on being friends with the toilet after eating.

“Would you like anything else sir?”

I shook my head no, then she left.

My first bite of the oxtail and I nodded my head in approval. Everything on my plate balanced. Maybe this would become my new home. I leaned back on my chair to enjoy the view of the strippers on the pole. She had a red mask on, the bra and panties she had on were also red. It looked like she was a fan favourite because of the loud cheers.

Money was flying all over the stage, she would at some point get off the stage, go to a gentleman in a suit and shake what her mama gave her. She gave a show and people seemed to enjoy it.

I felt a hand on my thigh, I turned to my left.. with my brow raised.

“You look bored daddy.” she said still brushing my thigh.

“Who are you?”

“You can call me Nancy.” she winked and sat on me. I tried to push her off me but she was adamant on sitting on my lap. “Tell Nancy, what's troubling you big papa!”

“Nancy, I'm fine. Please get off now.”

She, got off and pulled down her dress. She, still had a huge smile on her face. “I see.. you don't want anyone to see you with girls like me. But don't worry, there's a room upstairs and I promise you, you won't regret it.”

My light bulb finally went on and I realised what was going on. I had to play my game well. I leaned forward with my play boy smile. Well I hoped it looked charming enough to drop panties.

“Nancy! Why don't you go and wait for me upstairs? Be ready for me.”

She nodded and left. I let out a sigh, quickly stood up and left.

I couldn't stop laughing in my car. This is what happened when one act like a teenager while they're 30. I buckled my seatbelt

then drove. I had no idea what the time was or where I was going but it was definitely not home. At some point I almost called Jes, but I didn't want to cross that line again. I'm the one who called things off.

Rachel Ndlovu

It was very dark outside and there was still no sign of Terrence. I tried calling him again with no luck.

I stood up from the cushion I was sitting on then went to switch on the lights. I looked at the romantic dinner for two set up I had planned for us. I heaved then blew the candles. I was too hungry to let the food go to waste. I sat down and gulped the white wine, straight from the bottle.

The plate on the coffee table moved, I ignored it at first thinking it's all the wine I had been drinking. The fork hit against the wine glass and the knife fell down.

I squinted my eyes and looked closely to what was happening. I heard heels clicking on the tiles, I looked around- by then my heart was sitting comfortably on my throat.

A baby started wailing then the lights suddenly went off. I got up and screamed, running around not knowing where I was

heading. It was strange that I could not navigate my way in my own house. It made no sense. I hit something very hard then the lights went on.

I came face to face with Okuhle.

“Hello bestie!”

I tried speaking but my tongue felt very heavy in my mouth. I couldn't form a single sentence. I couldn't even move backwards. I was frozen!

“Cat got your tongue?” Okuhle, moved in circles around me; she was driving me crazy.

“Okuhle just stop! Stop, you're driving me nuts.” I finally managed to open my mouth.

“Ohh, now you can speak? How's the dinner.. alone, going my friend?”

“Eventually you will get tired of these games.” I tried to walk away but I couldn't move. I turned and looked at Okuhle, who had a smile on her face. She shrugged her shoulders then went to sit on the couch.

“You know bestie, a confession would save you from all these sleepless nights, right?”

“That will never ever happen!” I held on to the wall and took slow steps. Okuhle, had still not moved from where she was.

She was up to something. I turned to the couch, she was not there.

I continued with my slow steps to the room, thank the heavens we had a mini staircase. I dragged my heavy legs through each step until I reached the top...

Sebaga Trinity Tholo

I was slowly recovering from my surgery. The Swanepoel's were a blessing in my life. I turned on my side and removed a photo album from underneath the bed. I hesitated for a while then opened the album.

Ohh my poor baby. I closely looked at a picture of Goitsimedi. She was so cute and chubby; with a charming smile. I failed as a mother, I couldn't protect her from the cruel world.

How could I still stay with them and look her in the eyes after I failed as a mom. I brought Frank, into their lives now she has to live with the pain for the rest of her life.

I tried to get up from the bed but my upper body was in pain. It was expected after my mastectomy. The door opened Mrs Swanepoel, walked in holding a tray.

"Ma'am what are you doing?"

"I brought you something to eat Trinity, you need the energy."

If their son walked in and found his mom serving me, hell would break loose! Jacob, was a loose cannon. I don't understand how

he could be so rude while his parents are the most generous people ever.

"Mrs Swanepoel, I'm the one who is supposed to serve you and clean not you. I feel better and I'll start working tomorrow."

"No, no.. young lady you're not well enough to start cleaning."

"Mme wee, I'm telling you that I'm fine. Keng ka wena!" (Lady, I said I'm fine. What's wrong with you!)

Mrs Swanepoel, with her hands on each side of her hips, looked at me with sharp eyes. I know she badly wanted to ask me what I was saying but she didn't.

"Trinity, I don't know why you're so stubborn! You should be with your daughters at this time but you're here. I don't understand you sometimes."

"Bathong missus, do you want to fire me? If you don't want me working for you anymore just put it loud and clearly. Don't turn around the corners talking about my daughters. Assemblief!" I drank the water then looked the other way to show her that this conversation was over. I was done talking.

"Jy is onbeskof!" she said then I heard the door shut. (You're rude!)

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Waking up from my nap I looked around the room then sighed remembering how I spoke to Mrs Swanepoel. I struggled to sit upright but eventually I managed.

Suddenly I felt cold shivers down my spine. The room suddenly felt too small. The curtains swayed a bit then there was this bright light in the room. I closed my eyes to block the brightness yet even with my closed eyes, the brightness blinded me. Then I heard weeping... I opened my eyes but I couldn't tell where the weeping came from. The weeping continued then I heard a familiar voice.

"Mme?"

"Sebaga ngwanaka, where did I go wrong with you?"

I looked around then I saw my mom with tattered clothes sitting at the far corner. Even in death she was still suffering.

I ignored the pain as I got off the bed. "Mama?"

"Why Sebaga? Why are you doing this to your children? Ke dirileng that made you turn out like this? Where did I go wrong;

tell me so that I can fix my errors." she said with tears falling down her face. (What did I do..)

"Mme, you did nothing wrong I'm just a bad mother. I couldn't protect her.. I couldn't protect my own daughter from pain. I don't deserve to live."

"Do you think you leaving them alone, to raise themselves is a way to protect them? Are you hearing yourself Sebaga?"

"Mama

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they're better off without me. Trust me."

"O bua sebono ngwana ke wena! Shit hela. I hope it won't be too late when you realise that you have caused more harm than good." (you're talking shit..)

"Mama o bua ka eng?" (what are you talking about?)

She disappeared. I looked around the room but there was no brightness anymore. Just a dark room. "Mama?"

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I had a WhatsApp message from KB, she was reminding me to go and buy her the block heels she wanted. I quickly replied her and hoped she is not texting while in class;

We could go to town tomorrow and buy them?

Did you forget that I attend Saturday classes as well? Please go today GM, you don't have any classes and you need to go out more. - KB replied.

Okay fine, I'll go. I hope you're not texting while you're in the classroom! - I replied back but she didn't reply back. She was definitely in class.

How I hate going to Johannesburg CBD. That place is dangerous! You know where you're going the next thing you don't know where you are. After taking a bath, I looked in our closet for something to wear. If KB was here she would help me pick an outfit. I settled with dark denim jeans, a criss-cross tee and a denim jacket on top. Not too hectic.

I grabbed everything that I would need then locked the door. I made sure that my phone was hidden in my sports bra. I don't want any mistakes. Those Bree tsotsi's don't play! They will mug you then walk you to the taxi rank to make sure that you're okay. I shook my head then laughed remembering how I

got mugged at MTN rank, then they had the audacity to say I must dance for them. How can you mug me then ask me to dance? People are cruel in the world.

"Sawubona ntokazi." a raspy voice said inside the quantum, that was softly playing some RnB.

I looked inside the taxi that was parked in front of the gate. I couldn't see the person well.

"Hello." I said and waved.

"Unjani?"

"Ke teng wena o kae?"

The door of the quantum opened then a tall, light brown skinned guy wearing Brentwood stepped out. "Nami ke teng."

I shook my head then smiled. This must be the Zulu guy KB and Sedi were talking about. I looked at him one more time then I walked away.

I got off the taxi carrying the heavy plastics that had groceries in them. I couldn't even call KB to come and help me because my phone decided to die on me. The screen just went black.

It was a bit dark and I knew that this is the time the Roodepoort gangs come out to play. I was tired, carrying heavy plastics but I

was not going to use the passage. I'm taking the longer route instead, I'm not taking chances.

After walking for a short distance, I stood under a big tree just to rest for a while. I tried switching the phone on, to no success. Then it started drizzling. What a time to be alive ntate modimo! Couldn't bra Jesus wait until I got home at least?

A white GTI drove slowly next to me, I looked around and even if I wanted to scream no one would hear me. I picked up my pace then the windows rolled down; it was Mr Brentwood. I stopped then touched my chest and let out a sigh.

"What's wrong with you?" I had on a serious face.

"Ngiyaxolisa, bengingaqondile uk'kwethusa ntokazi. Ngicela ungene emotweni sihambe, ngaphambi kokuthi line kabi." (I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. Please get inside the car before it rains badly..)

We put the groceries in the boot then we got inside the car.

"Uyaphila kodwa ntokakazi?" (are you well?..)

I couldn't say a word so I nodded instead. He kept on trying to make small conversations but I just looked out the window. I was afraid that I would say something weird, so I kept quiet throughout until we arrived.

"Ke a leboga." (thank you..) I tried to take the rest of the plastics from him but he refused. Kept on saying he can't let me carry all the heavy plastics all by myself.

The stares I got from Sedi and KB when I walked in with Mr quantum. Their eyes were in disbelief. I thanked him once again then he left.

Sedi and KB started screaming like toddlers after eating too much sugar. I had to block my ears from their loudness.

"Bathong lona, help me unpack these bags and stop with the noise."

"How did you and Mr handsome meet?" KB asked while smiling from ear to ear.

"Ausi Goitsi, be honest he is hot right? In fact he is perfect! You're short he is tall.. the combos are communicating sis."

I looked at Sedi in disbelief. What does she know about perfect matches and combos communicating.

Terrence Ndlovu

A month had passed ever since I went out drinking at a shady place in Johannesburg. I drank so much I found myself, in front of Dr Puoentle's front door. I had no idea how I ended up at her house in the middle of the night, but I was there. She and her husband were kind enough to let me in and sleep. The next morning I thanked them for their kindness and left— I was too embarrassed to sit down with them and have breakfast. I just did not have the guts to.

I had just came back from my jog, when I found Rachel, preparing breakfast for us and made my lunchbox. I stopped in my tracks, looked at her then shook my head. I have stopped trying to convince her to attend therapy. She is too stubborn to see that she needs help. Just as I was about to turn and climb the stairs, she turned and looked at me with a weak smile.

“Hey baby, you're back I didn't hear you come in.” she said walking towards me.

“I just got in. I'm going to take a shower then get ready to leave.” I attempted to leave but she held my hand.

“You have been ignoring me, for a while now Terry. When will this stop?”

“I’m not ignoring you, I’m just busy at work.. you know this Rachel.”

“Is this because I refused to attend therapy?” she looked at me with puppy eyes. “I told you that I’m fine baby. I’m okay. Trust me.”

“You’re fine, you say? Absolutely fine; nothing is troubling you?”

She nodded. I shook my head out of disbelief. Rachel, has not been sleeping well for the past few months. She keeps on mumbling in her sleep or talking to herself I’m the kitchen. She sometimes mentions Okuhle’s name, but she's okay. Nothing is wrong with her. My wife deserved an Oscar for pretending. I just can't win when it comes to her, she is in her own lane when it comes to pretending.

“If you say so Rachel.” I left her at the bottom of the stairs then went to our bathroom to get myself all cleaned up. During my cleaning up session, I found myself thinking about Okuhle. I felt this amount of sadness I could not explain. I didn't understand why would I miss her this bad today of all days.

I got dressed, then went downstairs to get my car keys and lunchbox. Rachel was nowhere in sight.

“Rachel?” I noticed that the kitchen door leading to the back was slightly open. I made my way there, then heard Rachel whispering on the phone with someone. I walked a bit closer to hear who she was whispering on the phone with but she turned and saw me. She looked spooked from seeing me standing close by. She told the person she would call later. Then gave me a tight smile.

“Terry, how long have you been standing there?”

“Why?”

She nervously giggled. “Just asking, no reason.” she shrugged.

“Okay, I'm off to work then.” I gave a kiss. “Wait, why are you not dressed yet? Are you not working today?”

“I am but I still have time.”

I said my goodbyes then got into my car and drove out.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

“Karabo, you never told me whether you liked the dress or not?” I said with a mouth full of toothpaste. The bedroom door

opened, KB, walked in holding her school shoes then sat on the bed, looking tired.

“KB!” she looked at me with a raised brow.

“Keng?” she asked. (What?)

“Did you not hear a word I said?”

“Something about a wedding dress– I think.” she was in her own world.

“Wedding dress ya eng Karabo! Who is getting married? I'm talking about your matric farewell, ring a bell?” (what...)

“Ohh that, I'm going for my last fitting on Thursday, after school.”

“Thursday is tomorrow.”

“What?” she got off the bed with lightning speed to grab her phone and check the dates. She looked at me again.

“Tomorrow?”

“Karabo, what's going on? You never forget dates.”

“Exams are starting soon and I don't think I'm prepared enough. What if I fail?” she talked in a rush, I walked to her and held her hands.

“Look at me, hey, look at me.” I used my thumb to brush the back of her hand. “Everything is going to go well, I've seen how hard you have been studying okay? Just calm down.”

She nodded then wore her school shoes. KB, and I had breakfast without Sedi. She was not feeling well and was not going to school today. Her transport driver honked twice outside, KB, picked up her school bag then waved goodbye. After she left I went to our room to check on Sedi.

“Sedi, are you okay?” I checked her temperature and it was high. “Sedi!”

“Hmm..”

“I have classes today, will you be okay on your own?”

“Yes.” she said with a hoarse voice.

“Are you sure?”

She gave me a thumbs up. I felt bad for leaving her on her own but I had no choice, I couldn't miss today's practical. I needed those marks.

Before I left, in a tray, I brought her a jug full of water, painkillers and ginger tea for her throat. I looked at the sweat on her face, tears were threatening to come out.

“Sedi, don't open the door for anyone okay?” I shouted at the door then locked.

When I was about to enter the passage, a quantum hooted. I ignored it but it hooted again and I heard a familiar raspy voice. I immediately stopped in my tracks to look to my side. He had his window rolled down.

“Sawubona ntokakazi.” (hi...)

I smiled and waved at him.

“Uyaphila kodwa?” (are you well though?)

“Yeah.” I said looking down.

“Uyaphi ekseni, aw’funi ilift?” (where are you going so early

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don't you want a lift?)

“Bree.”

He opened the passenger side and I got inside, he was listening to Ukhozi fm. After five minutes of driving, two more passengers got in. Taxi maths was something I was not looking forward to. I didn't understand people who paid with fifty rand or hundred rand notes in the morning. It never made sense! You knew the previous night that you need to use the taxi the next day, but you don't make change? Selfish.

“Uyasebenza ntokazi?” (are you working?) we had stopped at the robot and a few more people rushed in before the robot could turn green.

“No, I'm doing my final year at a culinary school but I'm also looking for a part time job.”

“Alright.”

I leaned back on the chair then slyly looked at Mr quantum. I couldn't get a proper look at him because he would turn to look at me, when he realised that I'm staring. I would look down or outside, when he caught me looking.

“After robot.” he stopped after passing the robot, he had a lighter in his hand and looked at me with a grin as I got off. I could hear mumbling from the passengers when he didn't drive away after I got off.

“Manje siyobonana nini futhi nkosazane?” (when are we going to see each other again?)

I didn't reply him, instead I laughed then closed the door and waved goodbye. As soon as he had sped off, I realised that I didn't pay. Today must be my lucky day I said to myself.

Terrence Ndlovu

I called Dr Puoentle's office to confirm my appointment with the Dr. Maybe if I tried therapy, Rachel would give it a shot as well.

I had lunch at the canteen but my mind was far away. I couldn't remove this feeling deep inside. I was sad but I couldn't pinpoint why I was sad. I called my little sister, maybe she might cheer me up.

"Hello?"

"Ntombikayise."

I heard shuffling sounds. "Bhuti?"

"Wow, you don't even know your own brother's voice? What a stab in the gut."

"Yho bhuti, stop with the drama. I just woke up and answered without checking who called."

"Whatever! Unjani kodwa kayise kaBaba?" I heard her soft giggles. (How are you?)

"Ngiyaphila Gatsheni, wena unjani bhut' wami?" (I'm well.. how are you my brother?)

"I'm fine, just decided to check on you nothing much."

"Bhuti?"

“Hmm...”

“You don't sound fine. Are you sure you're okay?”

“Yeah, uphi uSgantsotso?” we both laughed. I heard her calling her twin brother, Lindokuhle.

“Usakhuluma nentombi yakhe.”

“Okay dade.. I have to get back to work now. Ngiyak'thanda yezwa.” (I love you okay.)

“Uthandwa yimina.” (you're loved by me..)

After my call with Ntombikayise, I returned back to work. I was just ticking the minutes to knockoff time. I hope there won't be any emergency, that would delay me.

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I had just arrived in Germiston, where Dr Puoentle's offices were at. I greeted her receptionist, Wanda, then went to sit at an empty couch.

“The doctor will see you any minute from now.” her receptionist said. I just nodded while I was on my phone.

The door opened, Dr Puentle, came out with a client all smiles. This woman was just perfect! She was in casual clothes today—jeans, a high neck t-shirt and sneakers but she still looked amazing. Her receptionist informed me that I could go in.

Her office was just as perfect. It was not depressing, it had a ‘feel at home’ atmosphere. Very cool.

She was writing something in her notebook, then looked up. She smiled while looking at me.

“How are Terrence?”

Straight to the point. “I’m okay doctor.” she gave me a look.

“Puentle, I meant.”

“Would you like anything to drink before we start?”

I shook my head.

“Alright, tell me why you're here Terrence.”

“You said...” she stopped me before I could continue.

“Listen Terrence, if you're here because I said so then it's best we cut this session right now.” she said with a serious look then leaned back. “People who step into this space, are here

because they chose to be here. Not because I said so. Now let's try again; why are you here?"

"To be honest I don't know. I don't even know why I made an appointment with you. It just happened."

"Have you always wanted to study medicine?"

"Yes. Medicine has always been the goal."

"How did you feel when you got accepted?"

"Over the stars! I couldn't wait to tell my parents the good news."

"How did they take the news? Were they happy?"

"Excited! I'm the first born so they were very happy for me and what I was going to study."

"Would you say you had a great relationship with your parents? Did they do something you didn't approve of?"

"I had the best parents ever. Home was a peaceful environment, I got along with both of them. My dad was a very understanding man. He didn't raise us how he was raised; under a strict hand. He was very gentle with us, very loving."

"Hmm.." I watched Puentle, as she carefully wrote something down, then she looked at me.

“Your siblings, did you get along with them?”

“A lot! As I said we were raised with love. We trust one another when we encountered any troubles or problems.”

“What do you do when you're stressed? Whether it's job related or just your personal life?”

“I like taking care of my body, as you mentioned I'm a doctor and I need to be at my best all the time. I work out at home if I couldn't go to the gym. If I get the chance I go hiking.”

“How do you feel now?”

“I feel okay, not anxious like I was when I came here.” she smiled then wrote something down.

“Listen Terrence, I don't believe in seeing my patients once a week. Depending on how serious the situation is, I see them twice to three times a week. So we'll start our sessions on Monday then I'll see you on Wednesday or Friday. Okay?”

“Start the session?” I looked at her with confusion. “What were doing right now?”

She got up while laughing. She looked out the window and stared for the longest time without saying a word then she sighed. “Those sunflowers remind me of a client of mine, my firecracker.” she looked sad.

“What happened to her?”

“She’s still alive, I just miss her. We shared a bond outside of her being my patient and me being her therapist.”

“She must have been very special.”

“Very..” she went back to her chair. “To answer you, what were doing here was me getting to know you before I know what's troubling you. I noticed how you were looking for an excuse to not be here yet you had made an appointment.” she said with a raised brow. “I’ll see you on Monday Terrence, Wanda, will email you the times that are suitable.”

Rachel Ndlovu

I looked at the time and Kevin was twenty minutes late! I looked ridiculous in this heat wearing a scarf over my head and huge sunglasses. I didn't want anyone to see me with Kevin.

Braamfontein, was very busy I was hoping no one would spot me this side, but with Kevin, taking his sweet time someone might spot me. I called the waitress over to order another cup of iced tea. I tried his phone again with no luck, this was frustrating! Maybe he was also playing mind games with me. What if all this people don't exist? Maybe I'm seeing things because of my guilt.

Just when my order was brought, I saw this young gorgeous girl walking into the coffee shop. She looked like she was still in her early twenties. She looked very nervous standing in the middle of the shop.

There was still no sign of Kevin, I used that time to quickly dash to the bathroom, I was very pressed. Returning from the toilet, the girl was still standing where I had left her.

“Hey are you okay?”

“Yes.”

“Are you sure? I mean you have standby there for a while people might think you're not well in the head.”

“Uhm, uhm, you're right let me go I don't even know why I came here.” turning around, the documents she had in her hand fell.. we both crouched down to pick them up that's when I noticed that she had hoped to find a job.

“You’re looking for a job?”

She nodded while looking down. How would she be able to work here when she's this shy.

“I’m Rachel and you?” I extended my hand for a shake, she looked at my hand for a while before shaking my hand.

“Goitsimedi.”

“How about you give me one of your CV’s then when I see a job vacancy I'll leave your CV.”

“Why would you want to help me? You don't even know me.”

“Tomorrow you will also help someone you don't know.”

“Okay..” she hesitated giving me her CV. She thanked me then left.

I went back to my table and waited a few more minutes. When I was about to leave, the devil walked in.

“I hope I didn't keep you waiting partner!”

“I just arrived as well.”

“Well then sweetheart, let's talk business.” he raised his hand to call the waitress. He ordered a hot chocolate and slice of blueberry cheesecake.

“Kevin, I don't have all day. You do know that I'm married right? Now tell me why I'm here.”

“Is that why you're dressed like a ninja in this heat?” he started chuckling and I was do annoyed I just wanted to leave. His order arrived and he immediately devoured the cake. I stared at him with disgust. Then he made those slurping sounds while drinking his drink.

“So... Where is my money baby girl?” he tried to touch my hand but I moved back.

“Last time I checked Kevin, I gave you your money. Now what money do you want?”

He lightly banged the table and I was frightened a bit.

“Are you crazy!” I whispered, “do you want people to focus on us?”

“I wouldn't give a shit if I was you madam. Do you think these people will give a crap about you when you're wearing orange overalls?” he leaned over.

“Kevin, listen.. I don't have the money you think I have. I didn't have it back then and I still don't.”

“Jy dink ek is 'n mampara neh? Huh.. luister hier; ek soek my geld! I know you work for that white lady and you sell houses, not small type of houses but only for the rich.” (you think I'm stupid? Listen here; I want my money!)

At this point I was not even surprised that he knew where I work. Kevin was a pain in the ass.

“I have only 10K, in my bank. That's all I can give you.”

“Transfer it now, I have things to do.”

“Are you stupid! If I transfer the money; that's just me digging my own grave. I'll go to the bank tomorrow then we'll meet again.”

He watched me for a while before he opened his greedy mouth, “I'll trust you this once but if you think you will make a fool out of me. I know where your best friend's husband works.” with that said, he stood up and drank the last contents of his hot chocolate then left. I looked at the time it was almost 19h00. I was very late

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Terry must be home already at this time. I asked for the bill—paid then left.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I was so grateful to find KB, cooking because I was too tired to touch the pots. I stood behind her and hugged her.

“Thank you for cooking ngwana ko gae.”

“I was not busy so I cooked, no big deal.”

“How's Sedi doing?” I peeped through the slightly opened door and she was still asleep.

“She was awake when I got here then she slept after I made her something to eat.”

I sighed then slid my shoes off and placed them in our room.

“What are you cooking?”

“Pasta and mince.”

“You didn't add tomatoes, right?”

She gave me a bored expression, “really?”

“You won't believe this; so after my classes I walked to this coffee shop in Braam to submit my CV and this other lady called

Ruth, I think.. took one of my CV's incase she finds something for me."

"And you trust this lady that you don't even remember what her name was? O tsaya di chance tlhe Goitsi." KB sat next to me and reduced the volume of the TV. (You're such a chancer..)

"I didn't trust her at first but what do I have to lose? She might actually find me a job."

"What if she wants to traffic you?"

Silence.

"These things do happen." KB.

"I know that but I have to find a job, I have a bad feeling about Mrs Swanepoel's son.. I have been jumpy ever since that call."

"That one is just a spoilt brat! Why is he so interested in his parents money? Doesn't he work and have his own family?"

"The mince is burning wena mma ditaba!" (busybody..)

We heard Sedi coughing in the room. Her cough was very bad.

"I'll go and check her maybe she needs something." I found Sedi, sitting upright on the bed trying to reach the jug that had water in it.

“Let me help you.” I gave her a glass of water to drink. “How are you my baby?” I touched her forehead, she was not hot like I had left her this morning.

“I feel better but my throat is very painful and I'm hungry.”

“Dinner is almost ready baby, just a few more minutes.”

She nodded then lay down again. I looked for a cloth then dipped it in cold water that had lemon slices and placed it on her forehead.

Mama was not my favourite person at the moment but I sent her a text to let her know that her baby is sick. It's up to her what she will do next.

Once Sedi was asleep I returned to the other room and found KB, dishing up.

“Is she awake?” KB asked.

“She fell asleep again. Did you cook something light for her?”

“Chicken noodle soup..”

We sat on opposite couches and ate our food in silence. The television was the only thing providing us with sound. I found myself thinking about Mr quantum, he was invading my thoughts and I didn't like it one bit.

“Why are you smiling like someone in love?”

“Huh?”

“GM, you were smiling alone just a few seconds ago. Who has you smiling like that?”

“I was not smiling.” I said defensively.

“Rainbow Tholo!” I shot her a look. KB of all people knew how I was not a big fan of my second name. I still don't get it; Rainbow, of all names?

“O batla go ntena akere wena Karabo?” (you're getting on my nerves now..)

Karabo continued teasing me about my second name.

After cleaning up we retired off to bed. I looked at KB, playing candy crush on her phone— I grabbed it from her hands because I wanted to play as well.

“Goitsimedi keng ka wena!” (what's wrong with you!)

I had ran to the other room to try and play but she was fast, in seconds she was chasing me around the couches.

“I'm not playing with you GM!”

“Just one game and I'll give you the phone.” I continued running around the couches until I tripped over something and

fell face first. KB erupted in laughter. She was on her knees on the floor, laughing at me.

Rachel Ndlovu

As I parked my car in the garage, I sat in the car wondering how Terry, was going to react. I didn't even let him know that I would be late. I grabbed my hand bag on the passengers side then locked going inside the house.

I found him watching sports in the lounge wearing khaki shorts and a vest. He had a Windhoek bottle in his hand while the other he was eating biltong.

“Hey babe.” I walked over to him then left a kiss on his cheek.

“Hi.”

Hi? That's all he was going to say.. hi?

“Give me thirty minutes and I'll whip something quick for us to eat, okay.”

He tilted his head then looked at me– “I've already ate, Rachel. Your dinner is in the oven.” his focus went back to the sports.

“Ohh, thank you.” opening the oven I uncovered my plate; it was mashed potatoes, chicken breast and steamed broccoli. I

poured a glass of apple juice then returned to the lounge and sat next to him. He placed my feet on his lap and I smiled a bit.

“How was work today my love?” I asked with my mouth full of food.

“As calm as a hospital can get.” he looked at me stuffing my mouth with food. “How was your day?”

“I found the perfect couple for that three bedroom town house in Weltevreden.”

“Did they like it?”

“A lot but there's another couple that's interested in it and want to view it tomorrow. I like them both so I actually don't know what's going to happen.” I sipped my juice.

“The one with the best offer will get the house, simple.”

“I guess you're right.”

“I'm starting with therapy on Monday.”

I gave him a look. “Excuse me?”

“I said I'm starting with therapy on Monday.”

“Ohh.” I moved my legs from his lap and took my plate to the kitchen. I washed and dried it then passed him in the lounge going to the bathroom.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

“Wake up sunshine it's a brand new day!” I pulled the blanket off KB and Sedi. They both groaned. KB had a frown looking at me. She was definitely pissed, not that I cared.

“Did you see the time GM? Did you?”

“Yes.” I pulled the blanket again when they tried wearing it again.

“Just this once when I don't have to go to school on a Saturday, you do this!”

“Time is not on our side grumpy– if you don't get everything ready for the dance right at this moment, your ride will leave you.”

Only then she remembered that today is not a day off, she had to get everything ready for the dance.

“Yho GM! I still need to fetch my dress, how did I forget that?”

I gave her a look.

“Don't look at me like that Satan!” she said rushing off the bed and looking for her phone to call the lady who made her dress.

“Why didn't you fetch the dress on Thursday, Karabo? Look at how you're rushing now.”

“I don't need a lecture right now Goitsi, I really don't. Besides something was wrong with the dress and she had to fix it.”

Sedi was finally up as well staring at KB, running around like a dog seeing a bone.

“Karabo o batlang?” she asked.

“My phone!”

“You're holding the phone in your hand.”

“Bathong!” Sedi and I, laughed at her then she ran out to call the lady. I sat next to her and brushed her head.

“How's the flu now?”

“I feel better now” she did look better. We were shocked to see our mother standing on our door step, Thursday afternoon. When I sent her the message I didn't think she would come to see her the next day. She didn't look well– she looked like she has been sick as well. I nearly asked her then stopped myself from doing that. She even slept over, KB was very surprised to see her when she returned from school. She left yesterday in the evening.

“Did you tell mama that I was sick?”

“Yes..”

“You shouldn't have done that honestly.”

“Well I did and she came.” I shrugged my shoulders. Sedi mumbled something I couldn't hear. I looked at her waiting for her to repeat what she said loudly. I waited but she never said anything.

I left Sedi to clean the room then I went to the kitchen to prepare our breakfast. KB walked into the house all sweaty.

“Jaanong wena?” (what's going on now?)

“The lady who was supposed to do my hair and nails just cancelled! What am I supposed to do now?” I could sense a tantrum approaching. She walked up and down the room with her phone in hand.

“Did she tell you why she cancelled at the last minute?”

“You won't believe this,” KB started cackling. “Apparently she mixed the dates. She thought the dance was for next week. What the hell!”

I didn't know what to say to my sister. I didn't even know anyone who could help her out.

“What about the makeup lady?”

“Thank God, she didn't cancel.. I would have lost my shit to be honest. This is all your mother's fault!” she said sitting down.

“Huh?” what did our mother do now.

“She abandons us to raise ourselves. She always made excuses when she had to see us, she never called.. then out of nowhere she comes to visit us? Please make it make sense GM.”

A furious Karabo was something I didn't want to deal with I let her throw her tantrums as I prepared breakfast. Sedi was standing by the doorway looking at a angry KB, then she looked at me.

“What’s wrong?” she whispered.

“The hairdresser just cancelled.”

“Yoh!”

“Make sure the bacon does not burn, I'm quickly going to the spaza to buy cheese. I don't even know if they have cheese.”

Sedi nodded and I walked out. KB was now quiet, I felt sorry for her.

On my way out I didn't see the quantum where it was usually parked. I let out a disappointed sigh but a smile formed when I

saw the door open and he came out holding a black plastic bag. He lifted his head then saw me—

He smiled then placed the bag on the ground as he walked towards the gate.

“Ntokazi.”

“Hello.” he walked closer and he was a tall gent. I finally could take a closer look at him and my smile grew. He was indeed handsome, he was not too dark but he was definitely not light in complexion. He had lazy eyes and his smile was very charming.. the voice was everything.

“Ntokazi!”

I snapped out of my day dreams and looked at him.

“Uyaphila?”

I nodded. I hated how I couldn't hold a five minute conversation with him. Just as he was about to open his mouth, the door opened; a light skinned woman with an hour glass figure stepped out of the door. I swallowed painfully, something was blocking me from swallowing.

If I had a flat stomach my body would almost look like hers. She was just perfect, her legs looked great in the tiny shorts she had on. She walked closer to us— I could hear my heart rate rising. His finger didn't have a ring but who was I kidding these men

can still cheat with a ring on. Then I laughed at myself internally, he didn't even ask me out.. so he is not cheating.

“Hello.” she had a beautiful smile as well. I greeted her then told them I had to rush to the spaza to buy something. I didn't wait for them to say anything, I left immediately.

Rachel Ndlovu

Terry walked in holding a tray that had my breakfast. I sat upright and smiled at him.

“I made you breakfast.”

“Thank you.”

“I’m going to see how Lindo and Kayise are doing. Are you coming with?”

I faked a cough then cleared my throat. “I’ll see them some other day.”

“You always say that Rachel, when are you planning on seeing them without me forcing you to?”

What a great way to start your Saturday morning. I crawled towards him then sat on his lap.

“Babe, we both know how Kayise

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feels about me. I don't like awkwardness.”

“Kayise knows that you're my wife, whether she likes it or not. How long are you going to avoid her? What about Lindo, what did he do?”

“Baby...”

“You’re being very unfair Rachel. You don't want to attend therapy, you don't want to see my siblings.. what do you want to do?”

“Baby..”

He ignored me and went inside the bathroom. Seconds later came out holding his car keys.

“Terrence, why are you acting as though I don't like your siblings? I told you that I'll see them another time, I never said I won't see them.”

“Okay.” he said walking out of the room. I upped my pace to catch up with him.

“What do you mean by ‘okay?’ – what do you mean?”

He left me standing at the top of the stairs and continued with his destination.

Once I was certain that Terry had left, I fixed our bed then had a bath. I made a note to call my sister on my way to the bank. I can't believe Kevin is blackmailing me— Mokgadi has to help me.

As I, looked for something to wear I felt a cold shiver down my spine. I slowly turned but there was nothing in the room. I settled with mom jeans and a plain grey shirt and sandals. My heart was racing; it felt like someone was in the room but I couldn't see the person. I took a big sun hat and shades, they were good to be my disguise today. I checked that all the windows and doors were locked then got inside the car and reversed out of the garage. I tried Mokgadi's number a couple of times then gave up. She must have sold the phone. Five minutes away from the mall, Kevin's call came through. I let it ring the first time then answered on the second ring.

“What?”

“Someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed.”

“Kevin!”

“Oh stop being so uptight. I hope you're on your way to the bank to collect my money.”

“I said you will get your money today and you will, stop harassing me.” I hung up without giving him a chance to annoy me any further.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I didn't think I would find Mr quantum and his girlfriend still standing outside the gate. I thought by now they would be inside cuddling and watching whatever it is that couples watch. I tried pretending that I did not see them but his voice stopped me on my track. It makes no sense that I've been in his GTI and taxi but I don't know his name. I'm really a risk taker for a fact.

“Ntokakazi uphi uKarabo?” how did he know my sister's name again? Of course I told him because I'm stupid like that.

“She's in the house and panicking.”

“Why?”

“It's her matric dance today but her hairdresser cancelled today.”

“Hawu!”

“Yep.” we looked at one another then I dropped my head.

There was complete silence until we heard someone clearing their throat.

“Sorry for eavesdropping but you said something about a hairdresser cancelling?”

“Yes...”

“Today is your lucky day, a client just cancelled and I don't mind doing your sister's hair. I'm Thobile, by the way.” she extended her hand.

“Goitsimedi.” we shook hands but my main focus was on Mr quantum, I didn't know how to ask his name.

“Nice meeting you, what time is the dance?”

“It's in the evening.”

“Okay let's go, then I can find out what she wants to do.”

We found KB laying on the couch crying. How I hated seeing my siblings crying. I let go of the plastic in my hand and ran to her; “KB?”

She was still sobbing, I shrugged my shoulder while looking at Sedi, hoping she would give me an answer but she was just standing at a corner holding a dish cloth.

“KB stop crying, I found someone who will do your hair and nails.” I turned to Thobile and she nodded.

KB lifted her head then looked at me with swollen eyes.

“Bathong Karabo— you look like this just because a hairdresser dropped you?”

She threw a small cushion towards me, I caught it and sent it back to the sender! Thobile sat next to Karabo and flashed her killer smile at her. Sedi and KB were staring at me waiting for an answer.

“This is Thobile, Mr quantum’s girlfriend or wife I’m not certain.” Sedi and KB’s eyes widened.

“He has a wife?” Sedi asked. I nodded with a painful heart. Thobile was confused.

“Who is this Mr quantum that I’m married to?” then she did the maths and figured out who I was referring to and she had a fit of laughter. “Wow, you guys!” she started laughing all over again.

“Wee Jesu, uMabutho nguyey uMr quantum?” (Jesus, so Mabutho is Mr quantum?)

My siblings and I nodded and she laughed again.

“He is not my husband, that’s my older brother.”

“What?” we all asked at one go.

I couldn't believe that I made my own conclusions— but on the bright side I knew his name. Nkanyezi Mabutho Bhengu! I left KB in the capable hands of Thobile, while I sat outside to enjoy my breakfast. I wanted to make something special for them but I was too lazy to continue where I had left off. Sedi sat next to me and said nothing. I looked at her and she pretended that she was not staring.

“Keng?” (what?)

“Nothing.”

“Lesedi.”

“Would you have been sad if he was married?”

I choked on the bread I had in my mouth. She quickly ran inside the house and brought me water; I had a few sips then the coughing stopped. She mouthed ‘sorry’ with puppy eyes. Lesedi’s growth always caught me off guard. I am never ready for her questions.

“What makes you think I would have been sad?”

“I was just asking. Do you like him?”

“No!”

“Why not?”

“Because...” I shrugged.

“You do know at some point you must have a boyfriend right?”

This child! “Where are we going with this Sedi?”

“I’m just saying.”

She stood up and went inside the house. I was left on my own and my confusion. Was I interested in him? How would I even know that I'm in love when I've never been in love?

Rachel Ndlovu

“Hello?”

“O sa robetxe wena? Ke mo park station.” (you're still asleep?)

I sat upright and rubbed my sleepy eyes.

“Mokgadi?”

“Don’t keep me waiting, we have a lot to do.” then she cut the call.

I watched Terry tossing and I sighed. It was 08h00 in the morning what time did she leave Polokwane? I got off then went to have a quick shower. Flashbacks from yesterday hit me like a ton of bricks. I slipped and fell– my butt hurt a lot from the fall. I crawled out of the shower then stood up. I limped to the rail to get a clean towel before I closed the shower head. I brushed my teeth then returned to the room to find something to wear.

“Where are you going Rachel?”

“Mokgadi is visiting her boyfriend Bushang so I asked her to spend a few days here. I hope you don't mind.” I said without facing him.

“What will I say because you're telling me and not asking me.”
he walked right pass me and went to the bathroom. I pulled up the jeans and zipped the light jacket I had on. Terry walked out of the bathroom then went back to bed.

“Babe it's only for a few days and I promise you she will be on her best behaviour. I promise.” I left kisses on his face.

“Whatever Rachel.”

Sunday's traffic was not bad, I called Mokgadi when I was close by. She walked to the car carrying her suitcase. I opened the boot for her to put her luggage. She came and sat on the passengers side, holding a can of Hansa. Unbelievable! Where did she get alcohol at this time? I stared at her with shame but she didn't care. She gulped down her Hansa, burped loudly then smiled while rubbing her tummy.

“Baie lekker!” (delicious..)

“You better behave Mokgadi, I told Terry that you will behave.”

“Just drive we have a body to bury.”

“This time?”

“Sometimes I wonder if you're my mother's child.” I drove us to Lone hill.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I heard sweeping noises in the other room. KB and Sedi were still sleeping so who was it?

I wore my gown then opened our bedroom door. I couldn't believe my eyes.

“Mama?”

“Hello Goitsi.”

I must be dreaming; I closed my eyes and counted until five. As I opened them mama was still there.

“What are you doing here?”

“To see my babies.” she moved the couches around then continued with her cleaning. KB was up as well, with confusion written all over her face just like me.

“Jaanong?” (and now?)

“Lenna ke maketse.” (I'm also shocked.)

“Bunkie, go na le motogo ko pitseng lo kanna lwa ja.” (there's porridge in the pot you two can eat in the meantime.)

Bunkie was a name she used when she was still a mother to us. I used to smile so hard when she called me like that; but now I hate the pet name. I don't know what drugs Sebaga has taken but they're very strong.

KB clapped her hands twice then returned to the bedroom. I was glued to my spot.

“Mama what's going on here?”

“I’m cleaning.” she said casually.

“I can see that.. but why?”

“Do you think you can forgive me Bunkie? I'm really sorry.”

“Huh?”

I was slowly losing my patience! I couldn't stay any longer in that room, if I stayed a while longer I would regret it. I disappeared into the room but I didn't want to cry in front of my siblings. I took some toilet paper and went outside to the toilet. I locked myself in– sat on the toilet seat and cried. Everything came back rushing as though it happened yesterday...

FLASHBACK

“Mama?” she turned and faced another direction. “Mama!” she mumbled something in her sleep but she didn't wake up.

I stood in front of her for a few minutes thinking she would wake up but she didn't. I saw our stepfather, peeling the blankets off his body and I quickly bent, then crawled into our blankets. If he had noticed that I was up instead of sleeping, hell would have frozen! I spoke too soon, someone removed the blanket off me and pulled me by my legs. I shoot my eyes open and came face to face with our stepfather.

“Shhh, get up and follow me.” refusing would just earn me a punishment. I got up and followed him to where we cooked. Our shack was not big, we used a curtain to separate where we cooked and slept. I looked back and hoped mama could wake up. I didn't want to go anywhere with France.

“Why are you standing over there? Come here!” I slowly made my way to him and he grabbed me.

With a knife on my throat and his big hand over my mouth, making sure I do not scream. I was too terrified to scream. My heart was beating so fast

the neighbours could hear it.

“Undress!”

I swallowed hard and pretended that I did not hear him.

“Goitsimedi?”

“Rra?”

“Who is the adult between me and you?”

“It's you.”

“I said undress.”

I had tears down my face but that didn't scare him. I removed the long nightdress I had on, and my panties. One hand covered my vagina while with the other I tried to cover my chest. He picked me up and put me on the small table we had in our kitchen. I watched him pull down his pants and held his penis. He licked his lips and opened my thighs wider. I closed them and he slapped me.. “what are you trying to do?”

I just shook my head while staring deep into his eyes. “Papa please don't do this.”

* END OF FLASHBACK*

I used my hand to cover my mouth as I sobbed. The tears could not be stopped. I cried for all the years where I couldn't cry but

ask myself why this happened to me. I didn't want to cry but my tears kept flowing.

After minutes of crying, there was a loud bang on the door. “Goitsi!” it was KB’s voice. “I know you're in there open the door she's gone.”

I didn't have it in me to open the door. I sat on the floor staring into space. If someone wanted to use the bathroom they will have to use the other one.

Terrence Ndlovu

There were loud noises at the door. I wiped my hands on the apron to get the door. I was surprised to find Kayise and Lindo.

“Surprise!” Kayise the loud mouth said.

“This is a nice surprise.” I opened the door wider for them to enter. Lindo and I bro hugged then I gave Kayise a side hug.

“I’m so hungry we didn't have breakfast.” Kayise opened the pan that had sausages and bacon. She stole a piece of bacon.

“Sies Ntombi!” Lindo looked at Kayise with disgust.

“Yini?”

“You don't just enter people's homes and put your dirty fingers in their pots. Sies.”

“This is my brother's house.”

“So? You need to know your boundaries Ntombi. This behaviour of yours is not adorable.”

One thing you never do is get yourself involved in the twin war. I left them bickering in the kitchen and went outside to set the table.

The garage was opened I noticed a dent on Rachel's car. I walked to the car to take a closer look. A weird scent was in the air. A scent I was very familiar with— blood! I walked around the garage with hopes to find where the smell was coming from but the twins loud noises stopped me from moving the lawn mower.

They helped me place everything where it had to be. Rachel and Mokgadi were supposed to be here now. Where are they? I walked inside to get my phone to call but the gate slid open and my car came to view. Rachel was driving my car. Kayise's facial expression changed from being happy to being very sour. I saw Lindo pinching her under the table and mumbling something.

I kind of understood why Kayise, acted how she did but it's time she accepted that Okuhle is gone and is not coming back. She was very close with Okuhle but this is ridiculous.

Judging from how Mokgadi wobbled from the car, it was safe to say that she had a few to drink before coming here. This woman could drink!

“Sbari!” she wobbled, almost falling but I caught her in time. (Brother-in-law..)

“Thobela Mokgadi.” Lindo and Kayise gave me looks and I laughed. That's the only thing I could say. Sepedi was very difficult for me. When someone spoke I could understand them the problem was when I had to reply. My tongue felt very heavy.

“Yah Tom and Jerry!” she said to Kayise and Lindo, while poking their noses. Kayise laughed out loud.

“Ausi Kgadi..” she gave her a hug. I noticed how Rachel was saddened by that. Kayise adored Mokgadi but she couldn't stand Rachel. Lindo stood up to hug Rachel.

I took her luggage to the spare room then returned and we had breakfast with Mokgadi being our comedian. Kayise and Lindo were laughing loudly.. my wife was very quiet. I held her hand and gave her a smile. She returned the smile and that warmed my heart.

I mouthed, ‘I love you’ to her then squeezed her hand.

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After breakfast, Kayise, offered to help my wife wash the dishes. I was stunned maybe Kayise needed time to come to terms that I married my wife's best friend. I found it weird as well in the beginning of the relationship. It was a very weird one but the more I ignored her, the more the feelings grew stronger— before we knew it, one thing led to another.

Lindo and I, were sitting in the garden drinking orange juice. He was so focused on the phone. I snatched the phone from him and placed it face down.

“Unjani Lindo?”

“I’m fine why?”

“You’re very quiet these days.. you never call you don't visit. Did I do something wrong?”

He shook his head. I gave him a look.

“No you did nothing wrong.”

“Then why the silent treatment? Khuluma nami Gatsheni..”

“Ng’khumbula uBaba.” I let out a breathy sigh then moved closer to him. Only then, I realise that I missed our father as

well. He passed away a year before Okuhle. Nothing was ever the same again. Our mother has tried to be our pillar but some days I can tell that she is also exhausted.

“I miss him as well.” I draped my arm over his shoulder; he lay his head on my shoulder. “I miss him a lot.”

“Do you think he is proud of me? I'm not a doctor like you..”

“You know he was proud of you.. he always told you and Kayise how proud he was. Don't sell yourself short. You're 24 and an aspiring actor that is about to get his big break.”

He smiled then nodded.

“If you ever need to talk, I'm here okay.”

“Thank you.”

“Now tell me Gatsheni, when am I meeting this mystery lady who stole your heart?”

“There's no lady that stole my heart, never listen to Ntombi.. she will lead you astray.”

We both laughed then went inside the house

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

“Karabo you're going to be late!”

“I'm almost done.”

We were all waiting outside for KB to come out. I had no idea how her dress looked. It was a surprise. Karabo's best friend, Tracey was here as well. She was her date since things didn't work out between her and Kyle. She looked very gorgeous in her dusty pink mermaid dress. Her makeup and hair complemented her outfit perfectly.

The street was full of nosey neighbours. They probably wanted to see how KB will be dressed. Most wondered how we go to expensive schools yet they have not seen an adult in our home.

“I can't wait to see KB!” Sedi said in excitement.

“Me too.” I had my phone out ready to take plenty pictures for the Swanepoel's. They couldn't come because Mr Swanepoel has been under the weather. As for our mother, I'll also send her pictures. I was done trying with that woman; more reason for me to find a job.

I looked up at the sound of heels clicking. My jaw was widely opened, I couldn't believe my eyes. KB was not a huge fan of

skirts and dresses. She always wore jeans, sweats or shorts. When she told me that she would wear a dress, I didn't believe her— but right now she looked amazing. I couldn't stop the tears from falling; at that moment I felt like a proud mother at their child's graduation. I couldn't stop my eyes from watering. Sedi had to take my phone from my hands and capture the moments because I was too emotional.

KB's dress was a mocha brown asymmetric dress; fitted at the waist and flowy at the bottom with a thigh slit. It also had sequins. The colour of the dress suited her complexion very well. Her metallic, ankle strap block heels were just perfect as well. Tracey and KB were taking pictures then they called me over to take some with them. Just hours ago she was a crying mess because her hairdresser had dropped her but Thobile did her hair and nails justice. I mouthed 'thank you' to Thobile.

"How do I look?" KB asked nervously.

"I still can't believe this is you. You look so great, I just want to stare at you the entire day." I turned to Tracey, "girl you look just as great, you two go and have fun!"

We waved as they got into Tracey's dad's Porsche. Once the car was out of sight, everyone left. Thobile stayed behind and sat next to me without saying a word. I had no idea what it was with Thobile but I was not nervous around her. It felt like I had known her my entire life. Strange that a while back I thought

she was Mabutho's wife but now we're sitting on the door step like old friends.

"Your siblings are so lucky to have you in their lives, do you know that?"

"I love them a lot."

"I can tell.." I could tell that she wanted to ask something else but decided not to. She probably wanted to ask the million dollar question; where are your parents?

"Thank you once again for helping us out today. I don't know what would have happened if you didn't come to our rescue."

"It was my pleasure I have to leave now."

I walked her to the gate then at distance I saw Thapelo. If I walked her to the next house Thapelo would up his pace to terrorise me.

"It was nice meeting you Thobile but I remembered that I had to do an assignment, bye." I quickly turned around and closed the gate.

Rachel Ndlovu

I was waiting for Kevin at a old abandoned building just after passing Krugersdorp. It smelt like rotten fish and a dead rat. No one passed here and if they did they wouldn't know me with this ridiculous hat and shades I had on. Last night I had to think on my feet and also get fake number plates. They might not notice me but I had to disguise my car just in case.

Kevin was definitely being late deliberately. It's 17h39 and he is still not here. The smell was just unbearable. I tried calling Mokgadi again but I got the same results as before.

I heard his voice outside, I went to the broken mirror and watched him walking in. I could just hit him over the head with something and no one would find him here.

“Planning on how to kill me?”

His voice startled me.. my evil thoughts made me lose focus.

“You’re late!”

“I’m here and that's all that matters.” he walked closer then tried to touch my face but I slightly moved.

“Here's your money and stay the hell away from me. Stop calling me, I don't owe you anything.”

His cackling stopped me in my tracks. I turned to face him.

“What’s so funny?”

“Did you really believe that a mere 10K would shut me up? If that's the case; you're way stupid than I had imagined. Very dumb.”

I could feel my anger rising bit by bit. Kevin thinks I'm his bank and he will get more money out of me. He has another thing coming. I came here prepared for anything. There was a half brick and broken glass where I stood. Without thinking I picked the brick up then hit him against the head. He let out a loud scream. I hit him again and he went down on his knees.

“Fuck!”

I watched him bleed then he looked at me with disbelief.

“You asked for this Kevin

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you asked for it.” I bashed his head with the brick again. At that point he was way too weak to defend himself. I kept on bashing until he stopped moving. I looked at my clothes that had blood on them then back at Kevin. What have I done? I let go of the brick and moved back.

“Kevin?” I waited for a response but didn't get one. I moved closer and kicked his arm hoping that he wake up.

“Kevin?” I said in a trembling voice. Still no reply. What have I done?

Without thinking twice, I snatched the envelope that had the cash and ran towards the car. I reversed out with trembling hands.

“You did it again!” Okuhle's voice said at the back. I panicked and hit a pothole. That didn't stop me from driving like a mad woman. I needed to arrive home first. How was I going to explain the blood on my clothes?

“Oh Rachel my dearest friend. I never thought this day would come.”

“Just stop it okay. Leave me alone.”

“The blood on your hands is turning me on.” Okuhle said in a seductive voice. I ignored her and continued to drive.

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Thank the heavens, Terry was not home just yet. I had to remove the fake number plates then hid them in the garage and went inside to change the clothes I had on. This was evidence and I had to get rid of everything!

I scrubbed my skin until it turned red. I could still smell his blood all over me. The tears were just pouring out. I was a murderer.. I just killed a person. Just when I was about to get out of the tub, something pulled me underneath the water. I tried to stay afloat but I struggled. Bubbles kept coming out of my mouth as I tried to stay afloat. Then I heard the laughing voice. It was Okuhle pulling me underneath...

“Rachel what are you doing!” Terrence pulled me up and I took a huge breath. My chest was on flames. This didn't look good, he probably thinks I had tried to commit suicide.

He wrapped my shivering body with a thick towel and walked me to the bed. I came close to dying. I looked up and saw Okuhle standing at the door then she disappeared. Terrence tucked me in and sat next to me. The pain on his face said it all.

“Why? Why are you doing this Rachel?”

“Baby it's not what you think.. I must have fallen asleep in the tub.”

“Do you see what I mean when I say you need help? This behaviour is not normal baby.” he held my hand with tears streaming down his face. “I don't want to lose you Rachel. Please...”

We were both in tears, we held on to each other as we sobbed.

Once I was certain that Terry was asleep, I slowly got up from the bed; wore my gown then went to the garage where I had hid the bloody clothes and number plates. I carefully closed the garage and grabbed everything that I would need to burn the evidence. If I used our braai stand, Terry might wake up. I walked around wondering what to do next. My phone rang, it was an unknown number..

“Hello?”

“Ke nna Mokgadi.” (it's me..)

I was so relieved. “Mokgadi, I'm so happy you called me back you have to come to Johannesburg, it's urgent.”

“Aowa wena, Johannesburg?”

“Mokgadi theeletxa mo sesi, I need your help. Okuhle is tormenting me I can't sleep and I just killed someone.” (listen to me my sister...)

“Huh? O mongwe gape? Aowa Rachel.” (another one?)

“I was desperate Mokgadi. He gave me no choice.”

“Mang?”

“Kevin.”

I heard shuffling in the background, this was a first.. Mokgadi sleeping?

“Where is the body?”

“It’s at an abandoned place no one will find him there.”

“I’ll be on the first bus tomorrow morning ngwana mama. Don't panic, Terrence o kae?”

“He is sleeping.”

“Okay go back to bed and sleep tomorrow is another day.”

I nodded then hung up. I looked at the clothes and shoved them in a plastic bag and hid them behind the mowing machine. I hope no one will find them here. I walked back inside the house; then went to our room. I slowly got underneath the covers and just lay while thinking about what I did today.

Rachel Ndlovu

I shook Terry a few times to be certain that he was really asleep. I had to crush a sleeping pill into his shake to get him to sleep. Mokgadi and I, had a lot of work to do and that was never going to happen with Terry and Mokgadi catching up.

I wore my black sweat pants, sweater and my black converse. I looked for gloves in the medicine cabinet; took two pairs then sneaked into Mokgadi's room and shook her.

"Mokgadi.." she turned and slept on her stomach– she let out a loud fart. I covered my nose because wow, this fart could kill a new born baby!

"Mokgadi!" I pinched her butt and she jumped. She looked around before switching on the side lamp.

"And then?"

"Ke nako, let's go." (it's time..)

"Aowa!" she mumbled as she got off the bed and wore her clothes. She gave me a twig to chew; I made a face as I chewed. It was very bitter! We chewed on the twig and spat it out.

"Keng nthwe?" (what's this?)

“Lets go.”

I took the plastic behind the lawn mower and stashed it in the boot. Mokgadi said we had to push the car and start it outside. I told her that won't be necessary because I gave him sleeping pills.

We drove to where Kevin's body was in silence. I wondered if we would even find the body. Mokgadi was whispering on the phone with someone. I stopped in front of the abandoned place and got out. Mokgadi shook her head as we walked inside the place.

“How did you find this place wena?” we heard rats running around, we switched on our flash lights and we came face to face with a dead Kevin. I wanted to throw up.. I made puking sounds; Mokgadi looked at me then shook her head. The closer we walked in, the more nauseating the smell. I couldn't hold it in– I ran out and threw up. Everything that I had eaten came out. I opened the car, drank some water then walked back inside.

“Go bring those sheets!” I ran to the car and brought the sheets to her. I asked her to close Kevin's eyes, they were freaking me out.

I was laying the sheets on the ground when a rat passed by my feet– I screamed out loud.. Mokgadi stood up and slapped me so hard, I became deaf for a while.

“Mokgadi!” I spoke with a trembling voice.

“Wa gafa? How can you scream like that!”

“No one will find us here.”

“This place is abandoned obviously street kids stay here, stop being slow.”

I never thought of that. We tried placing his body on the sheets but the bastard was very heavy.

“One, two, three..” we placed him on the sheets then breathed out. We wiped the sweat of our faces then started rolling him and made sure every piece of him was covered.

We struggled to get him inside the boot of the car but managed. We drove around looking for a place to burn the body and the clothes. We had drove for an hour without finding the perfect place. We finally found a place just before Rustenburg. The place looked perfect to hide and burn things. I just hoped that no one would find us while we still tried to burn the body. It looked like a farm but it was not one.

“We can't take the car along.” I told my sister.

“Okay.”

We took out spades, paraffin, matches and the plastic that had the clothes. With our flash lights on we walked into the big bushes until we got to the middle. The place looked very spooky– who was I kidding, what we're doing is just as spooky. Mokgadi opened a can of Hansa and gulped it down. I grabbed the can and gulped it as well. It was very horrible but at that moment I needed something that would take the edge off. How it tasted didn't matter.

“Is this the brick you used?” Mokgadi waved the half brick with dried up blood. I nodded and felt the beer slowly rising to my throat.

“If you dare throw up Rachel, I will burn you along with this body!” she left me behind and walked back to the car. I swallowed hard and followed her.

We carried the heavy body all the way through the bushes. We finally reached where we left our tools we dropped him on the soil and the digging started. Mokgadi was very calm. I don't know how she did this but I wish I was that calm as well. We dug a big enough hole to throw him inside.

“This is not how I wanted things to end Kevin. You did this to yourself.” I wiped the sweat and tears.

“Aowa sesi, you still have time to have a memorial service for him? I will leave you here.” she said while throwing everything in the hole. I poured the paraffin all over, I wanted him to burn and not leave a trace. If a trace gets left behind it must not be enough to incriminate us. I lit him up and watched as he burnt. A huge fire lit the area up.

“Greet Satan for me in hell!” Mokgadi said while pouring more paraffin.

My focus was on the burning body– I finally looked up, Okuhle, stood on the opposite end of the fire. I screamed and fell down. I fell close to the fire, my sweater caught some flames. Mokgadi poured beer where the sweater had caught fire. Okuhle was nowhere to be seen.

“Mokgadi let's go!” I grabbed her arm and ran to the car. I immediately put the ignition on and drove...

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I kept on tossing around in bed until I sat upright in the dark with tears streaming down my face. After all these years and I could still smell him on my body. The smell never left but I somehow almost forgot how he smelt. Till this day I still don't

know why mama left when we needed her the most, I really don't know. She came from nowhere to disrupt our lives.

I grabbed my phone as I got off the bed and headed to the other room. I badly wanted to speak to someone, someone who was not KB. No one came to mind, I had no actual friends. My siblings were my life, I spent my time being their rock while I lost myself little by little. It was not their fault that we had a selfish mother but some days I stayed up at night asking myself, what life would have been like if I didn't have all the responsibilities? If I just had the chance to be an actual child.

We didn't even have any relationship with our family members wherever they were. All we knew was that mama is from Ganyesa in the North West, and that's it.

“Ausi Goitsi

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why are you sitting in the dark?”

I lifted my head up and found Sedi, looking at me with concern.

“Sedi why are you not asleep?”

“I came to drink water.” she sat next to me and we both sat in silence.

After a moment of silence the lights came on I used my hand to shield my eyes from the harsh light.

“Bathong keng ka boloi?” KB said joining us on the couch.
(what’s with the witchcraft?)

“Why don't you two go back to bed I'll join you just now.” They looked at me with raised brows. Sedi kept on rocking herself back and forth, I knew she wanted to say something.

“Sedi?” I touched her hand, she stopped rocking herself and looked at me with tears in her eyes. That alarmed me and KB. We stared at each other then back at Sedi.

“Lesedi keng?” KB asked.

“He said no one will believe me if I told anyone anything. I promise I didn't want to keep quiet.”

“Sedi o bua ka eng?” KB and I, asked at one go. (what are you talking about?)

“I know what he did to you.. I know what he did. I can still remember everything, he said I must keep quiet or else he will burn us in here.” she was crying badly with hiccups in between. I rushed to get her water but I stopped midway– I turned and looked at her for a while. I shook my head in disbelief, this can't be...

“Sedi what did you see?” KB.

I leaned against the fridge then slid down slowly with tears burning my eyes. This was one secret I had hoped I would take

to the grave. No one was supposed to know about it. KB was very confused, she had no idea what was going on. She kept on asking us what was going on. Sedi and I said nothing. How did she see what happened?

“Can someone tell me what the hell is going on!” KB had her hands on her hips— she was getting frustrated, it was written all over her face. “Lesedi!”

“Leave her alone Karabo.” I said in a low tone. I didn't want Sedi to say a word but KB was not going to let this go until she found out the truth.

“I’m sorry ausi Goitsi but I can't keep this secret anymore. I just can't..” she looked at me with pity, something I didn't need at that moment. She wiped her tears and faced KB. “Sit down.”

“I’m fine standing up.” KB

“Okay... A few months after we had moved in here, Yonela and her friends said if I wanted ones be friends with them; I must not go to school and chill with them. I didn't go to school on that Wednesday...” she looked at us then sighed. “I wanted to fit in and have cool friends so I left with them and we went to the park, but I came home because I didn't want to smoke.”

“Lesedi get to the point please.” Karabo said running out of patience.

“While I opened the gate..” she looked at me with more tears, I shook my head for her to not continue but KB gave her an evil eye.

“I heard some noises coming from our room, I panicked because no one was supposed to be home but then I heard ausi Goitsi, sobbing. I walked slowly towards the door and opened, I.. I.. uhm, I saw Thapelo, slapping ausi Goitsi and told her her that if she stops fighting him, things would be much easier. I watched as he raped her– I just stood there and watched! I couldn't move my legs, I tried screaming but nothing came out. I'm so sorry.” she said looking at me, by then I had stopped crying everything in me was numb.

“What?” KB.

Sedi crawled towards me crying. She was a mess but I was too numb to hold her. She kept on apologizing, over and over again. KB was too shocked to say a word, she sat down while shaking her head.

“When did he threaten you?” I asked.

“You didn't see me but he turned and noticed me. My legs finally managed to move, I turned to run to the main house to ask for help but before I could get out, he pulled me by my neck and.. and...”

“Sedi did he do anything to you?” that caught KB’s attention. We both looked at Sedi waiting for an answer. She looked down without answering us.

“Please say something Lesedi. Please..”

“He lifted my school skirt up and touched me but he didn't do anything.”

I had failed to protect my siblings. I couldn't imagine her trauma after what she saw. Thapelo was disgusting!

“I’m so sorry Nana. I'm so sorry...”

“It’s not your fault ausi Goitsi, after a few days he threatened me. He said I must keep quiet or else he would not stop at only touching me, he would do more.”

The room fell into silence after what Sedi had said. No one moved, no one said a word.. we just sat in silence.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

“GM won't you be late for your test?” I turned and faced the other side. KB shook me again but I didn't turn around. I couldn't imagine how my face looked after all the crying we did last night. My temples were throbbing badly.

“GM come on wake up.” she pulled the blankets off that's when I woke up and looked at her.

“Keng?”

“You're going to be late.”

“What time is it?”

“Almost half past six.” I looked at her dressed in her school uniform and wondered what time they got up after what happened last night. The door opened Sedi walked in also in her school uniform. She was only starting exams next week and KB was writing her first paper today. They didn't need my drama to stand in the way.

“Let me go make something quick for you two. Will a chicken mayo be okay?” I tried standing up but I wobbled a few times, they caught me.

“GM sit down, we made ourselves lunch it's okay. We even had breakfast don't worry.”

This was a first, I was used to doing everything for them in the morning before they left for school. For the first time they made their own lunch.

“I'm sorry I couldn't make your lunch boxes, I did not hear my alarm.” Sedi was trying her best to avoid eye contact. I tried touching her but she moved backwards. She still blamed herself for what Thapelo did.

“You didn't hear the alarm because I switched it off.” KB said with no shame. Before I could open my mouth their transport hooted outside.

“See you later!” they both said and ran out.

Once they were gone I sighed and lie down on the bed. My life keeps taking wrong directions. When will I get a breakthrough?

My phone vibrated under the pillows, it was a message from KB—

I love you GM, I might not tell you this every day but I do. I don't know what Lesedi and I, would be if it had not been for you. You have always been our pillar through all we've been

through. I know how it must have not been easy raising me and Lesedi when you were just a child as well. I want to tell you that you have been doing a great job!

I don't know how you did all that you did for us with so much grace.. how you always put us first before yourself. You're my role model and you will always be my queen. I wish I could erase every trauma you have faced, just so you could tackle this life with no pain.

I hear you cry in your sleep sometimes and it breaks me into tiny pieces that Frank and Thapelo are the reasons why you're crying in your sleep when you're supposed to be resting. I don't know what you're going through at the moment but I know that you can beat it! Please don't give up just yet, please fight. Lesedi and I, will be there every step of the way. Maybe it's time we consider therapy.. I mean all of us. Ke a gorata ausi waka...

I smiled while reading the message. This was very cute and special. I fixed the bed then had the quickest bath in history. I usually take thirty to forty-five minutes to bath and get dressed but today, today I did everything in twenty minutes! I didn't care how I looked. I was in too much pain in the inside to worry about how I looked.

There was no time for breakfast, I grabbed my bag, locked then walked out. Passing the house where Mabutho, lived, for the first time ever since I met him, I wished that I didn't bump into him. I looked and felt terrible. I didn't know if it was his turn to drive the taxi today. I had passed his house when Thobile called out my name. I stopped and looked at her with a forced smile on my face. She ran to me holding a sling bag.

“Hey girl.” she said out of breath.

“Hi.” she held my hand and asked if I was okay. I nodded but she didn't believe me.

“Are you sure you're fine?”

“Yeah.” we walked until we got to the stop sign where we could get a taxi to town.

“I woke up late, now Mabutho has left without me.” she said trying to hold a conversation. I was lost in my thoughts to entertain her. A taxi stopped and we got inside. We sat next to each other then paid.

“My sister, Nomzamo has been on my case about me not being responsible just because I don't want to do nursing like her. I'm into beauty but she doesn't get it. I want to own a beauty spa some day but she's having none of that.”

“Yeah..”

“Goitsimedi what's eating you up?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I have been trying to hold a conversation with you but you're not interested. Am I annoying you perhaps? I know I can talk a lot and that can be annoying to people.”

“You’re not annoying me, I'm just thinking about a test I have to write today.”

“Mabutho tells me that you're at a culinary school.. girl you need to invite me for dinner some day.” Thobile poked me gently on the shoulder.

“He told you?”

“Yes. Now tell me, did your family also give you grieve about what you wanted to study?”

“No.”

“Lucky you! I'm the last born so you can imagine the treatment back at home.”

“After robot! this is where I get off,” I said to Thobile.

Terrence Ndlovu

Soon the hospital would be chaos because we're nearing December and the crime rate increased.

I was extremely tired today, my head throbbed badly as though I had too much to drink last night. Talking about last night, everything was a bit cloudy. I couldn't remember much—Mokgadi and I

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were catching up last night but then it was lights out. I have tried to crack my brain wondering if maybe I had something to drink but I don't remember.

On my way inside, I bumped into Dr Robinson.. “Just the person I wanted to see she said while smiling.”

“How can I help you Robinson?” we laughed as we walked to her office.

“Are you busy?”

“You do know that this is a hospital right? We're always busy.” she sat on her desk while I sat on the chair and faced her.

“I have a liver transplant to do in five minutes, how about I take one of my best protegés to come out of Vilakazi and Bahumi Hospital, to scrub in with me? What do you say?”

“Say no more!” Dr Robinson was one of the best surgeons we had in our hospital. Any opportunity to operate with her, I took it.

“Then let's go and give this woman a new liver!” I followed her out of the office.

“Tell me more about this patient...”

“She’s in her early thirties, very healthy and has been on our waiting list for about two years. She's finally going to live a bit longer.”

“Then let's go and give her a liver.”

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The surgery was a success and now I was running late for my first official session with Dr Puentle. I was looking forward to the session but I was also very anxious about what to expect. The last time she had me opening up about myself without me even realising. She was that good, only if I could convince my

wife to tag along. Talking about my wife my phone rang and it was her.

“Sthandwa sami.”

“My love, you sound very happy today.”

“Who wouldn't be with a wife like mine? Have you seen yourself?” her laughter made me realise how we have been through so much we have not had time to genuinely laugh at anything.

“You're really in a good mood my love. Ohh thank you for the flowers they were what I needed.”

“If you're happy then I'm happy. Are you home yet?”

“I just arrived.. are you at the therapists office yet?”

“One more turn and I'll be there.”

“Okay let me not keep you then baby. What time will you be here?”

“I'm not sure baby.” I parked the car and stepped out. “Baby, I'll see you later okay, I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I greeted Wanda then sat at the far end waiting for my turn. Minutes later the door opened, Dr Puentle stepped out alone

and nodded that I could come in. I couldn't get over how her office was very welcoming. I sat down and looked around the office.

“Terrence, I see you came?”

“You sound surprised.”

“You look happy today, why is that so?”

“I assisted with a liver transplant today and it was a success.”

“Congratulations. Now tell me why you're here.”

“The last time I was here I was very sad. I don't know why but I missed my first wife.” Dr Puentle placed her pen down and looked at me.

“First wife? This is not your first marriage?”

I shook my head no and poured myself a glass of water.

“What happened to your first wife?”

“She passed away.”

“I'm sorry about that— how was your relationship with her. Did you love her before she passed away or after she passed away?”

“She was my world. I was madly in love with Okuhle. She was 19 when I met her.”

“How old were you?”

“I was 23.”

She nodded forme to continue.

“She fell pregnant at 21, by then I was 25.. her dad was furious and demanded that I marry his daughter, which I didn't mind. I just didn't want us to get marry under those circumstances– I wanted it to be under our terms, when we're both stable.”

“How did your family take this?”

“All they asked was if I wanted to marry her and I said yes and they met with her family. We got married then she had a miscarriage.”

As we spoke the emotions I felt years ago, came back rushing. Something was blocking my airways. I couldn't breathe.

“Take a deep breath in Terrence.. there we go. Now breathe out– you're doing great. Are you okay?”

“Yes!”

“Calm down, this happens to the best of us. Tell me more.”

“We never really dealt with what had happened, we moved on with life after the whole thing. Her family just said we will have other children and that was it!”

“It must have been a lot to deal with Terrence. You're in med school trying to be the best, then you get married and you lose your baby. It must have been a lot?”

“At that time I didn't see it as a big deal. I don't know why, I think I pushed my emotions far back where I knew I couldn't reach them. But eventually our walls started cracking.”

“How so?” Dr Puento.

“We were invited to a friend's engagement party and baby gender reveal. Okuhle was not coping and it took that day to show that she was not okay. After that day we always had arguments over anything, things that were not worth arguing about. Eventually we found our rhythm and we were happy again.”

“How come neither of your parents suggested therapy? How was the marriage the following year.”

“My parents suggested it but we turned it down.. we felt that we were way too young for such a thing and we would deal

with it our own way.” I let out a soft chuckle then drank more water. “Very stupid if you ask me..”

“Don’t be too hard on yourself Terrence, in life we learn as we go. We make mistakes to learn from them, okay? This is where our session ends today, don't forget to make another appointment with Wanda.”

“Okay.” I stood up to leave still shocked that the session ended so quick.

Rachel Ndlovu

I heard banging sounds on the door as I made myself a cup of tea. “Don’t break my door!” I said and walked to the door.

“Kayise? Lindo?”

“Sawubona ausi Rachel.” they both said.

“Nifunani ek’seni kanje?” (what do you want so early in the morning?)

“It’s 09h00 in the morning Rachel, it's really not that early.” Kayise said going inside the house. She slumped over the couch and changed the channel. Kayise was going to be the death of me. I just can't with her— I opened the door wider for Lindo to get inside.

“Unjani mLindos?”

“Kodwa ausi Rachel, ungaze ung’bize mLindos? Ngiyaphila kodwa.” (why would you even call me mLindos?)

“Whatever! Did you and...” my eyes roamed to Kayise’s direction. “Did you two eat breakfast?”

“No.”

“Good, come and slice these tomatoes then fry some mushrooms as I make the eggs and pancakes.”

“What about bacon?” Kayise shouted from the lounge.

“If you want bacon get your ass in the kitchen!” Lindo shouted back. I smiled at him. Kayise, stuck her tongue out at Lindo.

It was a bit chilly outside, we were going to have breakfast in the dining area. I placed plates and glasses on the dining table as we finished making the breakfast. Terry was still asleep— he came drained from work yesterday; lost a patient he has known for a while. Mokgadi must still be drunk wherever she is, she was only supposed to be here for a week but it's been three weeks and she is still here. Terry has not complained yet, at least she helps clean when we're at work and she cooks some days.

I noticed Kayise going up the mini stairs, heading towards our room.

“Kayise?”

“I'm going to see if my brother is still alive.” she had one hand on the door handle. This I was not going to let go— I walked from the kitchen and stood in the middle of the room...

“Listen here Kayise, I understand that you don't like me and you probably never will...” she interrupted me—

“Who said I don't like you Rachel?”

“This is exactly what I'm talking about, the eye rolling and doing as you please. You don't have to like me but respect me. This is my house!”

She let out a dry laugh whilst looking at me. “What is your point exactly Rachel? I didn't know that you and I, have issues.”

“Kayise!” Lindo said next to me.

“Don't Kayise me wena Lindo, please don't. This is between Rachel and I, I need to know what her problem is.” she said staring at me.

“I'm not Okuhle, Kayise, and I'll never be her. Stop with the attitude! Do you think that we can be civil towards each other?”

“Even if you tried you could never be her! I was trying to be civil towards you but you just had to act like a drama queen.”

“You can't just do as you please in my house Kayise! Respect me at least as your brother's partner. Why are you even going to my room?”

“To obviously check my brother.” she made hand gestures with her eyes popped out.

“You don't go into my room and that's it, that's invasion of privacy Kayise. Hate me all you like but in my house you respect me.”

“Respect is earned mfazi kaBhuti!”

“That’s enough Ntombikayise!” Terrence said standing behind Kayise. Both Kayise and I, were startled by his bold voice. Terrence never raises his voice.

“That’s enough! You will respect my wife, do you understand?”

“Kodwa bhuti...”

“Kodwa bhuti yok’nuka– I have tolerated your attitude for far too long! This ends now and today.”

Kayise was such a cry baby, she was already in tears and I noticed how that made Lindo uncomfortable. Kayise was his twin afterall; when she was in pain he felt it as well. Terrence left her standing alone then walked to us; bro hugged Lindo then gave me a kiss on the cheek.

“It smells nice in here baby. Is breakfast ready?” I nodded and returned to the kitchen on my own to fetch the rest of the food.

Mokgadi joined us as we were dishing up. Kayise was sitting on the couch sobbing. Mokgadi looked at her then me.

“Keng Mokgadi?”

“Why is she sobbing?”

“I don't know.”

“Banna!” Mokgadi, clapped her hands then poured herself a glass of juice. I watched Lindo moving his food around in the plate without eating. Terrence was also lost in his thoughts, his food was staring at him. I touched his hand underneath the table.

“Are you okay baby?”

“Yeah.”

“You don't look okay, maybe you should go and sleep again.”

“I'm fine my love.” we heard the door being slammed and Kayise was nowhere to be found. Terrence, stood up about to follow her; I touched him gently and shook my head.

“Don't... Just let her be.”

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“What a great way to start a morning on a Saturday.” I said to Terrence

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who was in the bathroom.

“Kayise needs to know her place, she is getting out of control.”

“I know that baby.. I really thought we were making progress, I don't know what happened.” Terry, sat next to me on the bed; held my legs and massaged my feet so gently, I let out a soft moan.

“Do you like that baby?”

“Mhmm.”

“As I was saying, Kayise needs to understand that you're my wife. She needs to stop acting like a spoiled brat.”

I opened my eyes then looked at him, “Spoiled brat?”

“Yes.” we both laughed as he continued to give my feet some love.

“That’s so good baby, maybe you should become a masseuse instead what do you say?” he threw a pillow at me then tickled me— I fell onto my back while laughing.

“Let’s see what this masseuse can do..” he said getting on top of me and moved his face closer to mine. Just a few more

inches, our lips will be locking. I smiled and he returned the smile.

“I love you Terrence.”

“I love you too baby.”

Goitsimedi ‘GM’ Tholo

I packed a small bottle of vodka inside my toiletry bag then walked out of the room. KB and Sedi stared at each other then back at me.

“GM, o ya kae?”

“I’m going to use the bathroom outside.”

“Why?”

“Are we not allowed to use it anymore?”

“You always bath in our room so that's why I'm asking.” Sedi was quiet throughout. She has not been the same ever since she let the cat out of the bag— who was I kidding no one has been the same ever since. At night my demons dealt with me. I locked the bathroom door while I filled the tub. I sat on the toilet seat and had a few shots of the vodka. For the first time in my life two weeks ago I tasted alcohol. I needed something

that would help me sleep better; alcohol was that something. My siblings didn't know that I had turned alcohol into my friend and I hoped to keep it that way for a while.

Mama has been blowing my phone up and she was getting on my nerves. Why now? All these years she forgot that she was a mother now she wants to mother us. I texted Thobile to ask her where we are going tonight. I think she and I, are getting close. She's fun to be around; she's only two years older than me but at least I get to explore when I'm with her.

Thobile replied saying she's not feeling well today, she can't even get up.

I leaned back in the tub and drank more of the vodka. It burnt my throat a bit but I didn't care, all I wanted was to forget. Forget how I was used!

Tears streamed down my face as I removed the bandage I had wrapped around my wrist. The cuts were just about to heal. Alcohol was not the only new coping mechanism I had found— I slit my wrist as well.

I opened a new razor blade and made new cuts.. I closed my eyes as I made new cuts. It was painful but worth it! I had my knees raised up, the blood dropped onto my thighs as I slit the wrist. The moment I felt numb; I stopped making cuts. The

wrist that had cuts made contact with the water and that burnt as hell. The pain was too much. I sat for a while then got up.

My phone rang as I got dressed, it was mama. I watched it until it stopped ringing.

Returning to our room I found Sedi on her own. Once she saw me she attempted to leave; I held her hand to stop her from leaving.

“Why have you been ignoring me Sedi?”

“I’m not ignoring you.”

“You don't speak to me anymore.. when I enter the room, you leave. If that's not ignoring me I don't know.”

“Are you not angry at me because I am.” this was a start. We walked to the couch and sat next to each other.

“Why must I be angry at you? You did nothing wrong.”

“I watched as he hurt you. I did nothing but watch. Who does that?”

“You were not expecting to see what you saw, that's why your body froze. There's nothing you could've done.”

“No! Stop trying to make me feel better. What I did was plain evil!”

“Sedi...” she removed her hand from mine.

“I’m a bad person and you won't be able to convince me otherwise.” with that said she got up and left. I slumped over the couch without knowing what to do or say. This place was supposed to be our new beginnings but we're back to square one! I looked around then opened my toiletry bag and took out the vodka– I gulped what was left but someone cleared their throat by the door. I slowly turned only to find KB with her arms folded staring at me. We had a staring contest for a while but I blinked first. I cursed softly at the defeat.

“When did you start drinking?”

“Life was meant to be lived!” I gulped the little that was left.

“After all these years you're going to give up just like that? Where is my strong sister? The one who fights back and goes after what she wants, where is she?” KB.

“She got tired of being strong and now she's living according to her age. I'm no one's mother and I can do whatever I want. I don't have to babysit anyone anymore.”

“I see...” KB left me on the couch and disappeared into our room.

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“Why do you have to be so stubborn!”

“No leave me alone!” Thapelo and I struggled to get into the other room. I scratched and kicked hoping that would get him to back off but the skinny guy was having non of that. He used all his strength to push me in the room. I fell onto my knees but quickly got up.

“Why are you doing this to me? What did I do?”

“I have been watching you acting like you're the most important thing in this neighborhood. Ignoring guys as though they're going to ask you to marry them.”

“Now I must talk to people I don't want to talk to because you're watching me?”

“You will learn to be a bit more humble. You're not all that and I'll show you...”

I fell off the couch and looked around the house but realised that I fell asleep on the couch. I got up and touched my chest—

it was a dream, a bad dream. He can't hurt me anymore. After I had calmed down I realised how quiet it was in the house, Sedi and KB were not home. I tried their cellphones but they rang inside the house. This was not good– I tried their friends but no one had seen them.

The door opened, they walked in chatting loudly. Sedi looked down once she noticed how furious I was.

“Sorry ausi Goitsi.” KB didn't bother saying a word, she walked passed me entering the room.

“KB o tswa Kae?” (where are you from?)

Silence.

“Karabo!”

“O batlang Goitsimedi?” why was KB so angry? (what do you want?)

“Ausi,” I turned her to face me. “Keng? Why are you home so late?”

“Last time I checked you're not my mother, I can do as I please.”

That I was not expecting one bit! KB didn't even look remorseful.

“Why are you surprised by my statement?” KB.

“How could you say something like that I know I'm not your mother.”

“You said it yourself that you no longer live for other people, you're no one's mother. Ring a bell?”

What KB was saying made no sense— there was no way I could have said what she just said. No way!

“Karabo stop fooling around.”

“I am not fooling around; you did say you're tired of being a mom.”

This was not good.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

Things have been very awkward in the house between all of us. Sedi avoids me every chance she gets. KB does as she pleases, she's almost done with her exams and she's losing her focus. I couldn't understand what her problem was with me; I tried to crack my brain to think what I could have done or said to get her to act how she's acting but nothing comes to mind.

I had a job interview at a new restaurant in Clearwater mall around 09h00. I had no clue what to wear, KB would be helping me out but she's not talking to me. The door opened and Sedi walked in holding her tie and school shoes. Maybe she could help me out–

“Sedi what must I wear for my interview?”

“We both know that I'm just as clueless as you when it comes to clothes.”

She was right, I breathed in and out then walked to the bed and shook KB.

“Hmm..”

“Wake up and help me out.”

“Mhmm...” she tossed then faced another direction. I shook her again then she kicked the blankets off her.

“Keng?”

“I have an interview do you mind helping me out?”

“Goitsimedi you're old enough to choose what to wear.” she pulled the blanket over her head.

“KB for how long are you planning on ignoring me?”

“Get over yourself Goitsimedi, not everything is about you.”

“Maybe if you told me what I did I could apologize?”

She looked at me with a bored expression.

“Please leave I want to sleep.”

“Wow!” I turned to the wardrobe and chose what I hope was okay for the interview. I looked at KB one more time then got dressed. I heard the door close as I got dressed, I ran to the window, it was Sedi leaving. She didn't even say goodbye, what was happening?

“Goitsi are you in there!” Thobile said while knocking. I opened the door and she smiled at me.

“Thanks for coming Thobile, I don't want anything hectic just something simple.”

“We don't have time for anything hectic babe, I'll try to do your brows and maybe some eye shadow because I have to get ready as well.”

“No problem..” I wanted to ask her where Mabutho was but pinched myself not to. I have not seen him in a while. I mostly had afternoon classes or tests.

“I saw Sedi walking to the stop sign alone where is KB?”

“She's not writing today.”

“Soon she'll be done with her exams and going out to party!” I stared at Thobile then she laughed. “I'm being honest.”

“She's not even speaking to me.”

“What did you do?”

“That's the thing I have no idea Thobile. Just out of the blue she stopped speaking to me.”

“You must have done something, ask her until she gives in.. it can't be healthy to live with someone who doesn't speak to you.”

“Mhmm, so how did things go with your sister?”

“Ahh that one!” we laughed out loud.

“That bad?”

“Babes, you don't want to know.. she should've taken drama classes ngeke yoh.”

“I don't have champagne, we'd be toasting to dramatic family members right now.”

“We need to go out this Friday. Amapiano session at club nudity this Friday!”

“I can't leave my siblings alone you know that Thobile.”

“Konje... I'm done go look in the mirror.”

Thobile knew her story, I didn't look like a clown. I always looked like one after applying makeup. I have watched so many makeup tutorials but it's always a disaster!

“The day you open your beauty spa, I'll be the first in line to get pampered! I love it.”

“I'm glad you love it. Listen you're going to be in charge of catering at my wedding! I just need to find a man though.”

“My outfit is not too over the top right?”

“You're perfect, not too much. Just right... I have to go now, I forgot to lock.”

Perfect opportunity to ask about Mabutho! “Where's your brother?”

“Mabutho has been doing the early shifts so his already at work.”

“Okay.” I walked her to the door, then came and placed everything in its place then left...

Rachel Ndlovu

“Mokgadi are you sure we're at the right place?”

“I have been here before but it looks a bit different than when I was here.” we were deep in Alex looking for a man called Madlabantu, to help me out with my Okuhle situation. We once went to one in Limpopo but there was no time to drive all the way to Limpopo. We had to do this now before it was too late. I have not seen Okuhle in a while but I know when she returns she will not stop, more reason for me to strengthen myself and my marriage. I was not going to lose Terrence because of a ghost– never!

“Mokgadi let's just ask where this man lives, aowa.. we've been walking in circles for a while now. I only got half a day off remember I still need to go to work.”

“You don't ask directions when going to such places wena Rachel. I'm sure we're not far.”

“Aowa...” Mokgadi stopped walking and stared at me with annoyance all over her face.

“Don’t forget that I'm doing this for you
I didn't kill anyone.”

“Mokgadi!”

“Stop complaining let's go.”

“You might not have killed him but you helped burn him.”

“I never said I didn't.”

We continued arguing as we walked around looking for a green house that had a pale blue mud house next to it.

“Wena Mokgadi, how did you find out about this Madlabantu?
Does he eat people?”

“Ask no questions and hear no lies, keep walking and stop asking me stupid questions.”

I walked behind my sister wondering why someone would be called Madlabantu, it made no sense. I hope I won't have to sleep with him to get help. How did Mokgadi even know about this place?

“Yah!”

I looked up to see what had Mkgadi excited; I finally saw the green house. I let out a sigh from relief. I was exhausted from all the walking we did. I'm glad we left the car at home.

One could smell the mphepho all the way from the gate! We sat on a bench outside the mud room and removed our sneakers. We heard him chanting loudly in the room. I looked at Mkgadi who looked very calm. This one was definitely a witch! Weird things made her calm, she was definitely part of the witchcraft gang.

“Oh yes!” a strange looking man said coming out from the mud room. “Oh yes!” he repeated the same words more than once while staring at the gate. He was a short man with a round face and tiny eyes. His lips were pouted and had a black colour on them. He was very weird looking; one could not stare at him for more than five seconds!

“Come in.”

We followed him in, there were snake and crocodile skin around the room. The place smelt just as bad. I had no idea if it was fresh blood and urine that was lingering in the air or what. He instructed that we sit on a dried cow skin that he had turned into a mat. Hygiene was not part of his plans!

The chanting began, we had to clap our hands while saying ‘makhosi’ the whole time. He drank a red liquid from a tiny

bottle then spat in the fire that was dying down— the fire came to life immediately and lit the entire room. I wish he had not done that, I could see everything clearly. My skin crawled.

“You will find no peace! Peace is something you won't know.” he said startling me.

“You will find no peace!” he repeated staring at me.

“What are you talking about mkhulu?”

“You know what you did and you will be haunted forever!”

Mokgadi and I, exchanged looks then looked down as he changed. His pupils had turned into snake eyes; out of fear, I moved back and attempted to run but I suddenly couldn't move my legs.

“Her family were very powerful and praying people. You will visit all kinds of people but they won't help you.”

“Thokoza mkhulu.”

“The previous man you went to did not tell you everything you needed to know.”

“Thokoza mkhulu.” Mokgadi and I said.

“I can't really read what she has in store for you because she's blinding me from reading her. Her pain is blinding everyone from reading her.”

“Thokoza mkhulu!”

He turned to face Mokgadi then shook his head and turned and to my direction.

“Go behind that curtain; undress then get into that medium sized dish.” I did exactly as I was told the the curtain moved, he came in holding different bottles. I hid my boobs and he chuckled.

“I’ve have seen a lot of those to last me until I take my last breath.” he said without looking at me. He mixed coloured powders and herbs in a dish and squeezed something clear that looked like oil but had a foul smell, into the mixture; he lit more mphepho and held it above my head while burping loud. Once that was over, he made small cuts on my shoulders then took some of the mixture– rubbed it over my body as well as onto the cuts on my shoulders. I was tense throughout wondering what he was going to do to me. He took his time rubbing it over my boobs going all the way down to my thighs.

“What are you doing?”

“Shhh, just relax.” he continued rubbing the mixture all over my body, especially my boobs. I couldn't understand why a woman wasn't doing this.. he told me to stand and I did, no question asked.

“Wrap yourself with this then drink everything in that cup. Once you're done get dressed and leave.” before he left he looked at me one more time while shaking his head, “ this is only a temporary solution, you know what to do.” then he left.

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“How do you feel?”

I closed my eyes then opened them again. Mokgadi was kneeling next to me in my room.

“What’s going on?”

“You were tired when we came back and you took a nap.”

“Nap?” all I remembered was Madlabantu telling me to stand, then drink some bitter.. smelly herbs in a cup, which I did but everything else after that is cloudy.

“What happened in that room Mokgadi?”

“Nothing, he just strengthened you, that's it.”

I didn't know if at that point I could trust my own sister. I nodded then tried to stand but my legs were still painful.

“Why can't I move my legs? I need to get to work.”

“Don't worry I told them that you won't make it, you twisted your ankle..”

“Mokgadi!”

“My job is done here I'm going back home tomorrow.”

“How did you meet him?”

“Don't forget to drink those herbs and to chew some of them.”
she stood up and left.

Mokgadi was hiding something from me.

Terrence Ndlovu

“Good evening Wanda, I know I'm a bit late.. sorry.” I hoped Dr Puoentle could still see me. She gave me a warm smile and said I could go in there was no one in the room. I sighed from relief and knocked on her door before I entered. Dr Puoentle, stood firmly at the glass door leading outside to the garden. She was lost in her thoughts, I had no idea if she even heard me knocking.

“Penny for your thoughts?” she turned with a charming smile. For someone in her late forties, she was aging like wine.

“Terrence, I didn't hear you come in.”

“I realised that, is something wrong?”

“Nothing I can't handle.. our session is going to be a bit short today.”

“I'm sorry for being late...”

“Better late than never. Let's talk... But before that how are you finding your sessions so far? Is there anything that was left unsaid that you want to talk about?”

“I have no complaints honestly. I have to say I never thought I would enjoy or appreciate therapy but I'm glad you came to our hospital that day.”

“I wish I was there for a casual visit but life is a bitch!”

We both laughed, I never expected such from her. I drank water then leaned back in the chair.

“Take your time Terrence, take your time this is a safe space. Do you remember what we talked about in our last session?”

“Yes...”

“Breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth... That's it you're doing great. You were telling me about the day you got the phone call...”

“That week we received the best news ever! Okuhle turned 24 the previous day on a Friday. We went out with her best friend Rachel, her sister and two more friends. We had a lot of fun, from my side I never went out a lot because of med school.” I drank more water...

“The following morning she wasn't feeling well, we thought it was all the alcohol she had drank the previous day. Later into the day I brought her something to eat but she threw up and when she attempted to stand to go to the bathroom, she fainted.” I looked up and Dr Puento, was staring at me.. she nodded for me to continue.

“I didn't have a car back then, I called my father and we rushed her to the hospital. Tests were done, she was a few weeks pregnant.”

“How did you take the news.. both of you?”

“I was not overly excited with good reason but on the other hand seeing how happy she was I pushed aside my fears.”

“How many miscarriages did she have again?”

Dr Puentle asked what she already knew, this was her way to get you to keep talking...

“The first miscarriage was when she was 21, then when she was 22 she miscarried twice. We never thought we could get pregnant again. We went to different fertility clinics, saw gynaecologist after gynaecologist but we were both healthy and okay. I lost hope but she didn't. She never stopped believing that one day she would fall pregnant and she did when she was 23. This one was different, I also believed that this time she would give birth. She usually miscarried when she was two or three months into the pregnancy.”

“So Okuhle had already had three miscarriages, no one attempted any therapy; you just swept everything under the

carpet. You once mentioned that a friend who had some baby gender reveal was one of the reason you noticed that Okuhle was not coping but what about you? You never said anything about how you felt. How did you two cope after the two miscarriages when she was 22?" Dr Puoentle.

"When we found out that we were expecting again, we were still trying to deal with the first miscarriage. We were still figuring out what and how to deal with our emotions then we found out that she's expecting. We engulfed ourselves in that happy bubble and left behind everything else... We were just happy. Then she miscarried, our world came to a stand still.. we couldn't understand why. We drifted apart, she partied more and I buried myself in anything that related to medicine, case studies all of that.. another pregnancy after the second miscarriage, we were not happy but we tried to hope that God, will feel sorry for us and grant us the wish to become parents."

"You mentioned God, did you come from a religious family? Did you blame God for your pains and all the tears you shed? Did anything change after the third miscarriage?"

“As I had said; we were both not very happy about this pregnancy.. it had been just a few months from the previous one. Her breasts were still tender from that loss– but we tried to be there for each other. She partied less and I tried to be more involved than the two previous miscarriages. I think Okuhle and I, had no hopes to carry this baby full term. We just had no hope. We lost the baby when she was six weeks. Life carried on

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our parents had some ritual for us to strengthen her womb but by then– all hope had been lost. To answer your other question; we went to church on Sundays, we prayed we acknowledged our ancestors. Okuhle and I came from families that believed strongly in prayer and appeasing our ancestors. In our marriage we prayed but it was not a regular thing.” I drank more water...

“At 23 same story we're expecting again but as I said this pregnancy was different.. we became close, our love was blooming. It were as if we had just met. We went on dates, we just had fun as two young married people. We connected.. well I connected more with this pregnancy than the previous three pregnancies. She reached her second trimester and I knew that this baby was going to be born. Our miracle baby.. when she

was around 22 weeks, she was rushed to the hospital and there was no heartbeat. She had an emergency c-section and...

I exhaled then leaned back and looked up to block the tears from falling. I still didn't have the guts to cry— I felt my chest tighten up and my breathing was very shallow. I counted from ten going back but my chest tightened. I sat upright with tears falling. I had no control over them; I let them be. I wanted to scream so badly but I didn't know if it was allowed in her office. I stood up to stand at the opened window to get some air. I had my hands on the window pane and looked out with the tears still streaming.

“It’s okay Terrence.. it's okay.” I heard Dr Puento’s voice behind me. “Am I allowed to touch you?”

Words were going to fail me; I nodded instead. She rubbed me gently on my back as I sobbed.

“Men are allowed to cry Terrence. It's not a sin— cry as much as you want, let it all out. Set your heart free! Don't keep anything in. Scream if you have to.”

With that said; I fell onto my knees with a loud shattering scream. I didn't know I had it in me to scream and cry.

“You’re not weak if you show your emotions, just cry.. cry the pain away.”

Goitsimedi ‘GM’ Tholo

My interview was a total failure! I was prepared for any type of questions they would throw my way but I froze when I got there. My mouth and tongue refused to function. I drank water and asked for a moment; the lady was very patient but I still couldn't utter a thing. Out of frustration and not wanting to embarrass myself any further, I grabbed my bag and left. Not only did my interview become a disaster, we had practical test today. We had to make a rooibos cake with chocolate and caramel sauce and raspberry filling. I failed to get my sponge right– my caramel was burnt out and I forgot to add the chocolate sauce as well. My day was a disastrous one.

Karabo was not home when I arrived only Sedi was in the house. I didn't bother with any small talks. I had no desire to cook, something I enjoyed doing even on my worst days. I was too sad. I walked straight to the room, locked the door and sunk to the floor to sob silently. I didn't want Sedi to hear me. Days like these made me wish I was still young and mama was in our lives– before she met Frank. One of my many

nightmares! She would hold me in a tight, warm embrace and hum softly.. she would look at me with a beautiful full smile while her eyes twinkled. I had the same eyes as hers, even the smile.

Once I was done feeling sorry for myself, I opened my handbag and took out the small stashed, Smirnoff vodka I hid in the bag. I drank it little by little until my eyes became heavy. I unlocked the door before I walked slowly to the bed and slumped over and it was lights out for me.

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Stop.. mmmm.. please stop.

“Stop acting like you don't like this. I know you do!”

Thapelo, please...

“That’s my girl, beg for it! I want you to beg.”

Why are you doing this? I did nothing to you... Tears were streaming down my face as he roughly pushed himself inside my v*gina. He held my hands tightly stoping me from scratching him.

“From now on no one will touch you unless it's me. Do you understand?”

I nodded tears and mucus all over my face. I had stopped fighting; I just wanted all of this to be over. I wanted him to stop...

“Ausi Goitsi?”

I opened my eyes but I struggled to breathe.

“Water...” I said in a low tone. We couldn't see one another because the light was off. Sedi immediately got up from the bed and switched the lamp on. She looked at me with fear then shook KB, to wake up. Something heavy was sitting on my chest— I tried to breathe but nothing worked. I tossed until I landed on the floor that's when KB woke up.

I slapped my chest in attempts to breathe and that didn't work as well.

“GM keng?” KB said sitting next to me with panic all over her face.

“Water...”

“O batla metsi?” (you want water?)

I nodded twice; Sedi ran to get me water. I gulped it all in one go with some coming out from my nose.

“Ausi Goitsi breathe in through your nose and out with your mouth.” Sedi said in a rush. I tried what she said and I started feeling much better, the tightness around my chest lessened.. the tears followed. I lifted my knees then rocked myself back and forth.

“GM?” KB tried to touch me but I screamed.

“Don’t touch me, don't touch me, don't touch me...”

“Ausi Goitsi you're scaring us.” I heard them talking but they sounded very far from me. I saw myself falling deep into a dark hole. All I saw were Frank and Thapelo’s faces. Every single corner of the room, they were there staring at me with joy all over their faces. They had won! They had succeeded into invading one thing I tried hard to keep them away from– my head.

I stood up and picked up anything I could put my hands on, slammed everything against the wall. I just wanted to stop them from laughing at me; I didn't want to hear their voices.

“Just stop! Stop tormenting me, you win okay! You win, now leave me alone please..”

The laughing continued– I fell to my knees and lie down on my left side. I was exhausted from screaming and crying. I just

wanted this to stop. I needed them to leave me alone, had I not suffered enough? I could hear sobbing next to me but that was not my main concern, I was more focused on the faces I did not want to see.

I closed my eyes and pretended that I was still young and mama was holding me while humming softly. I imagined everything about her, that's how I wanted to remember her— my caring mother who loved me a lot. I fell asleep to her voice, soothing voice...

Rachel Ndlovu

I had been up two hours earlier than my usual waking up time. I couldn't remove what I did to Kevin from my thoughts. He has not haunted me but I did that on my own, I just couldn't sleep like a normal person would.

I turned and watched Terrence sleeping with his forehead creased. I stroked his beard then smiled; he was all mine. This is all temporary you know what to do... Madlabantu's words repeated in my head. I watched Terry face the other side and I could not imagine how he would take the truth, if it were to surface. He would not cope knowing what I have done— it was not my intentions but it was already late..

I reached for my phone on the bedside drawer and called Mokgadi, I have not heard a word from her since she left. I don't even know if she arrived well.

“Hello.”

“Mokgadi!”

“Keng wena?”

“You were supposed to call akere.”

“I forgot, well I'm home now what do you want?”

My sister and her moods when she was not drunk, a nightmare!

“Is it a crime to call my sister and find out if she arrived safely?”

“You only call when you have killed someone and need me to help you clean the mess up.” I reduced the volume as I got off the bed and walked out of the room.

“How can you say something like that so casually? You know it was a mistake.”

“It's always a mistake when it comes to you Rachel, this was the last time I was helping you.”

“You don't hear me go around telling people that o tsamaya dingaka and all that. Why is it when you help me, you point out my past mistakes?”

“I want to sleep Rachel it's way too early for me to be up.”

“Mokgadi...” I heard beeping sounds, she hung up on me! The nerve.

“Who was that?” I touched my chest and sighed before turning around. I came face to face with a topless Terrence, my husband was just perfect. He did not have a six pack but he did not also have a belly. I walked closer and wrapped my arms

around his midsection while staring into his dark pupils— I traced my finger on his scar that was very faint.

“Mr Ndlovu why are you up so early?”

“One would think you're cheating with all these secret calls you have been making when I'm not around.”

“Why would I cheat on all of this..” I snuck my hand into his pyjama bottoms and stroked him softly— the face he made was priceless. “You know you're the only man for me baby.”

“Is that so?” he said while coming forward and I went backwards until I had my back against the wall. “Where are you going baby?” Terrence had a very deep soothing voice, a lazy voice. I could listen to him talk the entire day.

“I'm not going anywhere Gatsheni..” he let out a dry chuckle— I fell in love all over again.

Terrence stood in front of me, hovering over me like a giant. We stared at each other and smiled then I looked down but he used his two fingers to raise my head to look at him.

“Terry...”

“You can't still be shy to look at me. Look at me, I want you to look at me.” I did and he captured my lips with his, with one hand he pulled me towards him while the other was at the back of my head to deepen the kiss. I opened my mouth a bit wider

to let his tongue explore with mine. Dance together. I moved to the side then pushed the door wider and moved in— our lips still moving in sync we both walked into the room. We stopped to catch our breaths for a few seconds then he captured my lips again.

The back of my knees hit against the bed, I had my hand inside his pyjama bottoms again and stroked him— he went very hard, like a rock. In a blink of an eye my nightdress had been removed from my body. I was left naked for him to enjoy the view. He caressed my naked torso then left wet kisses all over my body. He crouched down and draped my leg over his shoulder; I had my hands on his head for balance.. I felt his tongue on my entrance and a finger on my clit. He licked a few times while the thumb assaulted my clit— my head went side ways as I let out a whimper. Terry had a very experienced tongue, he moved it in and out of me while rotating it like a rotating chair. My leg was shaking, I was losing my balance..

“Baby.” I said in a low tone.

He removed his tongue and kissed my pussy lips then went up to my thighs all the way to my boobs— then my lips, I tasted myself on his lips and I loved how I tasted. I deepened the kiss until we both fell on the bed, I opened my legs for him to be comfortable. He looked at me then rubbed his erect shaft against my leaking coochie. The more he did that, I widened my

legs and thrusted from underneath with hopes that it would slide in..

“Baby please...”

“What do you want?” he said with his deep lazy voice. He breathed onto my face then he rested his head on the crook of my neck.

“Stop tormenting me.”

Terry held my hands above my head as he slowly slid himself in—

“Ahh..” we both moaned, he stared into my eyes while he moved his waist slowly. A tear escaped my eye.

He thrusted with so much ease at a snail pace, he let go of my hands and grabbed my waist to pull me to him. He was hitting my inner walls and I thrusted underneath, with the same pace as him; he let out a breathy groan, his face full of aggression...

“I love you Rachel.” words failed me, I nodded with tears streaming down my face

I held him tight as he gave me deep thrusts then we both reached our peak.

“I love you.” he said while he emptied his seeds in me.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

I looked around the dark room hoping to see someone I could recognise. I had no clue where I was and how I had reached the place. The room I was in was very dark and misty. It seemed as though it had not been cleaned in a while.

“Hello?” I shouted while sitting upright on the tiny bed, it made weird sounds; a lot of people must have used it before and it had reached its limit. There was a jug that had water in it next to the bed but it looked very filthy to store water.

My legs touched the ground, I was wearing a long blue dress I was not familiar with. My toe nails had been painted in the same blue colour as the dress I had on.

“Is anyone here?” I walked the filthy room trying to figure out where the door was— there was no door, I was trapped inside. I banged on the walls with hopes that someone would hear me.

“Someone please help...” I said while banging. I saw a mirror at the far end corner of the room; walked and I screamed once I saw myself on the mirror. I looked like something that came out from a horror movie. My hair was a total mess! My face had bruises, my skin looked very ashy.. I walked closer and touched my face. This can't be me. The further I looked into the mirror, I saw the happy me.. I was smiling with my siblings. I looked very

happy and I was holding a baby but I didn't know who the baby belonged to.

I wiped the mirror to take another closer look, I saw a young version of me curled up at a corner in a mud house. I looked very tiny and my lips were all dried up. My eyes were all red from the crying I had cried. "Sebaga, o ko kae ngwanaka?" a voice said outside the dark room, a room that looked very similar to the one I was in now. I couldn't understand why the voice said Sebaga.. the voice became very faint then the door opened, heavy footsteps walked in.. only then did the girl in the corner look up and...

I woke up panting and I was sleeping on the floor with my siblings. I looked around trying to understand what was going on. What was that dream all about? Who was that man that walked into the room?

I stood up, stretched then walked to the window and opened it up. My heart was still racing. A hand touched me, I screamed and elbowed the person. "Ahh!" KB said holding her abdomen.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to, you scared me."

"It's fine. Are you okay?"

"Yes why wouldn't I be?"

“You don't remember what happened last night?”

I shook my head no.

“Are you sure?”

“What happened?” before she could say anything, Sedi, woke up then rubbed her eyes. She looked at us with sleepy eyes.

“Ausi Goitsi are you fine?”

What happened last night for my siblings to ask me if I'm okay.

“Why are you and KB asking me if I'm okay, what happened?”

Then it all came back to me— I had a dream and couldn't breathe. I struggled to breathe but Sedi said something about breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth... I sat on the floor remembering everything, how I thought I was dying. I looked up and they looked at me with sad faces. They sat next to me without uttering a single word.

“Are you two not writing today?”

“No.” they both said. I nodded then leaned against the wall, trying to make sense of my dream.

“Must we make breakfast for you?” KB asked standing at the door.

“I'm not hungry..”

“You didn't eat last night GM.” it was nice to hear her call me that. I stared at her with a smile on my face.

“I'll accept breakfast if you tell me what I did that got you so angry.”

“Can we move past that now?”

“Not until I know what's wrong.”

KB told me everything I said to her and I was embarrassed. The girls knew I was not their mother but I never made them feel that they were a burden to me. I loved looking after them, yes some days I wished I did not have the responsibility of taking care of them but I would never trade what we share for anything.

“I'm sorry KB, I shouldn't have said what I said. Please forgive me?”

“I know you didn't mean it but it hurt hearing you say that you're no one's mother and you're not interested in taking care of anyone. I didn't expect you to say such.” KB.

“I promise I won't say such ever again, truce?” we shared a hug, Sedi stood by the door looking at us.

“Why are you standing there? Come here...” all three of us shared a hug then they left to make breakfast.

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After breakfast I bathed then sat on the bed dialling my mom's number. I didn't know if she would answer after I had been ignoring her calls but the dream I had left me with question marks.

“Bunkie?”

“Mama.”

“Is everything okay?”

“No.”

“Should I come over there?”

This was the mother I knew, one who would drop anything and everything to make sure that we're okay. I couldn't understand what had changed for her to leave us all alone.

“Mama were you abused as a child as well?”

It went silent. I checked if I had not mistakenly hung up but she was still on the line.

“Mme?”

“I’m still here.. why do you think I was abused?”

“I had a weird dream about me or it was about you, I'm still not sure.”

“Are your siblings at home as well?”

“Yes.”

“When will you girls be done with exams, I need to talk with you.. I need to apologize.” she spoke with a trembling voice. I shed a tear as well for some weird unknown reason..

“Mama.”

“I’ll tell you everything but only if you're done with exams.”

“Sedi is writing her last paper tomorrow and KB on Thursday..”

“What about you?”

“Next week monday.”

“I’ll come next week Tuesday then.”

“Okay...”

Terrence Ndlovu

I parked my car at my usual spot then leaned back in the chair thinking about what happened in Dr Puoentle's office on Monday. I had not realised that I had not dealt with a lot of issues. Monday's session drained me a lot at some point I didn't think I would attend Thursday's session.

I missed Okuhle as well, she would be turning 26 on Thursday and all I could do is wonder where we would be at this moment. Would we still be together? Did I even make the right choice by marrying her best friend? I asked myself many questions that I had no answers to.

A smile formed on my face thinking about what had transpired between me and my wife this morning. We bonded and that gave me some sort of easiness that I made the right choice marrying her. There was a knock on my car window, it was Dr Robinson. I opened my door and got out then locked.

“Robinson!” we both chuckled and bumped shoulders.

When I did my practicals and had to intern, I was lucky to be under Dr Robinson's wing. She became more than a mentor

and or teacher; we became friends. She's older but very young at heart.

“Why were you sitting in the car like someone going through the most?”

“Can I ask you something but no judging?” we used the stairs going up to her office.

“I have no business judging anyone.” Robinson said pulling the blinds in her office then joined me on the patient chairs facing each other.

“If your husband died, would you marry his best friend?” she choked on her ice tea then looked for wipes to wipe herself clean.

“Ndlovu!” we looked at one another then smiled. “It's way too early to have such conversations man.”

“Would you?”

“Are you doubting your choices?”

“We are not talking about me right now.” I gave her a bored look.

“Yeah right! Listen, I won't say I wouldn't because life is unpredictable and that's all I can say.”

“I love Rachel.”

“That's a good thing right? You didn't marry her because she reminds you of Okuhle?”

“No. They're two different people.”

“Stop thinking about this a lot if you and Rachel were not meant to be then you're not meant to be but just enjoy your marriage.”

“Thanks for the chat let me go and save lives!”

“Go and do what you do best.”

On my way out I bumped into nurse Jesica and other student nurses and doctors as well as porters rushing in and out of the hospital. Dr Robinson stood next to me, she must have heard the noise as well.

“What's with the noise?” Robinson.

“I have no idea.” I stopped Jessica as she wheeled in a badly wounded patient. “Jessica what's the status?”

“Mini bus lost control and crashed into an old age home, Dr Ndlovu. Some were declared dead on the spot! I'm sorry but I have to rush the patient to the emergency unit and there's more coming. The non private is kind of full.” I nodded and she left.

Robinson and I followed her to the emergency unit ward and assisted where we could. People were badly wounded. Some did not need to be in this unit but in casualty but because people were rushed in here because the non private hospital was full. We had to treat some patients here.

Our hospital was big, it was divided into two. We had the private sector and the non private sector. It was owned by the Vilakazi's and Bahumi family. They realised how public hospitals were always full and sometimes short staffed. They built this hospital from scratch and came with the idea to have the best of the best working here. Nurses to doctors swapped every second week; some week we worked at the public hospital, the next at the private. I first did my practicals at the public hospital and there is no rest. Some days you had to do the double shift because it was that hectic.

Sebaga Trinity Tholo

A part of me was not ready to sit down with the girls and tell them what I was about to tell them on Tuesday. The dreams could only mean one thing, Goitsi might have my mom's prophetic gift. My mom's dreams were always spot on but one

day when I needed them the most they failed her. I couldn't understand why she could help everyone but when I needed her this time around she couldn't help me. I blamed her for the rest of her living days and when I was finally ready to forgive her, I was too late. She died in her sleep. Ever since that day, I have not forgiven myself. If only I could have forgiven her maybe Goitsi wouldn't have gone through what she went through.

“Trinity are you okay?” Mrs Swanepoel said standing on the other side of the kitchen counter.

“Did I tell you that a few weeks ago I went to see the girls?”

She smiled then pulled out a chair and sat down. “How did they react?”

“I felt like a stranger around my own kids, Linda. I don't know what I had expected but..”

“Don't be so harsh on yourself Trinity. You tried and I'm proud.”

“Goitsi called me.”

“You see, that's a good start.”

“I don't think so but I guess one could say that. I don't know how Karabo and Lesedi are going to react.”

“Just know that they're allowed to be angry at you after all these years Trinity. You can't expect them to welcome you with warm open arms after you left them with Goitsi to raise as their own. They might not understand your reasons and they might not forgive you.”

“What kind of mother does what I did Linda? How could I have been so selfish to let my fifteen year old daughter raise her siblings by herself? She was a child herself- she had just gone through something horrible and.. I.. wow.” I sobbed into my hands

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Linda came and gave me a hug while rubbing my back.

“Hush now it's going to be okay, stop crying.”

“It's not going to be okay. I have hurt them in the most evil way ever. Maybe if I had dealt with my own demons, I would have been a better mom.”

“Don't do that to yourself Trinity. It's not too late to go for therapy. You could still go.”

“I blamed my mother for something she had no control over. I blamed her for so many years that she never got the chance to meet her first grandchild. I was very furious.”

“She was a mother, she understood where you came from.”

“Regardless of how I treated her, she still was the best mother.”

“Do you want me to organise your first session? Maybe you could take the girls with?”

I shook my head with tears in my eyes.

“You have done so much for me and my babies. I can't expect this from you as well.”

“I insist.”

“No Linda, No.”

“Take this card.. her name is Brooke Jones, she's a therapist.”

I hesitantly took the card and read the details..

“She's good; she works with the likes of psychologist slash therapist, Dr Puento Morolong.”

“Let me talk to the girls first on Tuesday then maybe we can all try this therapy.” Linda smiled at me then left.

Therapy..?

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

We all tucked in bed glued to our phones. I still had to tell them that mama would come and see us next week Tuesday.

"Girls..." they looked up from their phones and looked at me. Maybe it's not a good idea to tell them right away.

"Thobile asked me to tag along to club nudity on Friday.."

"Okay..." they said while shrugging.

"I said I couldn't come but I really want to go."

"Then why are you not going?" KB asked.

"I have never gone out clubbing or left you two alone. What if something happens while I'm gone?"

"Just relax GM, go out and have fun. You're young and I think you have played your part in taking care of us." KB.

"She's right ausi goitsi." Sedi.

"Obvioimously I'm right." she said and rolled her eyes. "I'm 18 and Sedi is 16. Soon we will all be going our seperate ways, what then?"

KB was right I needed to start living.

“Just go and have fun, a bonus is that on Monday, you will be done with culinary school. Our very own chef!”

“Okay.” I quickly texted Thobile to inform her that we could go to club nudity if the offer was still available. I hope I wouldn't regret this. Thobile's call immediately came through—

“Thobs.”

“What changed your mind?”

“Who else if not KB?” Karabo pinched me under the blanket.

“You're going to have the best time of your life. That club is the best.”

I heard Mabutho's voice in the background, I felt like I couldn't breathe and I couldn't stop smiling.

“Are you still there Goitsi?”

“Huh..? Oh yes I'm here.” Thobile told me more about where we're going and the amount of fun we were going to have. It still had not sunk in that I made a friend so easily. My siblings were my friends. I didn't make friends easily but, but with her, our new friendship felt right.

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

The door opened and it creaked as it opened. A tall man walked closer to the little girl in the corner and pulled her up by the hem of her dress, as though she was a piece of paper. He pinned her against the wall and choked her slender neck; the little girl kicked in the air then she tilted her head a bit— our eyes locked and I noticed that I was not the little girl in the mirror, the little girl was my mother. “Sebaga ngwanaka o kae..?” the voice said outside the dark room.

The little girl looked very tired and only hanging by a thread. She looked very hungry... The images I saw on the mirror disappeared and all I saw was myself. I was still wearing the long blue dress with a yellow and white headscarf. I didn't look scary anymore, I looked normal. I looked like my regular self; tired and stressed.

Suddenly I heard heavy footsteps near the door. I looked for a place to hide but the room I was in was very small. Smaller than the one I saw on the mirror. My heart raced and I heard them— I knew those voices very well. They were here to finish what they had started. I saw him first; Frank was bigger than the last time I had seen him in orange overalls. He had tattoos all over

his dark skin, and had one eye covered in a patch. The more he walked in; the more fear crept to my bones. He gave me the same smile he gave me when I was twelve.

“You’re not real!” I said standing firmly next to the mirror. “You don't exist.”

“We're real pumpkin.” Thapelo said walking in holding an axe.

He ran to me with the axe held up high and...

I sat upright while panting— my hand on my chest while I shook my head. It was a dream, it was a dream I said to myself silently. I climbed off the bed to get some water. I looked at the time on my phone it was 04h00. I sat on the edge of the couch still terrified from the dream I woke up from. I couldn't remember everything but I knew for a fact that the girl who I thought was me, was my mother. How I missed that in the first dream, had no idea. Sebaga was my mother's name. Why was I even dreaming about my mother as a child? I have never been one to dream. I walked back to our room and took out a blade from my toiletry bag and returned to my seat. As I removed the bandage, tears fell from my eyes. I had a lot of sadness inside me that I could not explain. I made small cuts then leaned back in the couch as my wrist became numb. Self harming had become my favourite drug.

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Today, KB was writing her final paper and I decided to make her an omelette that had bacon, mushrooms, and spinach from last night then added grated parmesan cheese. I also made doughnuts dipped in white chocolate and drizzled with dark chocolate. I placed everything on the coffee table before I went to wake her and Sedi up.

Her smile when she saw the little set up I made for us. She looked at me then back at the set up.

“You made this for me?” she sat on the pillow on the floor.

“Just something for your final paper, you need the strength.”

“Haah, this looks even better than what I got yesterday.” Sedi mumbled while she sat down. We laughed at her as she stuffed her mouth with the doughnuts.

“Jealousy so early wena Lesedi!” KB shoved her. They shoved one another and I could only smile at them.

After KB had left for school, I packed some doughnuts for Thobile then walked to their house. I had not been inside. I noticed that the quantum was not outside– he must be working I said internally. I knocked softly then moved back. I was about to knock again when the door was widely opened. Mr quantum stood in front of me, topless... I studied him from the chest going down, he looked like someone who visited the gym regularly– he wore some shorts and had flip-flops on.

“Ntokazi?”

“Hello.. ” I stuttered while looking down. “O teng Thobile?” he moved from the door and said I could come in. (is Thobile around?)

He lead me to the kitchen and said he was coming. He returned wearing a vest and asked if I would like anything to drink. Mabutho had a voice, his voice alone made me feel things I didn't want to feel for the other gender. But him, he snuck into my thoughts without lifting a finger.

“Awusho, niyaphi wena noThobile?” (tell me, where you and Thobile are going?)

“Si, si.. uhm..” my Zulu decided to deplete before I could even form a sentence, what a shame. Mabutho was staring at me while his back was against the fridge; with a glass of water in

his hand and a brow raised. I watched him swallow the water and I swallowed as well.

“We are going to club nudity.” I said after a long while.

We sat in silence with him staring at me, while I tried to avoid his stares.

What was taking Thobile so long?

Rachel Ndlovu

Today was Okuhle’s birthday and the guilt ate me up. Today we would be celebrating her birthday but that was not going to happen because of something stupid I did. Terrence was not in bed when I woke up and I knew he was in a shitty mood today.

I tucked my white shirt into my brown suit pants then sat on the bed thinking about all the good times I had with Okuhle. I met Okuhle in highschool. I transferred from another school in the beginning of the second term and making friends was very hard. On the second week of school, during break time I found Okuhle sitting where I always sat on my own. She introduced herself and I did the same and we clicked from that day..

Okuhle was that girl, every guy wished to date. She was insanely gorgeous. She came from a well off family than mine, they were not rich but they had more than we did but she never made me feel like I lacked anything. She always had my back. Just before she turned 19

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she introduced me to Terrence, they were dating. I started developing feelings for him but I kept that to myself. I thought as time passed, the feelings would disagree but instead I grew envious of what they had. I wanted her life, everything of hers I wanted it.

I snapped out of thinking about the past then looked myself in the mirror one more time. For the first time since I went to see Madlabantu, I saw Okuhle. She stood behind me looking very exhausted. For the first time ever, I was not terrified. She looked very different today, not her regular feisty self but worn out. If ghosts can look worn out.

“I have always loved you Rachel, always. I never wished you bad. How could you do this to me?” Okuhle spoke with a tired voice.

“I didn't mean to.. I got so jealous of you that I took drastic measures to get what I wanted. I'm really sorry.”

“We were best friends Rachel. We shared secrets with each other. I.. did you secretly laugh behind my back when I told you about my fights with Terrence?”

“Kuhle, just let me be please.. I can't reverse what I did to you.”

The lights in the room flicked twice then they stopped, I noticed that Kuhle was no longer here.

I took my things and headed to the garage.

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“Do you see yourself living here?” I asked the client I was showing the house. Out of all the homes we viewed in little falls, it seemed that she took a liking to the one we were in.

“I love the view a lot. I don't know if my fiance will even like this place but I really do.”

“Convince him then..” we both laughed while walking in the garden.

“Why did the previous owners move?”

“They wanted a bigger house because they planned on having a large family.”

“Do you have any children?” the client asked.

“Not yet but I want children.”

“If it were possible I would have 6 children.” she said sadly. I didn't want to pry, I didn't ask her any questions until we left.

Terrence Ndlovu

I took my time walking to the car. Ever since Okuhle passed away, I felt very empty. This was the second birthday ever since she left us. I leaned over the car and thought of cancelling my session today. I was very tired to talk.

“Terrence!” I got out of the car and saw Lodeka, Okuhle’s sister.

“Deka?” she smiled then went in for a hug.

“Unjani Terry?”

“Ngiyaphila wena unjani?”

“Ngiyaphila nami, looks like I caught you at a bad time?”

I still had time before my session. "Lets go and have some coffee across the street." I put my arm over her shoulder and she looked down. Londeka was a year younger than me.

"She would be 26 today," she said after we sat down and ordered. "I miss her a lot Terry. I find it hard to believe that she just left us like that."

"I understand what you're talking about.. I'm surprised to see you here though. Are you not angry at me?"

"Must I be angry?"

"Most of the family members were after I married Rachel." I shrugged.

"Terry.." she sighed then touched my hand. "I was disappointed when I heard but I know we don't chose who we fall in love with. Your heart went for Rachel and there's nothing we can do."

"How are your parents?"

"Baba tries acting strong but we can see that he is breaking down. Okuhle was his favourite and he blames himself for forcing you and her to get married early. Mom.. she's always been distant so.."

"I still don't see a ring on that finger Londeka."

“Mjolo uyanyisa wena Terry, yoh. Uyang’nyisa mina yerr.” I found myself laughing out loud.

“I’ll take you as my second wife neh.” I wiggled my brows.

“Phuma kimi tuu Terry! Unjani uRachel?”

“Rachel.. she's okay or pretending to be okay.” I said shrugging my shoulders.

“Terry?” Londeka, looked at me trying to say something but decided not to. “Never mind.”

“Khuluma Deka.”

“Have you tried to see the family healer about your situation?”

“Meaning?”

“Terry, do you think it's normal that Okuhle had so many miscarriages and your current wife is experiencing the same thing? Do you not find that weird?”

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While I sat in the waiting area, waiting for my turn with the doctor, I could only think about the chat I had with Deka. What

she said was something I had also wondered— was I the problem? A lot of things ran through my mind but I didn't have any answers.

“Mr Ndlovu the doctor is ready for you.” Wanda said standing in front of me. I nodded then walked in and sat.

“Terrence how are you today?”

“I’m well and you?”

“I’m great.” she said a of this without looking at me. Her focus was at the sunflowers. Then she finally turned and gave me her killer smile.

“You said she would be 26 today am I right?”

“Yes.” my tone changed. I had so much sadness in me.

“Do you blame yourself Terrence? Do you blame yourself for her death?”

“Uhm.. should I?”

“Tell me more...”

“It had been months since the last miscarriage when she was 23. Well she had not turned 23 yet. We were working on our marriage and she had a presenting gig in Cape Town. Something for about a month... We called each other every

single day and I visited on the second week. Things were not perfect but we had each other and that's all that we needed. On the last week of her gig, she was not well; I could hear her over the phone that she was not okay...”

“What happened afterwards...”

“She came back home on a Saturday morning. She looked very happy and had some glow on her face. She just looked different and I commented about how she had put on some extra weight and we both laughed. She was very nervous throughout the day until she finally gave me the news, that we were expecting.”

“A shock I guess?”

“A big shock! I struggled to come to terms with the news while her, on the other hand she looked hopeful..? I didn't think I had it in me to deal with another miscarriage. I just couldn't and wouldn't survive.”

“Go on I'm listening..”

“After two weeks we finally went to see a doctor and indeed we were expecting. She was around 23 weeks.. a week ahead then the last pregnancy. Seeing our baby in the ultrasound was just priceless. I had these emotions I could not explain to anyone.”

“Take me through the day of the accident..”

I sighed before I could open my mouth. I was dreading the day I would have to reiterate that painful day again.

“Okuhle wanted to visit her grandmother in Durban and we were on our way back to Johannesburg on a Sunday afternoon. Everything was okay on our way back, I drove slowly and carefully. I don't remember much but I remember a loud bang.”
I stood up to stand at the window..

“Take your time.”

“We were rushed to a hospital but we were all okay; even the baby.” Dr Puento nodded.

“A few days after that incident I received a disturbing call from my sister Kayise.. she was blabbering and crying, I couldn't get what she was trying to say.. I asked that she send me her location pin then I'll come to her. I was surprised that the pin was our home. There were cars and an ambulance outside our gate– the first thing I did was run out of the car and ran inside the house calling my wife. People I didn't know were trying to hold me back but I struggled until I escaped.”

“Don't forget to breathe, breathe..”

“Okuhle was laying in a pool of blood.. The amount of blood really gave me goosebumps. I couldn't hold it in– I ran to the bathroom and vomited everything I had eaten during the day. I can still smell the blood..” I said while sobbing.

“I will never forget that day, never!”

Goitsimedi 'GM' Tholo

A week later...

The girls and I were getting everything ready for when we meet our mother. I thought they were going to give me a hard time about meeting mama but surprisingly they agreed. We were all done with exams and had nothing to do. There was a shadow by the door, I looked up only to find Thobile holding a lunchbox. Our eyes locked and we smiled.

“Ladies!” she said walking in further.

“Thobs!” we shared a hug first before she hugged KB and Sedi.

“This us yours my love.”

I took the lunch box and there were oatmeal cookies inside. I had one and moaned in approval.

“Very delicious!”

“Really?”

I nodded and just before I could take a second cookie, KB snatched the lunchbox from my hands. We sat down and Sedi made some tea for us to enjoy with the cookies.

“Wena Goitsimedi..” she clapped her hands while shaking her head. “Mabutho ate all those doughnuts and did not leave me even one. I was so furious!”

“I’ll make you some one day..” inside I was very happy, a happy girl.

“Thobile tell us more about club nudity, this one here never said a word to us.” KB said pointing at my direction.

“Girl, it was fantastic! That place is the ace to be. We had so much fun and your sister can dance!” Sedi and KB turned their heads to me. I looked at the door.

“Our sister dancing?” Sedi.

“She can move I won't lie.. this girl went to the dance floor every minute.”

“Stop lying Thobile, I can't dance.” we laughed while Thobile continued to tell them about how I embarrassed myself at the club.

Terrence Ndlovu

Things have been so tense at home after I came clean to Rachel. I couldn't live anymore with this secret I was living with.. after my session I sat her down and told her that I cheated. She thought I was joking at first then realised that I was being honest. She lost her mind and turned the house upside down– anything she could get her hands on she threw it against the walls. She stormed out and only returned the next day to get ready for work. We have been sleeping in seperate rooms and this was a foreign feeling to me.

I knocked on our room before entering, Rachel was tucking in her blouse into her pencil skirt. I stood by the door for a while admiring her. I had these strong feelings for her that I couldn't explain. It were as though I was seeing her for the first time ever. She turned and found me staring, she smiled then walked to me.

“Baby.” we shared a kiss.

She took the tray that had her breakfast from me then we walked in.

“Are you okay?” I asked with confusion all over me.

“Yes, why wouldn't I?”

“After I told you that I cheated you were very angry and we have been sleeping in seperate rooms ever since.”

“Ohh that? Don't stress I'm over that.” she buttered her toast then sipped her rooibos tea.

“Rachel..?” I crouched and stared into her eyes trying to read her. Her behaviour was alarming. “Are you going to divorce me?”

That got her attention real quick. “After I fought so hard to be with you, you think I would let something so small come between us? You clearly don't know me well Terry.” she stood up in front of me and had her arms around my waist. “You’re mine Terrence Ndlovu, all mine and no one is taking you away from me. No one!” with that said she left.

I stood in the middle of our room trying to understand what just happened.

I returned the tray back to the kitchen then got ready to visit my mom. I was worried about her ever since our father passed away. She tried to act strong but one can see that she's not. Kayise and I were going to meet at home. She worked at a dance academy and had evening lessons to give.

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“Mfazi kaBaba.” I hugged my mom at the door.

“Mthokozisi.” I heard Kayise laughing like a goat in the lounge. She knew how much I was not a big fan of this name. Even my dad died knowing very well how I didn't like this name. I lost count of all the times I said I would change it. I didn't like the name but yet again I didn't hate it.

“Kodwa mah!” I closed the door on my way in then sat next to Kayise.

“Unjani mfana wami?” another blow. Kayise was enjoying this, she was having fun.

“Umfana pho? Kodwa nawe mah..”

“Uyintobi yini boy, boy?”

Kayise cackled close to my ear and had tears streaming down her face from all the laughing.

“Uyaphila mah wami?”

“Ngiyaphila mfana wami, Ngiyaphila..” she looked different today, a bit of weight gain. She almost looked like the strong mother I knew. I smiled looking at her.

“Yini wena?” I asked Kayise who had stopped laughing but was staring at me.

“Why are you smiling?”

Before I could answer her, our mother interrupted me.

“Uphi umakoti wami, Mthokozisi?”

“Emsebenzini mah.”

Silence engulfed the entire room. No one said anything for a few seconds. Kayise walked in holding two glasses of juice and cookies.

“I have to leave now.” she kissed my cheek then went to hug our mother.

“I thought you gave lessons in the evening?”

“Yes but I have a lunch date.” I spat the juice out then looked at Kayise. Mama was giggling on the other couch.

“Kodwa Mthoko, I said lunch date not marriage proposal!” she took her phone then looked at me.

“Hamba ngani kaGatsheni

hamba dade..”

“Ngiyahamba...”

Once Kayise was out the door, mama came to sit next to me. She smiled and I returned the smile.

“Talk to mommy sthandwa sami.”

“You know I've been attending therapy right?” she nodded.

“I'm ashamed to say this but months ago I cheated on..” she didn't let me finish my sentence. A slap, a hot slap connected with my cheek.

“Mama!”

“Mama wok'nuka! Terrence..?” I was only Terrence when she was angry.

“Mah.”

“Hamba.” she said getting up, then went to open the door wider. “Hamba..”

My mom has never been one to tolerate nonsense, she was definitely not going to start today. I slowly got up and left. It was no use talking to her when she was that angry.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“Do you think your mother is still coming?” KB asked walking in from the spaza.

It was almost 13h00 and we had not heard a thing from our mother. Out of nowhere my heart beat very fast I thought it would burst. I had so much sadness, sadness I couldn't explain. I sat down and I saw a blurry image of a car colliding with another car. I couldn't see the type of car it was but from how it looked, I don't think there would be any survivors.

“Ausi Goitsi are you okay?”

“Yeah..”

I tried calling the Swanepoel landline but no one answered. I tried their phones again hoping that one of them would answer.

“Mama and disappointing us, same WhatsApp group.” KB.

“I think something happened.. why are the Swanepoel’s not answering their phones as well? Something is not right.”

KB was not interested in what I was saying, she didn't give any fucks of what I was saying. Not that I blamed her.

After another hour of waiting KB stood up and yawned.

“GM, nna ka tsamaya, you will call if your mom shows up.”

“Bathong KB.”

“We have been waiting for a while now, if she really wanted to be here, she would be here.” just as KB reached for the door,

my phone rang. It was an unknown number, I let it ring but the person called again.. Sedi and KB were shrugging their shoulders.

“Araba tlhe mma!” KB.

“Hello..?”

“Is this Goitsimedi Tholo speaking?”

“Yes...”

“Would you please come to Louis deWet private hospital?”

“Why?” my palms were sweaty, KB and Sedi were standing next to me.

“It is very urgent and we would appreciate it if you can come here.”

“No, just tell me over the phone.”

“I’m afraid that won't be possible.”

“Then I'm not coming as well!”

“A Sebaga Trinity Tholo...”

The phone slipped from my hands and I had tears streaming down my face. KB picked up the phone from the floor but no one was on the line. I kept on saying no, no,no... This was not happening.

“GM, what's going on?” she shook me but I was in shock.

“Goitsimedi Mma!”

“She’s no more..” saying that out loud left a sour taste in my mouth. “She’s gone.”

“Who!” they asked at once.

“Mama.”

“Where did she go? Who was telling you that she's gone? Was it Mrs Swanepoel? Goitsimedi bua tlhe.” KB.

“Go wear something warm we have to go and confirm if it's her.”

KB walked to the door then stopped and looked at me with shock all over her face. The light bulb went on and she finally understood what I was talking about. She shook her head while leaning against the wall.

“No!”

“Is anyone going to tell me what's going on?” Sedi.

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We walked out of the morgue with our heads down. I was numb and had no idea where to from here.. who to call. We didn't know any family members. Our mother and the Swanepoel's were declared dead on the spot. They had a collision with another vehicle and their car hit a big tree that flipped their car over. Pictures from the scene were horrible. KB and Sedi were sobbing next to me but I couldn't afford them any comfort. It had not sunk in that she was gone. I saw her on the cold slab but it still didn't register that we no longer had a mom. She was not a mother when she was alive but she was still our mother. I still had a little bit of hope that she would change.

Jacob came out of the morgue and was ready for a fight. He was very furious but I had no energy to fight him. He could do and say what he wanted. He stood in front of us with fisted hands while trying to say something but he couldn't. He pointed a finger at us then left.

“What are we going to do?” KB.

“Let's go home we will figure things out.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

It had been a few days ever since I received a call that left my world in crumbles. I could only be grateful that Sedi and KB were done with exams. Especially KB; I couldn't imagine what would have happened if she was not done with exams. Sleep was something I was not familiar with. I sat on the toilet seat and made new cuts on my wrists. I was slitting both wrists instead of one. I needed something to help me forget about what was happening. I had to be strong for my siblings and I didn't have any strength for any of that. I sat in there for a while before cleaning the wounds and bandaging them.

I heard sobbing in our room, I opened and found only Sedi. KB was not here.

“Where is she?”

Sedi quickly wiped her tears then shrugged her shoulders. I didn't even have any words of encouragement. What do I say to her? I walked closer then joined her on the floor.

“Sedi.. uhm, uhm..” we both burst into tears. We held each other and cried. I didn't know why she was crying but we just let go. I heard another pair of hands on my back, I looked up

and it was Thobile. She mouthed 'I'm sorry.' while she rubbed our backs.

After Sedi fell asleep I went to join Thobile outside. We shared a long tight hug, where words were not exchanged. Her hug meant a lot.

"I'm so sorry friend, very sorry."

"We were supposed to meet Thobile. How could this happen? Why now?"

"We will never know my love."

I sobbed while shaking my head.

"I had a vision about such an accident." Thobile stared at me. "I saw this accident but it was very blurry. I saw it!"

"Cry my love it's okay to cry— let it all out."

A blue Jeep Wrangler, parked by the gate and Satan on two legs stepped out. Jacob Swanepoel, himself stepped out. He walked as though this world was his and we are about to bow down for him. He looked around the yard with nothing but disgust written all over his face. He was holding a medium box while

someone else was dragging two luggage bags. Thobile and I exchanged looks.

“I hope I didn't catch you at the wrong time, I brought everything that belongs to your mother.”

To say I was shocked would be a lie. Jacob Swanepoel was a piece of cow dung and he knew that. I told the man to leave the suitcases inside then took the box from Jacob's hand. He couldn't wait until after the funeral to do this, he just couldn't.

“Is this all our mother's belongings?”

“Yes, did you expect more than this?”

“No.”

“Have a lovely day..”

I watched him until he reached the gate. I was too exhausted to argue with him, he didn't deserve anything from me.

“Why did you let him speak to you the way he did?”

“What should I have done? Tell me please.” Thobile kept quiet then sat down. I placed the box inside then joined Thobile. She was too quiet and I didn't like it.

“I'm sorry I know you meant well.”

“It's fine, I understand.”

Rachel Ndlovu

Today was my day off and I used that time to strategize my next move. I had been looking for a sign and now I had finally found one. I couldn't believe she was right in front of me this entire time without me realising that.

I was not even surprised by what Terry said to me a week ago, about him cheating. This was something that was going to happen either way. Terry was not mine, and will never be mine fully unless I took matters into my own hands.

I loved him the moment I lay my eyes on him, I knew I couldn't have him but giving up was never in my genes. I always went after what I wanted and got it. No matter the cost. Madlabantu was not going to help me, so I called the first sangoma I went to in Limpopo. I knew he would help me—

“Thokoza mkhulu.” I said the second he answered the phone.

“Siyavuma!”

“I need your help again mkhulu, the herbs are wearing off him and I can't have that happening mkhulu.”

“When can you come and see me?”

“Friday mkhulu.”

“I’ll see you on Friday, siyavuma!” then he cut the call.

I felt some sort of relief after the call. I was starting to lose the ball, I needed to find myself before I totally lost it. Okuhle’s ghost has become a pain in the ass. I can't remember the last time I slept peacefully.

I called my work place to ask for a day off on Friday because I needed to attend my step sister's funeral.

I felt the hairs on my neck stand as I watered my flowers outside. I turned slowly and there she was and her babies.

“You won't get away with this Rachel. Never!”

“I think I just did Kuhle, I just did and you need to accept it.”

“You’re evil! Plain evil and how I missed it when I first saw you still amazes me.”

I let out a loud laugh. “I loved Terrence and I still do, you were not going to stop me from getting him.”

“You will never be happy with him, I'll make sure that you never enjoy your life.”

“Nothing will stop me from what I want, not even an angry ghost.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I looked at the time one more time and it was 20h00, no sign of Karabo. I tried calling but it went straight to voicemail. I couldn't sleep without knowing where she is. I looked at the box at the corner that had our mom's belongings. I had this urge to go through her things but I was too exhausted to get off the bed.

“Ausi Goitsi?”

“Hmm..”

“Are you asleep?”

“No nana.”

“Do you know what she wanted to tell us today?”

I turned and faced her, her eyes were swollen from all the crying she did. I have not shed much tears just yet. I have tried but I didn't want to accept that she was gone just like that. I refused.

“I have no idea baby, all I know is that she also wanted to apologize.”

“Do you think there's a reason she abandoned us? Not that it's okay but do you think there's something that pushed her away from us?”

“I don't know Sedi

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go to sleep it's late.”

“I didn't even know our mother's love or affection but I'm crying for her.”

“It's okay Nana, cry all you want it's okay.” I held her tight as she sobbed. Sedi fell asleep again that's when I got off the bed, went outside then called Thobile.

“Hello.” a familiar raspy voice said on the phone. A smile crept to my face. Breathe Goitsimedi, breathe..

“Hi, hi..”

“Unjani ntokakazi?”

“I'm okay and you?”

“Nami ngiyaphila, uThobile ulele.”

“Ohh..” I needed someone to talk to and I was not sure if I could do that with Mabutho. We have never had a serious conversation, he always does the talking and I just stutter trying to converse with him.

“Tell her that I called, bye..”

“Wait, don't hang up.”

I stayed on the line just listening to him breathing on the phone.

“Hello?”

“Would you like it if I drove you around, maybe that would help you sleep better?”

“Yes.” I answered without any hesitation. What did this man feed me that I couldn't resist him. “I would like that but Karabo is not home and I'm worried about her.”

“Wear something warm then I'll help you look for her.”

“Okay..” neither of us hung up, we stayed on the line for a few seconds then I finally hung up.

I removed my pyjamas and wore my white sweat pants and grey sweater. The door opened, KB walked in with swollen eyes.

“Karabo.”

“She's really gone, like really dead?”

“Come here ngwana ko gae, it's going to be okay.”

“How are we going to bury her on our own GM? Tell me how we're going to do all of these things on our own. Why did she

have to leave us? Why didn't we hear what she wanted to say first?" KB was crying badly, I almost cancelled the drive with Mabutho but I couldn't, I had to be selfish just this once. I needed to let go of this pain inside me. I had to.

"Do you think you can stay here with Sedi for an hour or two while I'm gone?"

"Where are you going?"

"Mabutho is taking me for a drive." I saw a smile on her face. Or that's what I wanted to see.

"Mr quantum..?" I nodded repeatedly.

"Yeah and I agreed."

We heard a faint knock just before KB could say anything further. KB opened and there he was, in his sweats as well. KB looked back at me with a smirk on her face and I smiled looking away. One would think Mabutho and I talked about what we were going to wear. He had on grey sweats and a white jacket. He exchanged greetings with KB before he winked at me.

He opened the passenger door and I slid in, then he ran to his side of the drivers side.

“Siyaphi nkosazane?”

“Anywhere is okay.”

“Okay.” he reversed and the street light kissed his face, he was really handsome. His eyes were my favourite. I could stare at them every single day without any shame.

“Thobile told me about your mom, ngiyaxolisa.”

I nodded while looking outside. I was afraid that I might cry in front of him.

“Ulambile Goitsi?” he was driving into the KFC drive through. The way he said my name– he was staring into my eyes as we waited our turn. I looked down.

“Phendula phela, ulambile..?”

“Eya ke lambile.” he chuckled then ordered.

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Mabutho decided to drive us to Westdene dam and we sat there eating in silence. He didn't eat much, he was more focused on watching me eat.

“Are you sure they won't mug us here?”

“Mhmm.” he sat on the car bonnet with his arms folded. He then removed a cigarette from his jacket and asked if he could smoke it.

“Goitsi?”

I looked up to find him standing in front of me with his hands stretched out. “Woza la..”

I stood between his legs and I finally stared into his eyes without looking down. I didn't know how to explain how Mabutho made me feel. He broke walls without trying. I felt safe standing in the middle of the night with him at a place I was not familiar with. I had no fear of any kind. I just wanted to be here with him even if we didn't say much.

“Why uz'limaza?”

“I don't understand.” he pulled the hands of my sweater up and my bandages came to light.

“Ngisho lokhu.” he pointed the scars as he removed the bandage. He brought my arm to his face and kissed it gently. He did so while his eyes never left mine.

“If you ever feel like talking, I'm here don't do this to yourself. Can I give you a hug?”

“Mhm.”

“Yini uMhm?” he asked while tickling me. I laughed so hard, tears streamed down my face. He pulled me in for the hug and I melted like butter on hot toast. He rested his chin on the top of my head as we listened to our heart beats.

“Mabutho!”

“Hmm.”

“Thank you for this, I needed it.”

“Do you want to go back home?”

“A few more minutes then we can go.”

Silence.

I looked up and he was dozing off, I shook him lightly and he opened his eyes, I smiled at him and he returned it. My heart did backflips.

“You’re tired let's go.”

“Are you sure?” Mabutho.

“We can do this another time when you're not tired.” I flinched after I realised what I had just said. I wanted to do this again. Mabutho didn't seem to mind what I said. He drove us home and I also felt the exhaustion.

The thoughts of arranging a funeral was something I was not looking forward too.

Terrence Ndlovu

“Rachel what do you mean? I don't think I understand what you're talking about.” we were both getting ready for work when Rachel, decided to rock my boat.

“I want to have children Terry and you know that. I want babies.”

“Rachel..” I held my socks on one hand then sat down with a sigh. “Rachel baby listen.. I'm tired of getting the same results. I've been through this with Okuhle, with you as well. Let's not do this to ourselves.”

“Well I want children and this is the only way we can have our own baby.” I watched Rachel walking around our room in her undergarments. I was fighting a losing battle.

“Surrogacy? Did you think this through baby? You do know this might not work as well right?”

“I will know that I have tried!” she held her dress then turned to me with a scowl on her face. “Or maybe you don't want to have children with me Terry. That's why you're so comfortable talking about Okuhle as though she's still part of you. She is dead!”

Now that was not necessary.

“Really Rachel? How many people told me that we won't work out and that you've always wanted Okuhle's life but I still chose you?”

“What am I supposed to think Terry when we're having a conversation about us and you bring Okuhle to the picture? Tell me.”

“I don't want to fight with you Rachel, tell me when you're free then we'll go and see someone at the fertility clinic.”

“Really?” her smile was very contagious.

“If this will make you happy then why not?”

“I love you baby.” she had her arms around my neck and gave me a kiss. “I love you a lot Terry. I don't want to lose you.”

“I'm not going anywhere.” we held on to one another for a while then broke the hug.

“Babe, I forgot to tell you, I'm going to Limpopo today, mama is not well.”

“If you had told me earlier, I would have made a plan to tag along.”

“No!”

“What do you mean no?”

“It is not necessary my love. You know how dramatic my mom can be, it might just be flu.”

“I really don't mind and it's been forever since I last saw her.”

“We can go some other time..”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

One less thing on my shoulders, mama had a funeral cover and it was going to cover everything. I had no clue on what I was going to do if she had no cover. I don't work how was I going to pay for the arrangements?

Another weird thing was finding out that our mother wanted to be buried in the North West, where her mother was buried.

We've never heard her speak of her family but this weekend we would meet them for the first time ever. I found a number of her sister amongst her belongings and called her. Luckily she works at Cresta mall and said she would see us today. Very weird that we had a family member so close by yet we never crossed paths.

I fiddled with the brown envelope that had my name on it— I didn't have the guts to open the letter and read it's contents. This December started off on the wrong foot. We've had bad December's but this one was going to take the trophy.

Some of the neighbours have been coming to offer their condolences and words of encouragement. The amount of making tea for them has left me tired. I wish I could tell them to stop with their fake condolences but that would be very rude.

After sending KB a text to not forget to buy our dresses for the funeral, there was a knock at the door. I should've left with them because if this is someone offering their condolences again I'm going to scream. I placed the phone on the couch armrest then dragged my feet to the door. A thick tall woman stood by the door.

“Hello Goitsimedi.” it was her! I recognised the voice from the phone call, it was her.

“Uhm, hi, tsena..” (enter..) I quickly removed the clothes that were on the couch to make space for her to sit down. “O batla sengwe sa go nwa?” (do you want something to drink?)

“Dula fatshe Goitsimedi.” the authority in her voice, one could not miss it. I sat next to her looking down without knowing what to say to her. I didn't know this woman who is my aunt.

“I'm sorry that we're meeting under such circumstances. How are you doing?”

I didn't know if it was how calm her voice was when she asked this but I felt warmth and a sense of belonging. I burst into tears. I couldn't hold it in anymore. I was tired and exhausted. Crying seemed like the right thing to do at that moment.

“Let it all out nnana, cry it's okay to cry.”

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Loud voices woke me up from my nap. I didn't realise how I had held in so much inside me. I still felt empty and exhausted but I felt better. I walked to the other room, Sedi was dancing for KB and our aunt, Masego. Only then did I realise that Sedi was our aunt's twin. Our aunt was taller but the resemblance was very much there.

“You’re awake, come join us your food is in the microwave.”
Aunt Masego.

“I’m not hungry.”

“I was not asking you to eat, I was telling you.” she said without looking at me. I sat down with a plate of food and ate a few spoons. Everything inside me was in tight knots.

“You avoided my question earlier, when you got here. I asked why we never got to know you or any other family member.”

“Goitsimedi, I don't know how much your mother told you but our family is messed up. Something happened many moons back and your mother was never the same again. She left and no one knew where she was. We only saw her at mom's funeral.. well the following day after we buried mama then she disappeared again.”

“What happened?” KB asked.

“I don't think it's my secret to tell.. if she wanted you to know, you would know.” Aunt Masego.

“That’s nonsense!” my siblings and aunt Masego’s eyes widened. “I’ve had enough of family secrets. What happened to our mother that made her run away and she never told anyone where she was going? I had to be a mother at only 15 because one day our mother woke up, left and never came back. Till this date I still wonder what happened and I don't have the answers.”

“I understand your frustration but..”

“You understand nothing! Nothing! Did you hear me when I said I had to be a mother at the age of 15? I never got the chance to be a normal child because I had to put everyone else first except me. I don't think you understand a thing. I'm going out for a walk...”

I heard KB calling me to come back but I was too angry to listen. I didn't want to listen, I was tired of that.

Terrence Ndlovu

I greeted Wanda then took my seat next to the door leading to Dr Puentle's office. I had to move my session to today, I had to do the double shift yesterday. I was a bit early today

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my phone rang it was Londeka—

“Deka?”

“You sound surprised to hear my voice.”

“I am..”

“I would like it if we could meet and discuss something, something that has to do with Okuhle.”

“Deka it's been two years since the passing of Kuhle, I still find it hard on some days to accept that she's really gone but I have to try. I don't think it's a good idea for us to meet.”

“Please Terry I wouldn't be asking unless it was urgent.. just a few minutes of your time is all I need. Please.”

“Can't you tell me over the phone?”

“No.”

“I won't make any promises but I'll text you if I change my mind, I have to go now.”

“Thanks, bye.”

After the phone call Wanda told me that I could go in. Today Dr Puento was not standing at the window. She was sitting down in her chair with a frown on her face. She looked up and looked very tired. She gave me a faint smile then said I could sit.

“Mr Ndlovu, I'm glad you made it today.”

“Sorry about yesterday.”

She nodded then wrote something down in her notebook.

“Where do you want us to start with today's session?”

“I would like to believe I told you everything about Okuhle, leading to the day I lost her and our baby.”

“You tell me Terrence. This is your time to shine, if you feel like you left something out then this is the time to address it.” she opened her bottled water and took a sip without breaking any eye contact.

“Her sister called me while I was still waiting for my turn.”

“You saw her not so long ago didn't you?”

“Yeah, after I told Kuhle's family that I wanted to marry Rachel, they said I was bewitched because a normal person wouldn't do what I was planning on doing. Rachel was there for me from

the day Kuhle was declared dead until we.. I don't know how to explain this.”

“You did say you have never had any feelings for her, romantic feelings but months after the funeral you started feeling some sort of way for her, right?”

“I never saw Rachel that way, I saw her as my wife's best friend and that was it. I was also confused at the sudden feelings I had developed for her. I just couldn't understand. At first I thought maybe it's all the time I've been spending with her but one thing led to the other and I proposed.”

“Do you really love her and I don't want you to answer me immediately, you don't even have to answer me. I want you to be totally honest with yourself and only yourself. Ask yourself do you really love this woman or you were just afraid of being by yourself.”

“Do you think she doesn't love me as well?”

“She can only be the one to answer that. I really can't tell you how someone feels about someone, not even you. My job is to

show you that there's nothing wrong with being one with your feelings.. it's okay to not be okay– my everyday motto.”

“She wants us to try surrogacy... I don't know but I had given up on us having children. She lost it when I mentioned Kuhle’s name.”

“I’m listening..” Dr Puoentle.

“I didn't mean it in a bad way, all I was trying to tell her was that I didn't think I was strong enough to go through what I went through with Kuhle.. and her. Kuhle and I lost 5 babies in total, 5! Every time I had my hopes high, she had a miscarriage. How many miscarriages did Rachel have as well? About 4.. yet she still wants us to try again. I don't know if I'm being selfish but I'm tired of having my hopes high.”

“Did you tell her any of this? Does she know this is how you feel? Have you suggested couples therapy Terrence? Do you think any of this normal, to harbour all these feelings inside you? My question returns again, do you really love Rachel? You could never love her like you did with Okuhle, but do you feel

something. I don't want you to confuse compassion and love.. I would've liked it if you both attended these sessions so that I could ask you both this question. Did you give yourself enough time to allow yourself to heal, not only for Okuhle's death but the babies you lost as well.. what about the current loses? Terrence you need to do a lot of soul searching for your own good. Go away for a weekend, on your own and let loose. Breathe and let go maybe you will finally get the answers you're looking for. Maybe you need to forgive yourself as well Terrence, then you can really love someone without any hesitation. All I'm saying is learn to let go, don't force healing it should happen at its own pace but only if you're actually putting in the effort.”

Dr Puoentle looked at the time on her watch then stood up and came to my side to sit on the opposite chair.

“I will never tell my patients what to do, you have to take the next steps on your own.. I'm just here to hold your hand and guide you. Follow your heart. Our session is up, go home and think about what we spoke about.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“It’s good to be home!” Sedi said slouching on the couch. I walked in further and opened the windows to allow fresh air in. It's been three weeks since we buried our mom and I was really glad to be home as well. The atmosphere in Ganyesa was not great. Every corner we turned, family members were gossiping about our mother. I have no idea how we managed to survive three weeks with them but we survived. Aunt Masego forced us to stay a while longer to avoid spending the festive holidays by ourselves.

Some of the family members were welcoming while some, some where just ice cold.

“Aunt Masego looks so strict but she's also cool akere?” KB.

“I was so scared when we arrived and found her cooking. I didn't know how to react. What about you ausi Goitsi?”

Someone was nudging me.

“Huh?”

“What do you think about Aunt Masego?”

“She’s okay I guess..”

“You have been quiet ever since we left the North West, are you okay?” Sedi.

“Yeah I'm fine, don't worry about me.”

“GM, did you see how that old man was staring at you? I think he was mama's uncle or was he the stepfather?.. Very creepy!”
KB.

“I noticed that but brushed it off. He gave me weird vibes and I felt like I knew him from somewhere, I don't know where but I've heard that voice somewhere.”

“I'm going to rest, schools are about to open for some of us!”
we laughed at Sedi as she made faces. My smile vanished when I realised that the Swanepoel's were no longer here to pay for her school fees. How were we going to cope? I was waiting for my results to know how I did at culinary school. I wish I could find something very fast.

“GM..?”

I turned to KB and smiled at her.

“What are we going to do? Do you think we will find jobs so that we could pay the rent?”

I stood up to get myself some water, KB was asking me questions I had no answers to. They have always depended on

me and now I had no way forward. Aunt Masego was not even an option. She worked at a book store in Cresta mall, earning peanuts. She had two children she had to take care of.. there was no way she could afford taking care of us as well. We were definitely on our own, when mama was still alive we didn't have to worry about rent or anything that had to do with money. Yes she was an absent mother but that was something. This was a new territory for me, I had no idea how we were going to survive.

“GM!”

“I don't know KB, I don't know how we're going to survive the next few months. You know I've been looking for a job with no luck. Hakitsi ngwana ko gae.”

“I'll send my CV out as well maybe one of us will be lucky.”

“What about your dreams to be on radio or being a television presenter?”

“I'm not giving up on my dreams GM, never!” she held my hands and wiped the tears that had escaped my eyes. “You worked damn too hard to make sure that we don't lose ourselves and lack any affection. We will live our lives as we hoped when we were younger. It might take a while to reach our dreams but since when do we give up easily?”

“When did you grow up so quickly.” I shoved her.

“What a way to ruin the moment Rainbow.”

“Satan!” we tickled each other until we fell off the couch.

“Can I ask you something KB?”

“Yeah..” we sat cross-legged on the floor. From laughing our lungs out to being serious.

“What do you think about Mabutho?” she smiled.

“You like him don't you?” she wiggled her brows.

“I never said that, I'm just asking.”

“What did you two talk about on your drive?”

“Nothing much..”

“Goitsimedi is in love people!”

“Bathong wena...” I straddled her to shut her up. “Watsenwa!”

“She’s finally in love! Tell me more...”

Rachel Ndlovu

The twins and MaNdlovu were having lunch with us today. Kayise and I were avoiding each other to avoid saying hurtful words to each other. Terrence left early in the morning to meet up with Londeka, well he thinks he is going to meet up with her but she won't be there.

Mkhulu Sithole revealed to me that someone from Okuhle's family was getting closer to the truth. Londeka and I never really got along just like Kayise. She never hid the fact that she doesn't like me. She only tolerated me for Okuhle's sake. Either then that we didn't see eye to eye. She was the light I didn't need in my life. We couldn't be in the same room for more than an hour, my darkness and her lightness couldn't tolerate each other.

After I went through Terry's call history and going through his WhatsApp, I knew she wanted to meet up with him today. When Terry told me, I pretended that I knew nothing. I paid someone to cut Londeka's car brakes just before they met. I can't have anyone know the truth. I will do whatever it takes to keep this secret.

"Makoti did you try his number again?" MaNdlovu said behind me.

"Yebo mah

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but I'll try it again..”

“Mthokozisi knew very well that we're coming here today, he should have been here already.”

“He will be here soon mama. It would have been rude to cancel at the last minute.”

“Eish.. do you need help with anything makoti?”

“Just relax mah, I have everything under control.”

Once MaNdlovu had left I looked around before removing the small black plastic I had hidden in my bra. It was a white powder that would make Tereence’ family love me more and always have my back. This powder would make them agree to anything I wanted them to do. The only stubborn person was Kayise, after all my tries this does not work on her. MaNdlovu, Lindo and Terrence ate from my palm.

Just as I placed the jug of juice on the table, Terry drove in. Time to work on my magic!

I walked to his car with a huge smile on my face; arms spread.

“My love..”

“I know, I know I'm late sorry..” we shared a kiss and held hands as we walked to the rest of the people. He hugged his mom and sister then brushed Lindo on the head.

“I’m sorry for being late.”

“It’s okay baby.” I held his hand on the table. “What did Londeka want?”

“She never came and never bothered to call and tell me why she's not coming.”

“That doesn't sound like Deka at all, she would have called if something came up.” Kayise said with a brow raised staring at her brother.

“Well she never came.”

“Did you try calling her my love?”

“Mhmm.”

“Excuse me...” Kayise said standing up.

“Uyaphi wena?” MaNdlovu asked.

“Kodwa mah...”

“Sit down Ntombikayise!” she huffed before she could sit.

While mah, prayed for the food I texted my accomplice to ask if he did the job.

“Amen!” we all said. This was the perfect time to test the waters.

“Terrence and I have something we would like to share with everyone.” I cleared my throat; all eyes were on me. Terrence was just as confused.

“Everyone at this table know how Terry and I have been struggling to fall pregnant with no luck...”

One couldn't miss the smile on MaNdlovu's face.

“To avoid any heartbreak again, we have decided to find a surrogate to carry the baby for us.” Terrence spat the juice out while looking at me. Kayise rolled her eyes at me before burying herself in her phone again.

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Terrence had not said a word after the stunt I pulled during lunch. He was watching sports, with a beer in hand. I was wearing lingerie hoping that would cheer him up. Maybe I should have waited a while for the powder to work before opening my mouth about the surrogacy.

I stood in front of him then straddled him while leaving kisses on his face.

“Are you angry at me baby?” I asked while still kissing him. I broke the kiss and looked into his eyes. “Baby?”

“Why did you tell them about the surrogacy? We still haven't found someone yet..”

“I needed to share the good news with family my love. We all needed some good news.” I pulled his pants down and rubbed him gently, he let out a groan.

“I wish you could have gave me some sort of warning at least?”

“I know baby and I'm really sorry.” I sat on his semi hard shaft and went up and down on him. He held me tighter and pressed me against him.

“Are we going to use your eggs or..?” he had flipped us over and was now above me. He ripped the rest of the lingerie off me as he pounded me with no mercy. My moans were very loud.

“Baby.. Ahh, slow down.. yes.. ahh.”

“You know we're going to have to attend therapy first right?”

“Mhmm, right there. Fuck!” he upped his pace and I felt my core tighten. “Ohh Terry...” he filled me up with his cum then stayed buried inside me before pulling out. He disappeared to

the bathroom and came back with a wet warm towel and wiped me clean. My waist down was very numb. I just lay there like a lamb that was about to be sacrificed.

Terrence lay behind me and placed a fleece over our naked bodies.

“I love you Terry..” I said sleepy.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

The weather outside was very chilly, I sat on the crate with a cup of coffee in my hand. The savings mama had would be enough to pay Sedi’s school fees for a year and her insurance money would help us pay the rent for a couple of months. Sedi would have to change school. I went back inside to fetch the brown envelope that had the letter then went back outside—

To my lovely daughters, Goitsimedi, Karabo and Lesedi Tholo..

I don't know where to begin because no amount of I'm sorry will heal your wounds. I have never stopped loving you or your siblings but I was not strong enough, selfish I know...

I folded the letter again and put it back in the envelope. I couldn't read it, I was afraid of what I would find in the letter. I drank the remains of my coffee then went back inside the house.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

To my lovely daughters, Goitsimedi, Karabo and Lesedi Tholo..

I don't know where to begin because no amount of I'm sorry will heal your wounds. I have never stopped loving you or your siblings but I was not strong enough, selfish I know. I wish I had the guts to have told you and your siblings this while I was still alive. If you're reading this letter, that means I'm no longer alive.

Bunkie, no amount of sorries will erase what Frank did to you. Nothing can heal that pain and bleeding.

That day brought back memories I had thought I had buried deep away. I didn't want to run away but running away was the only good thing I could do. I was not a mother to you, Karabo and Lesedi and I can only blame myself for all of that.

I had all the resources to seek help but instead I dug up a huge hole to hide in..

What Frank did to you is something I'm very familiar with but unlike you, my mother didn't abandon me when I needed her the most like I did with you. I blamed her for something she had no control over, I did that until her last days in this world.

Another burden I carried with me. I felt so alone and unwanted that when Frank came into my life, I didn't see any signs of my daughters being uncomfortable around him. I failed as a mother.

My mother, your grandmother had a prophetic gift. She helped people at our village. Her gift was very powerful, people respected her yet some of the family members wished death upon her. They wanted to have the gift but it was not theirs. My mother was my role model, I loved her a lot. She was such a perfect mother who would kill for her children. We lost our father at a very young age and they forced her to marry my uncle. Things were never the same after that marriage. My mom lost so much weight and, and.. the person who was supposed to protect me and my sister, Masego hurt me in the most unforgettable way. My mother had five children, my two older brothers passed away a few months after our dad then the last born went missing for weeks only to be found dead. That was one of the many reasons for her weight loss, she couldn't understand how in a space of six months she lost her husband and three children.

Mama got married to my uncle when I was 11.. at the age of 12, he started touching me inappropriately and made me believe

that was okay. Deep down I knew it was not okay, how could an uncle touching their niece ever be okay? But I kept it to myself.

One afternoon I came back early from school because I started my period at school. Mama was not home, she had travelled to another village to help a sick baby. While I changed, the door shut close behind me and my uncle was the one locking the door. He told me that I could scream but no one would hear me. I had no way out. He had his way with my body.. he did as he pleased. This continued until I turned 13, I was coming back from fetching wood when he grabbed me and dragged me further into the woods to an abandoned shack. A shack I have never seen in my life. He had me closed in it for weeks.. I prayed that my mom who always helped other people would also come to my rescue. I prayed until I gave up. I was his sex slave for weeks. Some days he would refuse to give me water and food, saying I was disobedient.

One day I heard my mom screaming my name but I couldn't open my mouth due to hunger to tell her where I was. I just lay on the floor in the middle of the dirty shack that smelled of urine and sweat. I woke up at a local hospital, I don't know how I ended up there but my mom was there and my younger sister, Masego. I was very angry, where was her gift when I needed it? Why did she let this happen to me. Why did she let me go to the woods on my own?

Once I had healed I told the family the truth. I told them what my uncle has been doing but they refused to believe me. Only my mom and sister believed me. I knew that he would kill me if I stayed at the village after I exposed him. I stole mama's money; packed some of my clothes and ran away from home. I didn't know where I was going or where I would sleep but I was not staying at that house...

I found myself in Johannesburg by asking for lifts.. I used churches as shelter. I would clean churches just to get shelter and something to eat. I fell in love with one of the church members and I fell pregnant with you. I was 17. He provided for us, I found work and became a domestic worker at a farm. We only saw each other on weekends. He loved you a lot. I never knew his family, but I didn't care. Then your siblings followed and he passed away. I really didn't know how I would survive with three children on my own. Your father's death reminded me that I needed my family, I missed mama a lot and my sister.. I realised that I blamed her for things she had no control over. I finally went back home only to find out that my mom was buried the previous day.

I didn't mean to turn you into a mother at such a young age my Bunkie. I wanted you to be a child as well. I wanted you to hate me and blame me like I did with my mother. I wanted you to want nothing to do with me. I couldn't understand why and

how you always had hope for our relationship. Only now do I realise that I caused more harm than doing any good. I hurt you and your siblings and there's nothing I can do to take that hurt away. Asking for an apology would be selfish.. all I'm asking from you is that you tell your siblings that I love them a lot and I'm sorry for the pain I caused. Attend therapy Bunkie

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it will help. I wish I had attended therapy when I had the chance.

I love you my girls...

Sebaga Tholo.

I read the letter twice with tears blinding my vision. I held the letter tight to my chest and cried. I don't know if the letter provided any consolation but at least I knew that she loved us. Before she left us for work, she was the perfect mother. I never doubted her love and maybe that's why I always have her so many chances. I knew that deep down my mother was somewhere in there. KB and Sedi sat down next to me and rubbed my back as I cried. I was not only crying for the mother that we lost but I was crying for myself as well; the me I was robbed by two men. For not being strong enough to open a case against Thapelo. For not being able to be the child I was.

Not knowing where to from here– what's going to happen to us now?

“Can we read the letter as well?” KB asked holding the letter.

“She wrote it for all of us, I think it's only fair if we all read it.” I wiped my tears then stood up. “I’m going to take a nap.”

Terrence Ndlovu

“Babe, I won't have time for breakfast I'm already late!”

“Terrence, if you had woken up on time we would be having breakfast but you don't listen.” Rachel shouted in the bathroom.

“How about we go out for dinner tonight and let loose?”

She snuck her head from the door. “That would be nice.. I'll pass by the dry cleaners to fetch my dress.”

“I really have to go now, have you seen my phone anywhere?”

“Check under the pillow Terrence.”

“I saw that eye roll Rachel. Okay found it.” I gave her a light peck on the lips.. “I love you.”

On my way out I grabbed an apple and banana then rushed out. I was going to be stuck in traffic.

I still couldn't understand why Deka has not called to explain why she didn't show up. This was very unlike her. I tried both her numbers but none went through. I had no choice but to call MaGumede, her mother. It had been ages since the last time we spoke. Bab'Gumede would never answer my calls.

"Hello?" MaGumede's tiny soprano voice said.

"Sawubina mah, uyaphila?"

"Terrence ngani yami nguwe lomuntu?"

"Yebo mah."

"Unjani kade ngagcina?"

"Ngiyaphila mah.. uphi uLondeka, Kade ngizama izinombolo zakhe?"

"Hauw mfana wami, awuzwanga ukuthi uLondeka ubandakanyeke engozini yemoto?"

That was a shock, this should explain why she didn't show up.

"Bekunini lokhu mah..?"

The first thing I did arriving at the hospital was to visit Deka. All along she was at the hospital I worked at. I opened her room and she was facing the wall.

“Deka..?” she turned with her bandaged head and faced me. She struggled a bit; I helped her sit well.

“Who, how did you know that I was here?”

“Your mom told me.”

“My mother?”

“Yes, what happened?”

“To be honest I also don't know Terry. One minute I'm driving to the coffee shop we supposed to meet at, next thing my brakes are not working and I collided with another vehicle.”

“You're still alive that's what matters.”

“I guess one could say that.. but I don't think my brakes just stopped working for no reason when we're supposed to meet. I don't believe in coincidence.”

“What are you saying..? Are you trying to say someone tampered with your brakes?”

Deka nodded slowly.

“Who?”

“That's what I would like to know as well.”

“I’ll check you later I’m supposed to be doing my rounds as we speak.”

“Terrence?” I stopped at the door and looked at her. “Be alert at all times Terrence, always be alert. Those we trust are the ones who betray us most of the time.” then she dozed off after saying that.

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Deka’s words kept ringing in my ears. Maybe it was just the medication making her say all those things. Who would want her dead? I’ve known Deka, to be a people’s person. She gets along with everyone, well it seemed that way. I was in the bathroom at Dr Puoentle’s office to wash my face. As I looked up– I moved back a bit and closed my eyes not believing what I saw in the mirror.

“Kuhle?” she looked different.. I don't know how I expected to see her but she didn't look like the woman I was married to. She looked very exhausted and lost.

“Kuhle?” I looked behind me but she was not there, I could only see her on the mirror. I leaned forward and I heard her faint voice; “Don’t trust her! She's not who you think she is.”

“Who?”

“Don’t trust her...” then she disappeared.

“No, no, nooo... Please don't go.” I sunk to the floor on my knees not understanding what was going on with me. Was I losing it? Am I losing touch with reality..? Did I miss her so bad that my mind played tricks on me.

I found my way up and went to Dr Puentle, her door was open so I went in. More like I dragged myself in her office. I felt light headed then used the wall for support. She quickly ran to my aid and supported me.

“Hey, hey are you okay?”

“Can I have some water?” I gulped the water in one go then I sat down. What just happened?

“Terrence you don't look great should I call someone to come and pick you up?”

“I’m fine, I'm fine.”

“Let’s go sit on that couch over there then you can lean back on it and close your eyes for a minute.” she helped me up to the

couch and I lay on my back while she massaged the back of my hand.

“Take a deep breath in for me Terrence, and hold it in for five seconds then breathe out.. do that until you have calmed down. Can you do that for me?”

I did as I was told until I felt my body letting loose.

“Do you want to start the session?” I nodded.

“Tell me what happened, why do you look so out of it today?”

“I.. I.. I, uhm I think I just saw Okuhle.” I watched Dr Puento as I said that, she didn't look shocked or surprised. “You probably think I've lost my mind.”

“What led you to see her?”

I told her about Deka's accident and what she told me when I visited her. To me going to the bathroom and seeing Kuhle on the mirror. I made sure to not leave anything out.

“You think I'm lying right?”

“No! I don't think you're lying and I don't think you're crazy. You might have really seen her because that's what you really wanted to see. You still think about her and wonder if you took

the right choice marrying her best friend. Our minds can be our worst nightmares and you know this. Our minds dishes out what we feed it.. it gives you the comfort you think you need. Do you remember what I said the last time?"

"I must forgive myself."

"What have you been doing since we last spoke?"

"I went to KZN to visit her grave. I was there for almost two hours. I spent the time crying and asking for forgiveness."

"Why did you ask for forgiveness Terrence? You didn't kill her."

"I know that but, but I just felt like apologising to her. I went to some of the restaurants we liked to visit in Durban and ordered her favourite dishes. I spoke to Rachel and told her how I felt about the surrogacy then we came to an agreement that she would have at least two sessions with a therapist then we can go ahead with surrogacy."

"Did she agree to that?"

"Yes, I told her that you could suggest someone else if she thinks you won't be fair towards her..."

Rachel Ndlovu

Three weeks later...

The house felt very empty as I walked in. I slipped my heels off as I walked in further. It was too dark, I tried the switches but no light went on.

“Terry!” I looked for my phone in my handbag and used the flashlight as my light– I felt hands on my waist. I knew that smell very well, I turned my neck slightly to give him more access.

“Mr Ndlovu what's going on here?”

“Nothing, I just wanted to have dinner with my wife. Is that a crime?”

“Mhmm, no.” I turned in the dark and faced him. Even in the dark Terry was still as charming. “Do you know how much I love you baby?”

“How much?”

“This much...” I pressed my lips against his; bit his bottom lip softly then swirled my tongue in his mouth. “This much..” I stood on my toes and licked him from the chin while removing

his shirt.. I left kisses on his neck and went all the way down to his chest.

“Shoud I carry on?” I asked seductively. Terrence picked me up to the wall and had my front facing the wall. His knee seperated my legs then I heard the zipper of my dress being unzipped. A cold breeze hitting against my skin. A muffled moan left my lips as Terry's thumb rubbed me gently. I opened my legs wider.

He kissed my bare shoulders, going down my spine until he reached my ass– he spanked me twice then bit each cheek and pecked each cheek. I couldn't hold it, I used my fingers to rub myself.. I felt his tongue on my opening, he licked and sucked while I rubbed myself. I had a very sensitive clit; I could already feel my orgasm nearing.

“Terry..” his tongue left me then I heard the zipper of his pants; I turned and found him staring at me with a smirk.

“I love...” he slid himself in without any warning. A loud moan left my lips as I held on to the wall for balance. His groans close to my ear were music to my ears. I pushed my ass into him..

“Fuck!” he groaned as I tried to fuck him back...

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“Dinner looks delicious my love.” we were at the dining table about to have dinner. It was a bit cold because of what we did a while ago. I pressed my thighs together thinking about what Terrence did to my body. I could still feel his tongue roaming all over my body. I looked up and found him staring, I looked down embarrassed.

“Mrs me are you good over there?”

“Yeah I'm good.”

“Did I tell you how proud I am of you stahndwa sami? I'm very proud of you.”

“What did I do?” I watched him swallow his beer and I swallowed as well.

“You attending therapy; that's something huge. I'm very proud.”

“It had to be done... I really want children Terry and if therapy had to be the start then..” I shrugged.

“How are your sessions?”

I knew that the only way to get Terry to shut up about therapy would be me going to therapy. That's exactly what I gave him, I told him I didn't want to attend where he did— I wanted my own therapist and he agreed.

Thanks to my sister's connection I found someone but I didn't really attend any sessions. I paid him to place me in the system and make it seem as though I actually attended my sessions. I hoped the girl I had in mind won't give me a hard time. She was my last hope. She looked desperate and desperation is what I needed right now.

“Therapy has been going great actually, I don't know why it took me so long to attend. I'm glad you suggested it. I really needed it. How are your sessions?”

“Doing the work, well at first I nearly gave up. My therapist knows her work. She knows how to get one very comfortable and spilling the tea.” we both laughed.

“Really?”

“Babe, if I had killed someone and attempted to cover it up, best believe she would get me to confess.”

I choked on my juice and spat some out. Terry stood up quickly and gave me a glass of water to drink.

“I'm okay baby, I'm good.. is she that good?”

“You nearly scared me, she's good.”

“The fertility clinic called me today.”

“Yeah?”

“They said we need to come next week to check possible surrogates.”

“That was quick.”

“I am married to a doctor afterall!” we continued to have supper and talked about our day at work, then went to bed.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

Our marks were out and I did well

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all I had to do is hope I get replied from all the hotels I sent my referrals to.

During the day I called aunt Masego and asked her if she would be able to help us out, I already knew the answer but one has to try. Her last born answered the phone and she told me where to get off. I've never been so embarrassed!

She made it seem like I was a mosque and I wanted to suck their mother's blood. It was confirmed that we're on our own. Sedi would have to change schools in second term because

things changed when we least expected it. I was so grateful that the Swanepoel's had paid my entire fees.

I felt like going out to let loose, inhale the fresh air but it was late. The house was suffocating me; it was swallowing me whole. I had to be strong because it was about to get tougher.

I was trying to stalk Mabutho when my phone vibrated in my hand. I had a WhatsApp message from an unknown number. My eyes widened once I clicked on the profile photo and it was Mabutho with Thobile. I sat upright and pulled the blanket up as I read the message—

Hi, would you like to go for a drive? It's Mr quantum..—
Mabutho.

Thobile must have told him that we used to call him Mr quantum. I smiled while typing then deleting everything only to type again.

Yes I would like to go for a drive. I replied.

I'll be there in two minutes get ready. —Mabutho.

I kicked the blankets off me and wore warm leggings, long sleeved t-shirt and a light jacket on top. I removed the head scarf then tied my braids. I applied some lip gloss and smiled at myself on the mirror.

“O ya kae bosigo GM?” (where are you going late at night?) KB said behind me. I turned to her—

“For a drive.”

“When did you buy a car?” she raised her brow.

“Okay fine! Mabutho and I are going out for a drive.”

“What’s going on between you two?”

“Hebatho KB, nothing. We're just.. you know, going out.” I looked at myself again and blew myself a kiss. KB shook her head then clapped her hands.

“I never thought the day would come where I would see my sister in love. God is good, can I get an amen! Somebody say Jesus!”

“Motho wa go itibatsa gore wa tsenwa.” (a person can forget that you're crazy.) I said reaching for my ringing phone, it was Mabutho. I cleared my throat before answering.

“Hello.”

“As’hambe..”

“Okay.” I hung up then looked for chewing gum in my gown. I said goodbye to KB and left. I found him waiting outside the car. He was wearing grey tracksuits; had one leg bended against the car door while puffing his cigarette. He looked up and smiled at me. Ntate modimo, I mumbled to myself.

“Hi.”

“Singahamba?” I nodded then got inside.

“Re ya kae?” I watched him as he drove with one hand while nodding to the song playing in his car.

“Hmm, uthini?”

“Re ya kae?”

“Nami angazi.. o batla re ya kae?” I turned my head so quick not believing what I heard. I laughed staring at him. “Yini?”

“Nothing.”

We drove around while listening to the music until we reached a place called “Kitchener’s”. We ordered burgers and chips with jalapeno sauce as a takeaway.

“Let’s take a walk as we wait for our order.” I looked at him confused, I don't if I noticed that it was dark outside and being mugged us something I was trying to avoid.

“At this time?”

“Woza...” he held my hand as we left the place. It was a bit chilly outside and I regretted wearing such a light jacket.

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We were chilling at the dam at 01h00 in the morning after all the driving around that we did in Maboneng. Mabutho was leaning against the car while I sat on the bench sipping on my Strongbow– Phakade Lami playing in the background. This was KB’s favourite song. I quickly took out my phone and called her, hoping she will wake up.

“Ngwana ko gae utlwa go tsene efeng..” (listen to what song is playing..) she screamed, Mabutho laughed shaking his head.. I hung up while she screamed her lungs out.

“Awugodoli yini lapho? Woza ume la.” (are you not getting cold there? Come and stand here.)

I walked to him; back to his front then he gave me his jacket to wear. I secretly inhaled it, the cologne was very intoxicating. I leaned back and listened to his heart beat. His chest was becoming my favourite comfort place. For a change I did not

think about my problems and how to deal with them. I was just Goitsimedi who was about to turn 23. The world would not stop because I was having fun for a change.

“Goitsi?”

“Hmm.”

“Lithini isoka lakho uma ulapha kimi?” I faced him then laughed out loud. Only now he is asking about my boyfriend. Mabutho is a chance taker. (what is your boyfriend saying when you're here with me?)

“You can't ask me such after all the hours we spent together. Wa hlanya.”

“Manje ithini indlela eya phambili? Unjani selokhu kwangcwatshwa..?” so much for not thinking about my problems. I sighed then faced him, I tilted my head up to look him in the eyes. How they twinkled in the dark amazed me. How strange that a while ago I could not face him nor speak to him but now I had my arms wrapped around his waist staring into his eyes with no shame.

I didn't know if I was being too forward right now but I moved my head forward; slightly that our lips were inches away from

connecting. He blew air onto my face as he brought me closer to him and we both inhaled each other's breaths...

“Mabutho...”

“Ufunani?” words were going to fail me badly; I wrapped my other arm around his neck and captured his lips. Whether I was doing it wrong or not I didn't care but I was not going to wait for him to tease me. He kissed me back and picked me up as he turned me so that my back was against the car. How he picked me up as heavy as I was, is a story for another day. I snuck my hand under his tee— he placed me on the ground and sucked on my neck while squeezing my waist. We stared into each other's eyes for what felt like forever, then he pecked me twice—

“As'hambe ngiyangena mina ngo six.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I was up early cleaning and listening to music thinking about what happened last night. The music stopped playing and my phone beeped twice. I had a message from Mabutho.

Ngiyethemba ulale kahle ntokazi enhle. Ngaze ngacabanga ngawe, uyathakatha yini? –Mabutho.

I put the feather duster underneath my arm and giggled replying him. Someone cleared their throat next to me..

“Ngwana ko gae!” I brushed her face with the duster and she sneezed. I threw it down and ran out. I was really taking chances, KB might have a thick body but she was a runner. Just passing a few houses and I felt like I had ran the marathon against Oscar Pistorius.

“Wena GM! Goitsimedi, you're going to be sorry.” I giggled as I ran then looked back and saw her holding the duster. I upped the little pace I still had while busy screaming; mama yoh, mama yoh..

“Rainbow weee!” she sounded very far behind.

“Jou shit ke Rainbow!” my chest was on fire as I ran in the passage. I bumped into someone and fell down. “Ouch.” I looked up and I came face to face with my worst nightmare. I looked back hoping to see KB but it looked like she might have taken another route.

“It’s been a while Nana.” He said giving me His hand to help me up. I could hear my heart beating in my ears. I couldn't hear anything— I closed my eyes with hopes that this was nothing but a very bad dream. I found Him crouching next to me as I opened my eyes. I tried screaming but nothing came out. My mouth moved but nothing came out, instead I cried.

“Shhh, don't cry I'm not here to hurt you. Shh...” Him.

“Goitsimedi mma when did you get this fas...” KB stopped in her tracks and looked at me then at Him.

She ran to me and stood in front of me shielding me from seeing Him. I was still on the ground crying from fear.

“Wena satan!” she helped me up then looked at Him again with disgust on her face.

“You have become a grown woman Karabo. Where is little Lesedi?”

“Keep our names away from that rotten mouth of yours. If you know what's best for you, please go before I scream!” KB.

We watched him walk away, only then did I breathe. I let out a shaky sigh once he was out of sight.

“Hey, hey he won't hurt you again do you hear me? Let's go back home.”

Terrence Ndlovu

I was working at the non private hospital at the clinic today, alongside Jes. I'm glad things were not awkward between us, she was her usual chatty self as we attended to our patients.

“Jes, don't forget to take MaKoena's BP and sugar levels before we discharge her.”

“Sure doc.”

I moved along the patients then my phone rang as I checked Rudzani's file. He was a regular here. Always came with bruises and when asked who does this to him, he just goes mute. His older daughter told is that his wife was responsible but her father does not want to leave her because divorce is a sin of some sort. I let the phone ring until I was done with my rounds at the clinic.

I bumped into Dr Robinson as I came from the bathroom.

“You’re here as well?”

“Not really.. Dr Ravele had a heart transplant today but her girlfriend was involved in a car accident and she couldn't make it. I was glad to take over, it's not every day one gets such a case.”

“Lucky you, I was at the clinic and I feel like I'm about to collapse. I don't know how the nurses cope with seeing so many patients on a daily; especially those who work at government hospitals.”

She tapped my back, “this is the price you pay for doing medicine kiddo.”

“I should have been a tree instead!” she stopped walking and looked at me then burst into laughter.

“A tree?”

“Yep and provide shade for everyone and also listen to them gossiping about people.”

“You’re really exhausted, how are you going to cope next week? Have you seen the roster?”

“No.”

“We are doing the double shift.. well you'll be here at the clinic and it's on a Friday. Good luck.” then she went outside to the parking lot. I just stood in the middle and felt tired already for next week. How am I going to feel once the baby is here?

I used the other exist to head to the private sector. I hope the clinic is not as bad as this side. My phone vibrated in my coat as I walked. ‘My wife,’ flashed across the screen.

“Mfazi ka Terry.”

“Sthandwa sami I tried calling earlier.”

“I was still doing my rounds baby. How are you?”

“I’m okay I just wanted to remind you that we need to go the family doctor to get those tests done before we meet with our possible surrogate.”

“Babe it's best we do that after meeting her and all the processes are over with. There's still a lot that needs to be dealt with. The agency needs to screen her as well.”

“Why do I get a feeling that you're getting cold feet?
Terrence?”

“Relax baby there's still time. Listen I have to go now, I'll see you in a few hours okay

Advertisement

I love you.”

“I love you more.” I hung up as I entered the clinic.

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“Terry! Terry!”

I looked back and it was Deka. She looked better than the last time I saw her.

“I’ve been calling you from the hospital.” she went in for a hug.

“Sorry I didn't hear you. You look better.”

“I feel better as well. Do you have time to talk?”

“I actually have a therapy session and if I don't leave now I'm going to be late.”

“Therapy..? You?”

“Yes me, Deka. What's wrong with therapy?”

“Nothing.. when can we meet?”

“Deka what's going on, like really going on? Strange things have been happening ever since I last saw you. I don't know how to explain it.”

“You see her as well am I right? You see Kuhle as well don't you?”

“How, how did you know?”

“When you're not busy tell me.”

“Deka wait you can't leave me hanging like that.”

“Call me when you're not busy Terry.” then she left me in the parking lot like an idiot.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I was still very badly shaken by what happened during the day. It didn't make sense that Frank was out of jail. No one informed me about this. The fact that he also knew where we lived was unsettling; he still had the guts to follow me where I am. He might be very dangerous than the last time I saw him.

“Did he say anything to you GM? Anything like how he knew where we stay?”

“If he did I did not hear him, I was just shocked to see him. He was the last person I expected to see. I had hoped that he would die in jail and I would never have to see him ever again.”

“If he thinks he is going to disrupt our lives he better think twice. I'm much older and stronger now GM, he better not try anything.”

“I still don't understand how he is out and roaming the streets. It makes no sense.”

KB stood behind me and rubbed my back gently. “He won't hurt you again GM.. stop thinking about him.”

“Easier said than done, where is Sedi it's late.”

“Thobile is doing her hair, I already told you this.”

“Ohh now I remember, uhm I'll wait for her you can go to bed.”

“Are you sure? It's really not that late..”

“Your yawning says otherwise; go and sleep I'll be fine.”

I sat by myself wondering what Frank wants from me. It can't be to apologize because that would be crazy of him. Then I remembered the last dream I had of him and Thapelo. Maybe he is here to finish me off and Thapelo will help him do that. I

quickly got to my feet and paced the room. Must I start carrying a pocket knife for when they try to outsmart me? But then they might even use that knife on me.

I noticed my phone screen flashing on the table, it was an unknown number. I wanted to let it ring but thought it might be very important.

“Goitsmedi hello?”

“Hi Goitsimedi, it's Rachel I don't know if you still remember me?”

Rachel..? I scratched my chin trying to remember where we met but I was never good with names.

“I’m sorry but I don't recall meeting a Rachel.”

“I understand it was far back. We met in Braam– I took your CV, ring a bell?”

Flip! “Oh yes now I remember, hi how are you?”

“I’m okay thanks for asking. Are you busy tomorrow?”

“It depends on why you're asking.”

“I have an offer for you and it needs us to meet face to face. What do you say?”

“Where do you want us to meet?”

“You can choose the place.”

“Will East Gate be okay?”

“Okay can we meet after one?”

“No problem I'll see you then.”

“Bye...”

Now that was strange maybe this would actually be the beginning of something great. I hope and pray it's good news because if it's bad news, I don't think I'll be able to handle it.

I wore my sandals and walked to Thobile's place, I didn't want Sedi to walk alone. I knocked then stood back.

“My friend.” we shared a hug by the door. “Come in I'm almost done.” we walked in and I looked around for Mabutho.

“He is not here.” Sedi said the minute she saw me.

“Who?” I played dumb. Sedi and Thobile laughed at me trying to act dumb.

“You know who I'm talking about, he is not here.” Sedi.

“You and my brother have been spending a lot of time together. Is there something you want to tell me?” Thobile asked without looking at me.

“Me and who, spending time together?”

“Ha ha nice try! I see how he looks at you when you're here visiting and how you look at him when you think no one is looking.” Thobile.

“I have no idea what you're talking about Thobile, I really don't.”

“There we go.. I'm done.”

“Thank you ausi Thobi.” I mouthed ‘thank you’ to Thobile then we left.

“I’m so glad tomorrow is Friday, I'm already exhausted!”

“Bathong Sedi, school just opened.”

“Nna ke lapile shem and I'm not looking forward to second term as well.” I looked at her as we walked inside the house. If it was possible, she wouldn't change schools but we had no choice. Waiting for Santa to perform miracles will not work in our case.

Terrence Ndlovu

“Babe I'm leaving!” I grabbed my belongings and attempted to leave—

“Your shift does not start so early Terry, where are you going?”

“Uhm, I have to meet up with Robinson to discuss a patient of mine. I need her advice.”

“Can't that wait?”

“Unfortunately no.” I pecked her forehead and left.

I needed to know what Deka wanted to tell me. I've been seeing Kuhle everywhere I go and dream about her as well. This can't be normal. I didn't want to fight with Rachel because the last time I mentioned Kuhle's name she lost it.

I called Deka as I stopped by the garage to fill my tank.

“Hi Deka, I'm almost there.”

“Okay I just arrived as well, should I order something for you?”

“No I'll order when I arrive..”

—

Deka waved her hand once she spotted me arriving. We were at the same coffee shop opposite the hospital. She stood then we shared a hug.

“I'm not late am I?” I asked sitting down then called the waitress to order coffee and carrot muffins.

“No. Listen Terry, what I'm about to tell you is going to be a shock and chances of you believing me are very slim.”

“Now you're scaring me.”

“I was just as scared when the truth surfaced. I found it hard to believe but yet again I did.”

“Are you going to tell me or not?”

“Rachel is not who you think she is Terry. you can't trust her.”

Not this again. I really thought everyone was over this. “I thought we're here to discuss Kuhle not my marriage, what's this now?”

“Yes we are! Just listen to me,” she moved closer and looked me in the eyes. “do you really believe that Kuhle just died like that and nothing was done to her? Do you honestly believe that?”

“Why would the paramedics lie Deka? I know it's hard to accept her death but you have to for your own sake.”

“Then explain to me why you're seeing her? She died naturally, so she's resting in peace. Now tell me why you're seeing her.”

“I don't know how to explain that but such things happen Deka. It happens when you think a lot about someone who has already passed. You start seeing them and hearing them.” I held the back of her hand and rubbed it.

She pulled her hand from mine. “Listen here, you might not believe me as I said but I know for a fact that your wife had a hand in Kuhle’s death. I know and I'll prove it!”

“Now you're going too far! Too far!” I raised my voice more than I wished. “What has Rachel done to you for you to hate her this much? Deka please don't do this...”

“As I said you won't believe me but something is off with that wife of yours but you're too blind to see it. I know I was the person who said we don't choose whom we fall in love with but..” she shook her head. “Open your eyes Terry and see her for whom she truly is. She killed Kuhle.”

“Stop! Just stop okay... Rachel was Kuhle’s best friend she would never do such a thing. They were like sisters. ”

“Yet she married you..? Please wake up and smell the coffee. Wake up before she finishes you as well. Go and see someone maybe you'll believe them.”

There was no way what Deka was saying was true. Not my Rachel. What would be the reason to kill Kuhle? No she was just messing with me. This was a joke, it had to be a joke. But her face was very serious, she was not joking.

“I have something to show you, maybe then you'll believe me.” she searched for something in her laptop bag, she gave me a flash drive. “Watch this and tell me what you think.”

“What's this?”

“I received this a few weeks ago but I was too busy chasing deadlines to check what was in it. I did while I was still hospitalized and.. it's not finished, the person was disturbed before he could finish it.”

I hesitated from taking the drive but I had this urge to know what was in it that made Deka believe that my Rachel was capable of murder.

“I'll watch it when I get a chance, but right now I have to go.” I paid for our orders then she touched me,

“Terry,” she sighed and closed her eyes, opening them they looked different more like I was seeing Okuhle in the flash.

“You're not dreaming it's really me but don't freak out.” even the voice belonged to her, how was I expected to not freak out. I ran out of the coffee shop with lightning speed! There was no

way I was staying another minute to be freaked out. I was definitely going mad.

Rachel Ndlovu

It was almost one and it didn't look like my client was satisfied with all the houses we had viewed today. If I don't meet up with Goitsimedi today, I don't think I'll get another chance to convince her.

My chest was extremely hot today, it felt like someone was sucking the air from my lungs. I couldn't understand why that was happening. This only happened when I was in the presence of Londeka, this is how I felt when we were stuck in a room together. I held my chest and took a few breaths, I found the client looking at me with a tight smile. I already knew that she didn't like any of the apartments. Rich kids were always the worst, never sure of what they want. You give them suggestions they toss them aside but they don't have any clue of what they want.

“I really don't like any of these apartments.” she said with a scowl.

“I noticed,” I gave her a tight smile back.. “how about a colleague of mine takes you through the apartments she has then maybe you might like those better?”

“I’m a very busy person Rachel and I was told you're the best in the game that's why I'm here but it looks like you're not.”

“There’s nothing I can do for you right now, that's why I'm referring you to my colleague. I could give him a call right now..?”

“Fine!”

I quickly gave Andile a call and told him where to fetch ‘Mrs I'm very busy

’ I mean who is not busy?

“How about we go to that pastry shop at the mall then my colleague will find you there. He is almost here.”

“Are you paying?”

To go is to see! I nodded yes then she led the way. On all days I had to get a rich kid. The drive to the mall was five minutes, she sat down and ordered a hot chocolate and a slice of their bar one and Oreo cookies cake.

“How long till he gets here?”

“By the time you finish your delicious cake, he will be here. Enjoy.” I ran out of the mall as though I was not wearing heels, testing fate I know but I was running out of time.

—

Just as I was fastening my seatbelt, my phone rang and it was Madlabantu, very strange.

“Thokoza!”

“Rachel what do you think you're doing?”

“Askies?”

“You’re playing with fire my child and you will burn.”

I didn't mean to laugh but I did. I laughed as I reversed out of the mall.

“I thought by now your bones would have revealed that I like fire, it does not burn me. I'm fire!”

“Rachel! Rachel! I warned you when you came to me and I'm warning you again— nothing that is done in the dark stays hidden forever and don't involve that poor souls in your evil doings.”

“Arg shut up old man! Who do you think you are, telling me what I can or can't do? O mang weni? I will do whatever it takes to keep this secret.”

It was his turn to laugh. His laugh was very unsettling, It made me wonder what he knew that I didn't.

“Every doing has consequences young woman. You might think you're on top of the game right now but everything has its expiry date and so will your shenanigans as well.” then he cut the call. Bloody old cow!

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The second I was in the parking area, I called Goitsimedi and asked where she was. She was in pick n pay and I told her that she would find me at Piatto.

I ordered some nachos while I waited for her. I texted Andile to ask how things were going with the spoilt brat and he sent me crying emojis. I sent laughing emojis to him and told him that I would bring him a burger and an Irish coffee.

I noticed Goitsimedi walking in with plastics. She was very gorgeous, she smiled once she noticed me and I stood up.

“Hi, I hope I didn't keep you waiting.”

“Not really, thank you for meeting up with me.”

“Curiosity brought me here, so why did you want to see me?”

“Straight to the point, can we order first then we can talk.” the previous waiter came; I ordered a bun-less burger with chips on the side and sparkling water, she had the bacon and cheese with chips as well and iced tea.

“How have you been since I last saw you? Did you find a job?”

“Nope still struggling to find a job.”

Bingo! I just hit the jackpot.

“That’s the reason I asked to see you actually.” thank goodness we were seated at the back and chances of anyone eavesdropping were zilch.

“Okay..” she sipped on her iced tea with her focus in me. If I didn't use anything to make Terry fall for me, he would definitely fall for her.

“I have a proposal for you, it's something very delicate and needs one to take their time. Unfortunately time is something I don't have.”

“Are you a human trafficker?”

“What? No.”

“Then can you get to the point and stop telling me about you not having time and all of that.” this was a different girl then the last one I met. She was more feisty.

“Be my surrogate.”

She placed her glass down, leaned back and blinked twice—

“What?”

“Be my surrogate.”

“Are you out of your mind! How can you expect such from me?” she picked up her belongings about to leave.

“R60k is my offer with benefits.” she stopped then turned and sat down. “Please, I wouldn't be asking unless I was desperate. I've tried everything and nothing works.” emotional blackmail it would be. “I have had about four miscarriages and I don't have the strength to fall pregnant again only to lose the baby.”

“I'm so sorry to hear that,” she came to me and gave me a hug.

“I'm so sorry.”

“Such things happen, maybe I was not meant to be a mother.”

“No don't say such.”

“What can I say, we have been searching for the perfect surrogate but with no luck, you were my last hope.”

“Can I at least think about this? This is something huge and I just can't give you an answer immediately.”

“A week is only what I can give you, there's a lot that needs to be done.”

“Okay, that's uhm, a week is okay then. Uhm let me go then.”

“Your food?”

“I have to be somewhere else, bye!”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

The nerve of that woman! I looked back at the restaurant then went inside a taxi heading to town.

R60K and benefits, It would help a lot, what's so hard with falling pregnant then giving the baby away? I sighed while thinking things through.

I went on Google to check more about surrogacy; I was shocked to find out that it was illegal for someone to offer you money to become their surrogate in SA. I definitely needed the money but what good would it be if I was behind bars?

I had a WhatsApp message from Thobile asking that we meet up later today when she knocks off from work.

Surrogacy..? Was this a sign?

I took another taxi to Roodepoort and Frank snuck to my thoughts. Another issue that I didn't need, I still couldn't get any answers on how he was released. No one gave me any answers, I just got excuses after excuses.

As soon as I arrived at home, I took out ingredients that I would need to bake the oatmeal cookies. I had three orders to deliver, the money was not much but it was something while I waited for something tangible. KB was helping me and I had no idea how to tell her what Rachel wanted from me.

“KB?”

“I just checked them GM and no they're not burning.”

“I was not talking about the cookies. I wanted to ask you something.”

“Ask.”

“Have you ever considered surrogacy? Would you become a surrogate?”

“For you and Sedi I would but another person I don't want lie, I have no clue. Why?”

“No reason just asking. It's also good to know that you would become my surrogate if it were to happen that I can't have children.”

“I thought we were your children.” she made puppy eyes.

“You know what I mean dummy!”

“Yeah I know. Now tell me what's really going on between you and Mr quantum..”

“Nothing.”

“You returned at two in the morning the other day. This morning you two were on the phone for so long like an old married couple. And you want me to believe that there's nothing going on between the two of you, like for real?”

“Eya believe me, I'm telling you.”

“You're in love just admit it tlhe! Okay at least give me hope for love then.. give me something.”

“We've kissed.” she gasped with her eyes widened.

“O maaka!”

“It felt so good ngwana ko gae, so damn good.”

“Halala GM, halala!”

“Arg, go and check those cookies wena satan.”

“You always have to ruin a good mood don't you?” she said opening the oven and removing the last batch then added the ginger and cinnamon biscuits.

“Sedi is unhappy have you realised that?” KB.

“It's about changing schools.”

“Did you talk to her and make her see reason?”

“I did and she understands, she really does but we both know change is never easy. She's already made friends and now she has to start that process all over again. It can't be easy.”

“You're right.”

“Wena?”

“What about me?”

“What are your plans?”

“Ahh GM mma, you're starting another issue now. I applied for a short business course at Unisa, then we'll try Boston media house. Hakitsi.” she shrugged.

“Come here..” I gave her a tight hug, squeezing her then a kiss on the cheek. “Don't give up, no door remains closed forever. Something will come up, okay.”

“I know.. I know.”

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Once we were done with the baking I had a bath then went to Thobile to hear what she had to say. I pray it was not bad news. I don't need such at this time.

The door was slightly opened, I knocked and she opened it wider. She was mopping the floor.

“Hey friend let's wait for it to dry out then we can go in.”

“It's not dark outside, we can sit here.”

“Let's go and buy airtime then...” she locked as we left.

“How was work?”

“Whoever said working at a beauty salon is easy was lying. I can't wait to be done with this short course.”

“You will still be working there though.”

“Listen here GM, working is not the problem, the problem is school. Never liked school vele.” we both laughed as we exited the passage.

“How did your meeting go with that lady?”

“Not bad, not bad.”

“You won't tell me what she wanted?” she bought airtime and a 2l sprite.

“I wish I could.”

“She’s not a pimp right? She won't traffic you or anything like that?”

“What’s it with you, KB and traffickers? She asked the same thing.”

“We don't want to see you getting hurt. People can smell desperation miles away. Just be careful.”

Just as we entered the passage, someone grabbed me by the arm– I turned to find Thapelo. Thobile turned as well then he pretended to know me, he didn't realise that I was walking with someone.

“Motho waka..” he said touching my face. I slapped his hand off. (my love..)

“I told you to leave me alone. Wa tsenwa!” (are you mad!)

“What’s going on here?” Thobile.

“Nothing let's go..” I grabbed Thobile by the hand and upped my pace.

“You can't run forever sweetheart!” I wished I had not turned around

I saw a glimpse of Frank. My palm sweated immediately. “The dream,” I whispered.

“GM, you're scaring me what's going on?” we stopped just after passing the passage.

“Nothing let's go.”

—

I kept on looking backwards as we walked, one couldn't be sure where Thapelo was involved. I was afraid of him, but seeing him with Frank, now I was in fear. Was this my dream coming true? Were they going to kill me? How did they even meet?

“Shit!” I said out loud as Thobile unlocked the door and we entered. “Fuck!”

“Yini”

Thapelo was the son. He was the son he once mentioned when the police collected him. He kept on saying Thapelo will finish off where I left of. Thapelo raping me was not a coincidence, it was planned, it was revenge. Now his face was clear, he used to stay four shacks away from where we used to stay in Alex. Frank was always in and out of that shack, that was him checking his son. I remembered him now. We used to call him Kagiso then, he must have been using a fake name or both these names belong to him.

Someone was shaking me...

“Why are you crying?”

I didn't even realise that I was crying. I wiped the tears and gave her a sad smile.

“I’m not crying.”

“You know you can talk to me about anything right? I can see that something is bothering you, especially after that dirty boy touched you. Did he do anything to you? Talk to me.”

“I promise you, I'm fine.. what did you want to tell me?”

“Let’s go chill in my room...”

Rachel Ndlovu

I looked at Terry coming from the bathroom looking like a zombie. I couldn't even tell him that I met up with our possible surrogate today. He didn't look like his usual self and that worried me. Was the powder already wearing off him? No, I can't have that happening.

“Baby are you okay?”

“Yeah just tired.” he was lying.

“I’m your wife Terrence and I can tell when something is bothering you, now tell me.”

“I said it's nothing Rachel, now let it go.”

“Ohh..” I got up from the bed wore my silk gown then walked out of the room. Something was off with Terry and I could not stop thinking about what Madlabantu said earlier.

My phone rang and it was Bab’ Mahlori–

“Thokoza mkhulu.”

“Rachel!” he made weird sounds over the phone, he sounded like a wounded animal. He burped over and over.

“Thokoza mkhulu.”

“The truth is about to be unfolded Rachel. The powder is also wearing off him. We underestimated his ancestors.. they've finally smelt the coffee and they're fighting for their own. It does not look good on your side.”

“Mkhulu?” I don't think I heard him well. How was the powder wearing off when I made sure to add it in his food every single day? This made no sense.

“The dead girl's sister is also fighting you. Her sister is using her as a vessel. She knows that you're the darkness. She knows.”

Damn you Londeka! Even after the car accident you're still after me?

“Your husband knows as well.” the room felt very small. I balanced myself using the wall then walked to the window in the spare room.

“I don't understand.”

“He knows and his family healer knows as well..” blow after blow! “He told your husband that you're keeping a massive secret from him and you needed to confess. You're lucky that he is still under your spell either than that he would have believed that girl.”

“Thokoza!” then he hung up. Now that explained Terrence’ sudden behaviour. As much as he was under the spell, with his ancestors fighting for him as well chances are deep down he believes Londeka.

This was not good, not good!

—

I walked back to our room all calmed down, I can't have him suspecting anything. I slowly opened the door and he quickly closed his laptop. I smiled as I walked to him.

“What are we watching that we don't want the wife seeing? Are we watching porn my love? At this big age, fantasies we have not fulfilled yet?”

“Don’t be ridiculous Rachel. Just a work email.”

“I was just pulling your leg, what's the matter with you today?”

“Nothing, just tired.”

“Then sleep.”

“That was the plan but I'm thirsty.”

“Should I go and warm up some milk and honey for you?”

“It's fine I'll do that by myself.”

“Relax I got you..”

Whatever it was in that laptop I needed it. I crushed a sleeping pill into his milk then warmed the milk. This should do the trick.

“Here you go my love..” I had a huge smile on my face.

“Thank you baby.” he gulped it all then switched his lamp.

Twenty minutes later I heard him snore and detective mode was on! Luckily he had not changed the password on his laptop. There was nothing interesting in it. Something told me to check the laptop bag, and bingo! I found a flash drive marked with an ‘X’ in red.

I walked to the lounge to watch it with no disturbance.

*If you're watching this that means that I'm no longer alive.. I had to make this video in case something happens to me. If a

week passes without me sending you any message then you can go ahead and watch the video.

My name is Kevin October, two years ago I did something very terrible. I committed a crime that has left me with scars and nightmares. I can't do anything without seeing her face. My only crime is helping someone getting out of a tight situation. I was only given R10 000 for the job. This was not the amount we had agreed on but xthat not really the reason for this video. A woman called Rachel Ndlovu, married to a doctor named Terrence Ndlovu hired me to help her carry the body of a pregnant Okuhle Ndlovu....*

I watched the video twice with sweat all over my face. Who gave Terry this video? I paced the room not believing what I had just saw.

That sneaky bastard!

“I told you that you won't get away with this but what did you say? Rachel, Rachel, Rachel!” then she disappeared again.

I threw the cushion against the wall and screamed my lungs out. Now was not the time to be emotional. I wiped the drive clean then went back to our room and placed it where it was.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I still couldn't believe what Thobile told me a few days ago. I couldn't wrap my head around the news. Just when I thought I made a friend this happens?

I've been avoiding Mabutho ever since.. I couldn't afford seeing him because I was falling very hard for him. Very hard. I still had a few days to decide about the surrogacy issue. I also felt very sorry for Rachel. She was strong indeed. How she's still standing after all her loses, I would be six feet under.

KB came holding my ringing phone. "How long are you planning on ignoring him? Just answer him."

"I will later, right now I'm busy."

"With what?"

"I'm baking hebatho!"

"Then switch your phone off or put it on silence." she left it next to me and returned to our room.

Why are you ignoring me? –Mabutho.

I read the message and wondered if I should reply or not.

I'm not ignoring you. I replied.

Can I call? –Mabutho.

I didn't reply him, I continued with what I was doing. I didn't need Mabutho to distract me.

Terrence Ndlovu

I've been trying to watch the flash drive Deka gave me but it's blank. Why would she give me a blank drive?

I got ready for work then made us some breakfast. Rachel was still in bed.

“Babe?”

“Hmm.”

“Won't you be late?”

“I called in sick.”

I touched her forehead but her temperature felt very normal.

“What’s wrong nana?”

“I think it's something we ate last night. My stomach hurts.”

“I’ll make you some ginger tea maybe that will help. Don't you want to see the doctor?”

“My husband is a doctor”

“Really?” I left kisses on her face and she giggled. “Such a lucky woman to have a husband who is a doctor as well. Rare luck.”

“He is very handsome as well.”

“Wow!”

“I’m so glad to have my husband back. The past few days have been very awkward. I thought there would no longer be any secrets between us, what happened?”

“I’m sorry but I actually don't remember what happened Rachel. Maybe the workload is getting to me.”

“Are you still having the Okuhle dreams?”

“Not like before, much better now. Those herbs really worked hey. Thank you.”

“Anything for you my love.” we shared a kiss.

“I have to go now, go and see a doctor if you still feel sick later in the day. Bye.”

—

I called Kayise on my way to work, she has been staying with mom because she has not been well and we didn't want her being by herself. She has already been to the doctor but they can't see anything wrong with her. All seems well but mom has been complaining about a pain on her abdomen. She can't eat or drink anything.

“Hello.”

“Unjani uMah?”

“Getting worse by the day.. I really don't understand what's wrong with her. She looks so weak!”

“Maybe we should try another hospital?”

“We’ve been to four different hospitals, four! Don't you think they would've found something by now?”

“Then what do you suggest? I've ran out of ideas.”

“The Terry that I know would have suggested that we take his mom to uMkhulu. What's going on with you? You don't sound like my older brother.”

“What could Mkhulu possibly do that the four previous doctors couldn't? Please enlighten me dade.”

“Haibo Terrence!” my mom said.

“So now you're on loud speaker?”

“Terrence yini ngawe?”

“Ngenzeni manje mina mah?”

“Well we're taking uMah to Mkhulu this weekend, you can tag along if you want, if not that's also okay.” Kayise.

“Travel well.” then I hung up.

My head suddenly felt very heavy, my eyes as well. I looked through the rear view mirror, that made me slightly lose control of the car. Cars behind me hooted very badly, I stopped at a near by garage then looked again.

“Kuhle?”

She just shook her head trying to speak but her mouth was taped.

“Kuhle talk to me. Why do I keep seeing you? Am I losing my mind?”

She shook her head no.

“Then what's going on, make me understand please. Are you not resting in peace?”

She nodded with tears streaming down her face. I couldn't understand why she was not resting in peace. She was buried next to her grandfather just like she always wanted.

“Why?”

My phone rang it was Rachel—

“My love.” I realised that Kuhle was no longer in the car, I looked around but she was nowhere to be seen. The sky was very dark outside.

“Terry did you hear me?”

“Sorry what were you saying?”

“Please buy some pork chops on your way back home.”

“Is that all?”

“And some ice cream any flavour. I love you bye.”

“Bye.”

“I said I love you.”

“Yeah, listen babe you said you want lamb chops and chips right?”

“What’s wrong with you today? I said buy pork chops and ice cream, did you hear me now?”

“Yeah, bye then.”

I parked at the hospital and stayed in the car for a minute. I turned to the passengers side to grab my lunch but instead Kuhle was sitting there, her dress torn and blood all over. I tried getting out of the car but I couldn't open. She couldn't say a word, all she did was stare at me while shaking her head. I was freaked out still trying to open the car.

“Kuhle please stop whatever games you're playing. This is no longer funny!”

She leaned forward trying to touch me, suddenly the door opened. I ran out of the car and forgot to lock it. The security kept on calling my name but I was not interested in what he had to say. I didn't want to hear a word.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

After delivering the cookies and biscuits, I had a quick nap. A nap that led to a weird dream, in the dream I was holding a boy child. I had taken him to the park then this woman whom I couldn't see her face, grabbed my son saying he belongs to her then she ran off. It made no sense, or it had nothing to do with me but someone else. I checked the time and it 17h45. KB and Sedi were not here, the house was too quiet. I got up to start

cooking but someone beat me to it. Pap, ox liver and fried cabbage. One of my favourites, I hope the liver was still fresh and was not hard to chew or tasting like rubber. I closed the pots then fetched the laundry basket to fold the clothes we had washed when someone knocked on the door. I threw the top I was folding back in the laundry basket, to open the door.

“Mabutho?”

“Will you tell me why you're ignoring me?”

I did not expect to see him here

especially at this time of the day. People were knocking off, so what was he doing here?

“Tsena.” I opened the door wider for him.

“Are you sure?”

I nodded then walked in, he closed the door on his way in then sat on our couch. I cleared my throat not knowing what to say..

“Something to drink?” I was still standing.

“Awume ngo something to drink wakho Mma Tholo. Why are you ignoring me, ngenzeni?” (wait with.. what did I do?)

“Thobile told me.”

He looked at me with a frown.

“When were you going to tell me that you're leaving soon? We have been spending so much time together I thought we're getting closer, or was I fooling myself?”

He stood up and walked to where I was; I moved back until my back was against the fridge. I had nowhere else to go. My breathing pattern changed as he stood over me. I swallowed dry saliva and stared into his eyes.

“Is that why you're angry?”

“I'm not angry!” I folded my arms, looked away.

He bit my bottom lip and licked my chin, he did all that still looking at me.

“Mabutho..”

“Ndoni yamanzi?”

“Why didn't you say anything?”

He sighed then held my hand as we walked to the couch. He made me sit on him, I wrapped my arms around his neck while holding his gaze.

“Mma Tholo I told you about my plans the first drive we had didn't I? I told you the reason why I became a taxi driver. This was a short term thing. I told you what my brother and I had in mind or was I talking to a ghost?”

I looked down remembering what we spoke about, he lifted my chin up using his finger.

“Khuluma phela.”

“I didn't expect it to be so soon. Do you really have to go?”

“I have to do this nana. I don't plan on working for someone until I take my last breath.” Mabutho kissed my chin going to my lips. He stopped and watched me with his lazy eye. I licked on my bottom lip then kissed him..

My hands snuck under his tee and rubbed his back. He squeezed my ass and a moan escaped my lips. His hands snuck under my tank top as well and squeezed boobs. We kept on kissing while touching each other's skin. I could feel something poking me underneath, Mabutho stopped the kiss and licked his lip.

“Khuzeka ndoni yamanzi, khuzeka.” he said with his panty dropping voice.

Mabutho lay down on the couch and had me on top of him, our tops were off. We just stared at each other and smiled. I played with his beard then pecked his lips.

“Khuluma..”

I shrugged not knowinng what to say. I wasn't going to lie, I was saddened by the idea of him leaving. He once mentioned it but

I really didn't think it would be this soon. I didn't want him to leave but that would be selfish of me, especially knowing that he was going after his dream.

“Do you believe in soulmates?”

He smiled before answering me, “You think we're soulmates?” he asked while twisting my nipples. How I was not afraid of showing him one of my insecurities, my stomach was beyond me.

“I don't know, I've never been in a relationship before to understand what's going on between us.”

“Uma sihlo selwe ukuba yikho, sizobuya sibonane futhi.” (if we're meant to be, we will meet again.) he held me tighter and left kisses on my bare shoulder. “Umuhle yezwa!”

I nodded. He pinched my back.

“Mabutho!”

“Umuhle yezwa!”

“Yebo.”

We shared another kiss then the door suddenly opened— KB and Sedi walked in and I quickly got off Mabutho and wore my tank. He took his time wearing his tee.

That was not how I expected my siblings to find me, on top of someone I've been saying there's nothing going on between us? The same one I've been ignoring as well.

“Ladies.” he greeted them before leaving, he stopped by the door then winked, I looked down blushing.

“Goitsimedi!” KB.

Sedi just disappeared to the room giggling.

“It’s not what you think.”

“GM!” she clapped twice then looked at me and shook her head. “There’s nothing going on between us, she said bazalwane! Nothing!”

“Batho KB..” we shoved one another while laughing. I sat down and covered my eyes while laughing but the laughter turned into a soft sob. KB ran to me shocked, hell I was just as shocked.

“Bathong GM keng jaanong?” (what now?)

“For the first time ever I fell for a guy, I love him KB but he's leaving. Where's the fairness in that?”

“Ohh GM, askies tlhe don't cry..”

“It hurts so bad! Why can't I be happy? Don't I deserve to be happy as well?”

“You will meet someone don't stress, you're still young. At least when you meet that person you will have a tiny bit of experience.”

I laughed with tears on my face. I sniffed and looked at KB.

“I don't think that will ever happen. Not with Frank and Thapelo causing havoc in my life. As long as they're still breathing I won't know peace.”

“O bua ka eng?” (what are you talking about?)

“Thapelo raping me was not a coincidence ngwana ko gae, it was revenge. It was revenge.”

“I'm confused.”

“Do you remember Kagiso, from Alex? He lived like four shacks from us?”

KB nodded.

“Thapelo is Kagiso.”

“Never! No, GM.. no it can't be. That sweet boy who always protected us? That one?”

“It's him KB. Remember how Frank said Thapelo will fight for him? I told you that I saw them together when he tried harrassing me.”

“Now it makes sense and knew where to find us..”

“We are not safe, but I'm more worried about Sedi..” then I widened my eyes seeing her by the door staring at us. I had totally forgotten that she was in the room as well.

“Sedi..? How long have you been standing there?”

“I heard everything.”

This was going to be a long night!

Rachel Ndlovu

The room was very dark and smelt of blood. It was too dark, I couldn't see a thing. I used my hands and feet to figure out what was in the way.

“She’s finally here ladies and gentlemen!” I recognised that voice, it belonged to Kevin. Where the hell was I? Was I dead?

I walked in further using their voices as a map.

“Where am I?”

“Welcome to the afterlife sweetie!”

No,no, no this was not happening. This was not happening. The lights suddenly went on, the amount of blood that I saw freaked me out. At the far end Okuhle was in a tattered dress that had blood stains in it. Kevin was wearing the exact same clothes he wore when I bashed him with the brick– he also was badly burnt. I heard wailing sounds but could not pinpoint where they were coming from.

“No, no, no..” I said moving back. I hit something and it was Madlabantu. He laughed so loud then the rest joined him.

“No!!!!”

—

I woke up with a heavy heart, Terry was dead asleep next to me. I watched him then got up and went to the kitchen, it was turned upside down. It didn't look like my kitchen.

“We’re back sweetie!” Okuhle’s voice.

I turned around but no one was present. They kept on laughing and cackling. I couldn't take it. I crouched down and shielded my ears using my hands.

“Just stop it! Stop!”

“Your evil heart can't take a little bit of fun bestie?”

“I said stop..” I was on my knees, face on the floor. “Just stop.”

“Confess! Confess! Confess...” their voices chanted around me. I was too weak to get up and do anything.

“Please stop.”

I felt hands on my shoulders, “leave me alone, just stop it! It's enough now.”

“Rachel?”

I removed my hands from my ears then looked at Terry. I immediately got up and held him tight..

“Please don't leave me.”

“Hey, shh, it's okay I'm here, shh.”

He picked me up; carried me to our room and put me down on the bed.

“I’m going to make you some green tea, is that fine?”

“Don’t go... Please stay.”

“Okay I'm not going anywhere..” he slid in behind me and held me tight. I was afraid of closing my eyes. The thought of seeing what I just saw was traumatic.

*

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The next morning I woke to Terry still holding on to me tightly. I turned and traced my finger on his face. The blinds were not fully closed, the sunlight was slightly kissing his face. I grabbed my phone and took a few snaps of him sleeping. I posted the snap on WhatsApp with heart emojis.

I went to the bathroom to wash my face then I went downstairs to make us breakfast.

I felt hands around me as I toasted the bread.

“Good morning baby.”

“You’re up early sunshine. Are you good?”

“Feel much better.. breakfast is almost ready.”

“Mhmm.” Terry sipped the apple juice that was in the table then carried the dishes to the coffee table.

“Babe are we not having breakfast in the dining area?”

“No.”

We sat in complete silence enjoying our meal, with Terry feeding me every chance he gets. He didn't look bothered or like someone who had something to ask. He might have forgotten what happened last night. If that's the case, I'm very grateful.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I was lost in my thoughts when I heard Thobile’s voice. She rested her head on the crook of my neck, then pecked my lips.

“You look tired.” she said going to take a seat on the couch.

I stopped stirring the pot that had the sour porridge and joined her. “I am tired but nothing new there. How are you, is everything packed?”

“I helped Mabutho pack his things, I still have to pack mine.”

I swallowed painfully at the mention of his name.

“I’ll come and help you after breakfast.”

“Thanks.” Thobile stood up and made us both tea. This friendship was not one I thought I would have. I always saw my siblings as my only friends. Thobile came from where she was from and stole my heart.

“You’re really leaving tomorrow?”

“Yeah.” she sighed then crouched in front of me, “listen friend, at least I'm not going to KZN. I'm just going to live with my cousin in Parktown. We will still see each other.”

“I know that..”

“Why do I get a feeling that this has to do with my brother?” she stood up to fetch our teas.

“There are some cupcakes in that small bucket..” I saw her smile once she realised that it was vanilla cupcakes with condensed milk in the middle. These had become her favourite.

“I love you so much!” we both giggled. “You love him don't you?”

“Who?”

“You know who I'm talking about GM stop trying to play dumb.”

“I’ve never been in a relationship to know how it feels to be in love.” I shrugged.

“Today is ladies night at club Dominantz, how about we go out before I leave tomorrow?” she looked at me, as I thought of what to say to her. “Maybe I can twist Mabutho’s arm and he could tag along?”

“You don't have to use your brother to blackmail me into going, you know.”

“Is that a yes?”

“Yeah.”

I dished out some of the porridge then we washed the dishes—we left so that I could help her pack.

Terrence Ndlovu

During my lunch break I found myself driving around not knowing where I was headed. There was a faint voice in my ears leading me—

I found myself in an old abandoned house in Krugersdorp, I walked in and the stench was nauseating. I used my hand to block my nose from the smell but that didn't help.

The place was very dark, I could hear rats doing as they pleased. I switched the flash in and looked around the room. It was filled with papers.. a smell I knew hit me.

I walked in further; flash held very closely while I searched. I didn't know what I was searching for but I was looking for something. Then I finally saw the dried blood; I walked to the spot and crouched down. I noticed a rat passing by my foot very quick, I moved back then looked up. I was shocked to see Kuhle here, she still had tape on her mouth. I walked to where she was but when I tried touching her, she moved back.

“Why are you doing this to me?”

Then she disappeared. I screamed her name till my throat hurt. I didn't understand what was going on with me. One minute I am okay the next I feel like someone is overtaking my body. I have a string migraine and I hear noises in my ears.

I looked around the room trying to understand why I was even here. I didn't understand what I was doing I'm such a filthy place and how I got there.

Something caught my eye just when I turned to leave. It was a diamond bracelet I bought Rachel after our first date. How did it get here though?

I used the tissue in my pocket to pick up the bracelet, it had a bit of blood on it.

What were you doing here Rachel?

—

On my way back to the hospital I called Kayise but she rejected my calls. That confused me. I called again then she picked up.

“Ufunani Terrence?”

“Kayise is that how we answer calls now?”

“Ufunani?”

“I’ve been trying to call you but your phone took me straight to voicemail. Are you ignoring me?”

“I don't understand what's going on with you Terrence. Today you're cold and the next you're hot! I can't deal with such mina, I just can't.”

“Ukhuluma ngani?”

“Haibo Terrence, are you suffering from amnesia?”

“Ouch!” I held my temples that were throbbing badly. I stopped the car on the side of the road..

“Terry?”

“I’ll call you later dade.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“KB tlhe mma come and help me pick an outfit for tonight.”

“You still have not told me where you're going.”

“Out with Thobile, I told you.”

“Will Mabutho be there?”

“Why?” I asked holding a black jean.

“Just asking.. I would offer to do your makeup if he was going to be there.” KB said still looking through my clothes.

“Really?”

“But you said he won't be there so...”

“KB tlhe mma help me out maybe he will be there I don't know.”

KB gave me a brown checked tennis skirt and a mocha brown spaghetti strap crop top.

“Are you sure?” I asked holding the tiny clothes. I was still not very comfortable wearing so much revealing clothes.

“You asked me to pick out an outfit and that is perfect! Now come sit here let me do your makeup.”

—

Thobile sent a text asking if I'm done while I was still getting dressed. KB whistled by the door and shook her head.

“I should be a stylist instead! Turn around and give me your best pose.”

“Bathong wena.” I giggled while she took pictures. Once I looked at the pictures only then I noticed that I didn't look bad. I looked smoking hot!

I grabbed my sling bag and left when I heard the car hooting outside.

I found Thobile standing outside with Mabutho. She let out a scream once she saw me. She jumped on me and screamed in my ear.

“Girl..!” we stared at each other but I stole looks at Mabutho instead.

“Sorry for keeping you waiting.” I said going inside the car.

—

Thobile was telling the truth the place was packed. The vibe was great, one would think it was a Saturday but it was a Thursday. The hangover they would have tomorrow at work. Mabutho was at another table with a friend. Thobile had left to get us more drinks when some guy came to our table and tried touching me inappropriately.

“Keng ka wena?” I pushed him away but he stood still.

“Mamas give me a kiss...” he moved closer but I slapped him away and that angered him. Before he could manhandle me some more, Mabutho and his friend pulled him away from me. He returned and asked if I was okay, that the idiot did not hurt me. I hugged him without thinking twice.

“Are you really leaving tomorrow?”

“Kodwa Mma Tholo ungenzani?” he pulled my bottom lip before kissing me. I didn't care that Thobile would return and find me exchanging saliva with her brother. Mabutho held me closer as we kissed while I snuck my hand under his golf t-shirt.

“Mabutho..”

“Hmm.”

The cocktails we had been drinking were about to be blamed for the decisions I was about to take. Today I was not letting us stop at a kiss. I wanted more, I wanted a proper goodbye. If I

was not going to see him ever again— I needed something that would be reminder of ‘us’.

I sent him a text instead of telling him what I wanted. I did not have the guts to tell him face to face. I paid close attention to his face as he read the message. He had this smirk that had my nipples hardening.

“I’m back friend!” Thobile returned holding a bucket that had ciders in it. She was already drunk but she bought more alcohol.

“I’m so happy that you're my friend GM. I'm so happy.” she held my hand and dragged me to the dance floor. ‘Asibe happy’ was playing. We held on tight to one another while we moved to it; I used this opportunity to tease Mabutho as well.. I turned to Thobile and twerked on her. Thank you KB for teaching me all these weird things. She spanked me while giggling. My focus was on him the entire time and I loved every single bit of it.

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“Yho Thobile!” Mabutho said picking her up from the car and taking her to her room. She had a blackout, not a surprise due

to the amount of shots she took. I held her belongings and followed him inside the house— I sat on the couch waiting for him to return. Maybe this was a bad idea I said softly. Where did this fierceness come from so quick?

A size 9 pair of converse stood in front of me, there was no need to look up to know if it was him or not. His smell alone was intoxicating.

“Ufuna amanzi?” I nodded, he returned with a glass full of ice cold water. I slowly sipped the water, his gaze made me a bit shy.

“Mma Tholo, kodwa uzoyimela lento oyiqalayo? Uqinisekile ukuthi yilokhu ok’funayo?” (will you stand for what you're starting? Are you certain this is what you want?)

He asked while he leaned against the wall, one brow raised and a match stick in his mouth. It was now or never.

I removed my sneakers, along with my socks then walked over to him, the coldness from the tiles sobering me up. I brought his face closer to mine and stared into his eyes with lust written on my face.

Rachel Ndlovu

Three weeks later..

I was at Queens surrogates, trying to iron things out.

“I told you that no court will allow this surrogacy to happen. This girl does not have a child. Just find another surrogate.”

“I want her, don't you understand? Listen Stepheny, we both know that finding a suitable surrogate might take months. Something that I don't have.”

“My hands are tight Rach, I really hoped I could help you out.”

“You can..” I looked at Stepheny knowing that he might not like what I was proposing.

“Rach!”

“I have not said anything just yet.”

“I know that look Rach. That look only means trouble and I want none of that trouble girl, none!”

“Trouble has always been my second name babe, but listen how about I get this girl to sleep with...” she didn't even let me finish what I wanted to say.

“No Rachel!”

“Let me finish what I wanted to say.”

“You want this hot girl to sleep with your handsome husband with hopes that she falls pregnant?”

“Then what? You know they could fall for each other and raise that baby together?”

“That won't happen.”

“You're so certain of yourself babe, too certain. That girl is sex walking on two legs, don't get me wrong you're fine as hell as well but damn that girl yerr!”

“I know right! She's a flame but she doesn't know that yet. She has some insecurities.”

“I don't like this idea of yours. How do you not find it weird that you wouldn't mind your husband sleeping with another female, how is that normal? Rachel I think you're loosing it now friend.”

I walked to the huge window and looked at all the passing cars. I was definitely loosing my mind. I felt hands on my shoulders, Stepheny turned me around.

“You know if I could do anything, I would help you. Legal surrogacy is not going to work and we both know that. Yes you could bribe someone but it could still backfire.”

“Then what must I do, I'm desperate. After birth she will sign adoption papers and we part ways. Easy.”

“Where is my smart friend because this one in front of me right now,” she shook her head. “I don't know her.”

“If it means I must get them drunk then that's what I'll do, they'll wake up the next day in the same room. No turning back after that.”

Stephany widened her eyes then laughed while returning to her seat.

“Do you really love Terry?”

“Is that a trick question?”

“Do you see Terry agreeing to this nonsense because the Terry that I know would never agree to such.”

“I'm about to find out..”

“Girl, what!”

“I'm heading to his office right after here, wish me luck.” I picked up my purse then hugged her.

“Wait! I think I have a better plan.” I closed the door and walked back to her.

“I'm listening..”

“I know someone at the fertility clinic who could help you with the insemination. Then you won't have to let your man sleep with another female.”

“Will he agree?”

“There’s nothing that money can't buy babe, you of all people know this. Let me talk to him and get a date when you could go see him to do the insemination. What do you say?”

“In the meantime, I'll go and talk to Terry. If he does not agree to the natural route, your person will have to pull through for us.” we shared one last hug then I left.

—

I called Goitsimedi on my way to the hospital—

“Hello.”

“It’s me Rachel.”

“I know.” she sounded very exhausted, how would she feel once she was pregnant?

“I know we were supposed to meet yesterday to talk about the law process and all that. Do you think you could tell me over the phone?”

“There’s a part that said something about me using my own eggs. What's wrong with your own eggs? Using my eggs that

would mean that the baby is mine and the bond is going to be very strong. You do know I could abort right?”

“I know that but my eggs are not an option. Is there something else?”

“If there was anything to happen to you, your husband and I would have full right to the baby? What bullshit is this Rachel? Why can't you give the rights to someone else? Mom or sister but someone, not me. Why am I being a surrogate then?”

I arrived at the coffee shop then ordered some spicy Chai.

“I understand your concerns honestly but my mom is too old to be taking care of a child. My sister well that one drinks a lot she might forget that she's someone's guardian. I'm not saying anything is going to happen to me, I'm just saying just in case something does.”

“I don't know Rachel, this is a lot.

“R70K then? Half now and the rest after giving birth. You would have to sign the adoption papers after giving birth. Right now you will just sign these terms and conditions.”

“When am I meeting the husband, are you sure he wants this?”

“Listen I'll call you later with your answer.” I hung up once I saw Terry walking in with Dr Robinson.

I stood up, hugged her then kissed my husband.

“Get a room please!” she made faces but smiled as well. “It was great seeing you Rachel but I have to meet someone at the hospital.”

Once she left Terry took one of my spinach muffins and tried it out.

“Definitely wouldn't order such.” he said chewing as though he was chewing on glass..

“I like them and they are very healthy.”

“No thank you!” he sipped on his orange juice. “Babe why are you here? My lunch is almost over.”

“Do I need a reason to see my husband?”

“Rachel.”

“Okay fine, our possible surrogate does not have any children.” Terry raised a brow.

“Sthepeny did mention that no court would approve our application

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unless we bribe someone.” Terry coughed badly while looking at me.

“Did you say bribe? Did I hear you well?”

“Another solution is that you sleep with her.” I said that in a low tone. He didn't say a word. He was probably waiting for me to say I was joking.

“Baby!”

“Sleep with her..? Like have sex?”

I nodded.

“No.”

“But baby you said...”

“No Rachel. I'm not doing that.” he abruptly got up and left.

That was a long shot.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

It felt very strange that Mabutho was not here anymore. I would pass by the street and expect to see the quantum then remind myself that he is gone.

If I felt this empty yet it's been only three weeks, how would I feel months later?

The whole surrogacy issue was also giving me nightmares. If I used my eggs that means the baby is mine. Would I really have the guts to actually give away my own flesh and blood?

I still had not told anyone a thing! They would just see me with a big bump then only I could tell them what's up. Until then, they'll be in the dark.

“GM mma borrow me that mustard flare jumpsuit please.” KB said the second she entered the house.

“What’s the occasion?”

“I’m going out with a high school friend, tommorow and who knows I might get a boyfriend.”

“Check it in my clothes.”

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!” she ran to the room immediately.

As I walked coming from the shop, it felt like someone was following me. I stopped; turned back but no one was there. Or they were hiding.

I walked faster then someone grabbed my arm. I turned only to find out that it was Thapelo.

“Leave me alone!”

“You have balls these days I see my princess. Where are you little Zulu friends now?”

I kept quiet as I tried to push him away from me. I could tell that he was very drunk but he still had power.

I saw Frank at a distance and my guess was right. These two knew one another, this was not negotiable. No one was going to convince me otherwise.

“Thapelo! Thapelo I said leave me alone!” I kicked him on his leg, he looked at me with face full of shock. While he was still shocked, I kicked him again then he let go of me.

“If you ever, ever touch me again, you will pick up your teeth on the ground.” I walked then stopped and looked at him with squinted eyes then left.

I still couldn't believe what just happened out there. My heart was beating so loud! Why didn't I have this strength years ago? Yerr!

Terrence Ndlovu

I took slow steps from the garage to the house. I still couldn't believe that my own wife wanted me to sleep with someone who is not her. I know I cheated but this was not on.

I left my keys on the kitchen counter, took out a bottle of juice then leaned against the counter. I shut my eyes for a few seconds to only rest, opening them I found Kuhle standing next to me. The juice I had in my hand slipped from my hand. I shook my head as I moved from the kitchen to the lounge. I found her sitting on the couch. What the hell was going on here!

“Run!” Kuhle said finally then disappeared. I turned around looking for her but there was no sign that she was here. What did she mean by saying that I should run.

I dragged myself to the bathroom to take a cold shower. What did she want from me? What was she trying to tell me that I was not seeing?

I called mkhulu back home, maybe he could provide some clarity.

“Gatsheni.”

“Sawubona mkhulu, Unjani?”

“Cha umuntu uyaphila yena Gatsheni.”

“Kubi la kimi mkhulu, kubi.”

“Kodwa Terrence did I not tell you that your wife was hiding something from you? Did I not tell you that nothing will make sense unless she comes clean?”

This was news to me. I was very much confused. I was very forgetful on some days it made no sense.

“Mkhulu when can I come and see you? I really need your help. I'm very forgetful these days, I don't even remember you telling me that Rachel has a secret.”

“I’m not surprised mfana wami. Okuhle is not resting, she is restless where she is. She has been trying to fight for you but she's getting exhausted now. Idlozi lakho nalo liyadlala.. ai konakele Gatsheni.”

“When should I come mkhulu?”

“Angikho ekhaya, angazi ngiz’buya nini Gatsheni..” I hung up then wore track pants and went downstairs to watch sports. The door opened, Rachel walked in with a smile on her face.

“I hope you didn't cook, I got us takeaways.”

“I just got here as well.”

“Good.” she walked to me and kissed me on the cheek before she sat down. “My baby looks very tired, how was work?”

Was Rachel being serious right now?

“Rachel can we address the elephant in the room? What was that stunt you pulled at the coffee shop? Where you being serious..?”

“Yes.” she gave me my food then sighed. “Listen Terry we know if you do it naturally, chances are she will fall pregnant much faster and before we know it, our baby would be here. Please baby.”

“Why can't we just do an insemination, it's just as trustworthy my love. Think about the poor girl as well. Do you think she would still want to do this after you propose such?”

“Okay fine I hear you.. she has already signed all the necessary paperwork, the court has approved of everything all is left is for us to do the insemination.”

“You did this all in your own? Baby you make it seem like I don't want this baby as well.. we were supposed to do this together.”

“Make time tomorrow then you can meet the surrogate and the process can begin. She's going to take new tests then be assessed one more time. The insemination should happen some time next week.”

“What's the deal of you stating that if something were to happen to you, she and I would both have parental rights? Rachel this makes no sense.”

“She is practically the child's mother, the bond will always be there and it only makes sense that she helps take care of our baby I'd something happens to me.”

Every single day Rachel confused me further. Something was off with this entire process. We continued having our dinner with her trying to convince me that our surrogate was such a lovely human and how I would love her.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“Sedi did you take the forms I signed last night?” I shouted as I made her a tuna and mayonnaise sandwich. She came from the room with toothpaste all over her mouth. It was that time of the month and she was very moody and tired.

“Why can't I stay at home today? I'm not feeling okay.”

“Sedi mma, you can't skip school because you're on your period. You have some mock test to write remember?”

“I don't want to go!” she threw herself on the couch and cried. KB stood at the door, looked at me then at Sedi.

“And then?” KB.

“She's on her period.”

“Yah no bophelo ke entrance ya go tsena! Kubi shems.” I looked at KB making the situation worse. I was the only normal one around here, everyone else is crazy.

“Okay, listen Sedi, go to school attend a few classes and write your mock test then you can ask the school to call me and I'll come pick you up.”

“Okay fine.” I wiped the toothpaste and gave her, her lunch then her ride hooted outside.

“Did you take that ginger juice?”

“Yes!”

I leaned back on the couch and tried calling Thobile but it just rang and rang, just as I was about to give up she answered.

“Hello.” her voice was very rough.

“Are you sick babe?”

“I think so, my throat hurts a lot.”

“Sorry, I was just checking how you're settling in and thought we could go out but we'll do that some other time.”

“No, I'll be okay, where are we going?”

“Thobile you don't sound okay, we'll go some other time.”

“Mxm.”

“Okay how about you come this side and we watch movies instead?”

“Okay fine. Why are you up so early?”

“It's not early but I have to be somewhere else today.”

“Friend someone is calling we'll talk later. I love you.” then she hung up. I called her back but she didn't answer. I wanted to be the one to hang up, I called so I must hang up.

“KB at what time are you leaving?”

“In the evening not now it's very early.”

I had a message from Rachel reminding me that she was going to send someone to come and pick me up. I got up and washed the dishes then got ready to meet up with Rachel. I wonder what type of person her husband was.

—

I wore my white sundress with nude sandals and let my braids loose. KB was on the bed staring at me,

“Keng?”

“Where are you going?”

“Out.”

“With who?”

“Uhm, just out. Bathong KB.”

“I was just asking yoh!”

“Don't forget that someone is coming to fetch their cake order and you must go withdraw some money we need to pay rent.”

“Do you think her savings will last us until this year ends?”

“Definitely not! That's why I have to do this.” shit, I was not supposed to say the second part out loud.

“What are you planning on doing GM?” she asked approaching me.

“Nothing, look I have to go now. Don't forget to withdraw the money okay.” I ran out and left KB with questions. Me and my mouth.

Rachel Ndlovu

Terry and I had already went to the hospital to do blood tests then we drove to back home where Goitsimedi would find us.

A public space would just bring us unnecessary attention. I looked at the time; ticking off the minutes. I watched Terry as he video called his mom and sister. On another day I would be conversing with them but my nerves were all over the place. Goitsimedi might change her mind and not show up anymore.

I read the text from my doctor telling us that Goitsimedi arrived and everything went well. Now the waiting game began. I checked if the chicken and mushroom pies were done. She went to a culinary school so she knows her way around the

kitchen. I removed the ginger snap biscuits, some were badly burnt. With my elbows on the sink I let out a shaky sigh. How hard could making biscuits be.. I followed the recipe now what was this? I felt hands around my waist.

“At least some were not burnt right?” he turned me around.

“Calm down babe she'll be here soon.”

“What if she decides that she doesn't want to this anymore? What then Terry?” I laid on his chest sobbing. “I would die Terry

I need this.” he rubbed me until I calmed down. He continued with the rest of the biscuits the he made the green as well as the fruit salad. He made a beef and bacon stir fry in case she didn't like the pie.

He placed everything on the table then came to me.

“I'll be back babe, let me go and change before she comes okay.” I nodded and watched as he disappeared into our room. Minutes later I heard a knock on the door, I dragged my feet to the door and there she was. She looked gorgeous in her sundress.

“I thought you changed your mind.”

“I almost did.” she said walking in.

“My husband will be here soon he had to chat into something else. Would you like something to drink?”

“Mango juice would be great.” I stopped in my tracks and looked at her, mango juice was Kuhle’s favourite juice. She would kill for it. I turned to ask her if I heard her right, I let out a soft scream once I saw Kuhle sitting next to her. Kuhle wrapped her arm around Goitsimedi.

I quickly went to the kitchen and brought the juice. I sat on a different couch, Kuhle was still there just staring at me.

“Babe were you talking to me or...” Terry said walking down the stairs but stopped once Goitsimedi raised her head. He looked like he saw a ghost. I turned to Goitsimedi and saw Kuhle smiling. Now I had no idea if he could see her as well or what was going on.

Goitsimedi opened her mouth to say something but she looked down instead. Terry walked to us and sat next to me, his focus very much on Goitsimedi.

“You!” he said to her. “We have met before.”

“I know..” she replied.

What the hell was going on here? I looked at them both waiting for an explanation on how these two knew each other.

“Can someone tell me what's going on here?”

“Rachel can we talk about why I'm here. You can ask such questions later not now.”

“No I would like to know what the hell is going on here. Someone tell me something.”

“Rachel do you want me to continue carrying your baby or should I leave?”

“Fine! Everything is ready and the insemination will happen next week Monday evening. After two weeks you will go see a doctor to confirm if you're pregnant or not.” I looked at Terry who was still gawking at Goitsimedi. He said he slept with a nurse and she's definitely not one. How do they know each other then?

“Okay. Now let's talk about me still having rights to this baby.” she turned to Terry. “Wena Brock Lesnar what do you say about this? You're agreeing to all of this?”

Who the hell was Brock Lesnar now.

“Goitsimedi I explained why I made that clause. I thought you understood, what now?”

“I was talking to your husband. I need to know what's his take on this. Maybe he knows someone who would help him with the baby if something happens to you.”

“Goitsimedi you're already using your eggs and that means you're the mother so you having rights will not change a thing.” Terry replied, I held his hand and squeezed.

“Okay fine. I'll meet you at the hospital next week Monday.”

“I had prepared something for us to eat.”

“I have to be somewhere, thanks but no thanks.” she took her bag and left.

I let out a sigh of relief once she was gone. This day had finally came. I was going to give him an heir, I was going to be someone's mother. I looked at him with a smile on my face.

“I love you.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

My phone rang as I sat in the car to fetch Sedi. Free transportation, why not.

I let the phone ring since I didn't know who the numbers belonged to. The person called again—

“Hello?”

“Ndoni yamanzi.”

My heart stopped beating immediately. My body went numb. If I was the one driving I would've collided with cars.

“Ntokazi?”

“Mabu.. Mabutho ke wena?”

“Ke nna Nana, it's me.. I miss you.”

Why was he doing this to me? My heart could not take this.

“Don't do this to me Mabutho. Please..”

“Kodwa iqiniso nje ndoni yamanzi.”

“O batlang?” (what do you want?)

“I just needed to hear your voice.”

“Look Mabutho I'm busy and I.. I can't do this, bye.” I hung up before he said anything. I leaned back and listened to ‘Phakade lami’ playing on my phone. I missed him but I had to move on. I blocked the number he used to call. I blocked the old numbers as well.

—

I saw Sedi waiting outside with the security. She looked confused seeing me step out of the car. I had to sign her out.

“Ausi Goitsi?”

“Shut up!” I was trying so hard to not laugh at her facial expression.

“Whose car is this?”

“Ask no questions and hear no lies, tseña tñe motho re tsamaye.” (get in so we can go..)

“Yeh!” she clapped once, as she got inside. “Where are my haters when I have a personal driver?” Sedi and I laughed as the driver reversed.

“How are you feeling?”

“Like someone is setting insides in fire. I really tried being strong but the pain was getting to me.”

“Did you at least write the test?”

“Yeah and I'm glad it was a mock test. Ausi Goitsi yoh, ke bone satan face to face.”

“Askies muffin.” Sedi lay on my lap the entire trip back home.

I still couldn't believe that Rachel's husband is the same person who bumped into me at the hospital. We do live in a tiny world indeed.

—

“Sedi wake up we have arrived.”

“Hmm.” I shook her then she woke up and looked around.

I tried the door but it was locked. The lady opposite our room told us that KB left.

Sedi went straight to bed and I made her a hot water bottle. I looked at the signed terms and conditions while the water boiled. I had to find a place to hide them. I peeped through our room, Sedi was facing the wall. I snuck in then hid the brown envelope in between my clothes, with hopes that no one would find it. I went back and filled the water bottle and gave it to Sedi.

Terrence Ndlovu

Three months later..

My phone rang while I was at the gym. I got off the treadmill and looked who was calling. It was Rachel's cousin. Something strange happened three weeks after we did the insemination. Rachel turned into someone I could not recognise, she would be very violent on some days. I was once called at her work place because she attacked a colleague. Rachel was never a violent person, so this didn't make sense, I had to get someone to help out with her when I was working. Her mother came for a week to help out but Mokgadi fell sick as well and she had to return back home. I couldn't remember the last time we had a proper decent smile. Night time was the worst, during the day she was calmer.

“Rosina?”

“Hello bhuti Terrence.” I heard loud screams in the background and knew that there was trouble. I could tell that Rosina was trying to hide from Rachel to be able to speak to me.

“Rosina what's going on there?” I grabbed my gym bag and ran to the car.

“Bhuti Terrence please come home, I can't take this anymore. Rachel is chasing me with a knife. I'm afraid of locking myself in because she might hurt herself.”

“I'm 10 minutes away Rose, I'm almost there. Where are you now?”

“The pantry.”

“Stay in there I'll be home soon okay, don't come out no matter what.”

“What if she hurts herself? I've never seen her like this.. I'm afraid for her.”

“Calm down I'm 2 minutes away.” I was driving like a maniac. I was afraid for the both of them.

—

I found security outside the gate due to all the screaming, some of the neighbours were outside as well trying to figure out what was happening. I closed the gate as I drove in.. I could hear Rachel's loud scream before I even reached the door. This was not good, not good at all.

The door was slightly opened, I peeped and saw Rachel swinging the knife around as though she was holding a sword.

My phone rang as I was about to enter the room, it was Goitsimedi. I cancelled the call, I'll have to call her later.

“You think I'm afraid of you huh! Come out and face me you coward! Come out.” Rachel.

“He is mine! Mine, mine, mine and no one will have him. I would kill for him.” Rachel said cackling.

I took small steps walking in behind her.. anything could happen but I hope none of us get hurt.

“Do you think I'm afraid of you? I told you that I'll get away with this didn't I? Who has the last laugh now!” she cackled again.

I held her from the back and tried to snatch the knife but she was tough. We struggled for the knife for a while– with no warning she bit my earlobe. I let go of her and screamed; she came with speed at me, the knife held high. I got up as she approached me then she stopped and looked at me–

“Terry?”

“Yes it's me baby, it's me.” she walked to me with a smile plastered on her face. She threw the knife down and gave me a hug.

“Baby I've been looking for you all over. Where is our baby? I want to feed him, please go and fetch him.”

I saw Rosina standing by the kitchen door. The poor girl was traumatized, who was I kidding I was just as traumatized. Now she wanted to feed our baby..?

“What do you mean?”

“Stop fooling around Terrence. Our son, did you forget that I gave birth two days ago?”

Rosina returned with a doll that had no eyes, they were dug out and had crosses over the face. Red ink was used to make the tears.

“Here is your baby Rachel.” Rosina.

“You see, even Rose knows our son.” she held the doll as though she was holding a real baby. She sang a lullaby as she sat down. “Hello my son, mommy is hear now drink your milk..”

“Rose where is this doll coming from?”

“You remember that she disappeared yesterday right, she returned with this doll.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I should be getting ready for my doctor's appointment but I was still in bed trying to call Rachel and her husband. None of them were answering my calls. We managed to find a school for Sedi before second term, this way she still had time to make friends.

It still felt surreal that today I was 13 weeks pregnant. I was carrying someone in my womb. I lifted my pyjama top up and rubbed my small bump with a smile on my face. I had not had any pregnancy symptoms. No throwing up or mood swings.

Sedi came in holding her lunch box—

“Ausi Goitsi I forgot to give you this last night. It was a friend's birthday and we had too much cake. I brought you some.”

“Thank you muffin!” I licked the cream off my fingers and moaned in appreciation. “This is good.”

“Okay, must I make you some tea before I make my lunch?”

“Where’s KB I thought she'd be making your lunch.”

“She’s not back from her jog.”

“That one must have found a boyfriend at work. The giggling she does at night.” Sedi laughed as she got off the bed.

“I heard that wena GM.” she walked in drenched in sweat.

“Are you not working today?”

“I’m doing the night shift today.”

Two months ago KB found a part time job at a new club that just opened in Johannesburg. She didn't earn much but at least she had a salary.

“Thobile and I will come and do a sneak this Friday. Some support akere.” I brushed her shoulder as I got off the bed. A dizzy spell hit me fast like a hurricane, KB caught me just in time.

“GM..? Gorileng jaanong.” she helped me sit on the bed.

“I think I got up way too early.”

She didn't look convinced, Sedi walked in with my ginger tea.

“My transport is here, bye.” she ran out. KB was still looking at me.

“Keng wena?”

“You look different weitsi GM. I can't pin point what is different but there is something.” I pulled my top down.

“Must be that soap we've been trying out.”

“Wena talking about coming to the place I work, tomorrow is Friday.”

“I know..” I disappeared to the other room to get boiling water to bath. I returned and KB was in bed.

“Wa robala?”

“Nna ke lapile tlhe.”

—

I tried the Ndlovu's one more time after my bath but no one answered. Why do people buy phones if they won't answer them?

I tried their landline but no one answered as well. Ba ntlwela shit that couple I said while walking around the room naked. I found KB staring at me

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staring at my bump. "Shit!" she walked closer to me and tried to touch me, I moved backwards..

"GM is that a bump? Are you pregnant?"

"KB have you seen my nude bodycon dress that's below the knee?"

"Don't ignore my question. This should explain the glow.. who is the father?"

I ignored her and continued looking for the dress. I settled with a wrap denim dress and sneakers. I looked for my hand bag that had my clinic card in it.

"GM are you really going to ignore me? Vele, vele?"

"We'll talk when I come back."

"Goitsimedi!"

—

The drive to the Ndlovu's household in Fairlands was the longest ever.

The guard gave me a hard time before he could actually let me in. Both their cars were here so why is no one answering their calls. I heard shouting and screaming as I pushed the door wide open. The house was a mess, I went outside to be a hundred percent sure that I was at the right place.

"Goitsimedi ufunani la?" Terry asked as he turned and saw me.

"I tried calling you and Rachel but.." he tried to get me outside but Rachel beat him to it and dragged me by my hair. I lost balance and fell by my side, the pain was very much there. I was shocked to see Rachel in that state. What happened to the sweet lady?

"Are you the one sleeping with m husband? Is that his baby?" she tried to slap me but Terry and another woman pulled her away from me. My heart was racing, I immediately got up—

"Brock Lesnar what's going on here, why is she attacking me?"

"Just go outside I'll explain later."

I didn't need to be told twice what to do. I walked to the garden, lay on the garden chair while I massaged the side I fell on. I suddenly felt too hot, my clothes felt small as well. I stood up and paced the garden thinking that would help.

After a while the noise died down, I saw Terry making his way to me. He looked like shit.

“Terry what's going on here? Why do I have to run after you and your wife?”

“I’m sorry but my wife is not well. I totally forgot to call you back. How did your appointment go?”

Satan wa nteka morena Jeso, wa nteka.

“Terrence this is not the first time I tried calling you and your wife for my antenatal care. Your wife approached me to carry this baby, now you two are making it seem like I'm a crazy baby mama?”

“Listen Goitsimedi..” he held my hands and sighed. “I won't lie to you, let's sit down. Things are not looking good, I don't know what's wrong with Rachel. She's a danger to herself and those around her.”

“I don't understand.”

“That baby has our blood in his or her veins. We will have to take responsibility.”

I abruptly stood up with a frown in my face. “This was not the plan, I was not planning on being someone's mother. I did this because I needed the money and Rachel was desperate for a

baby. I can't be a mom. Find someone to help you raise the baby not me.”

“Goitsimedi...”

“No! No! No!” he tried to touch me, I moved back. I shook my head as well.

“Just until she gets better?” he pulled me in for a hug.

“Please..”

We remained like that for a while then I pushed him away.

“Find someone to take me to my appointment, I'll be at the gate.”

*

*

*

All I wanted was to sleep. After the day that I had, I needed to rest. Before I left for my appointment, Rachel had another episode; Terry had no choice but to tie her hands and drove her to a hospital. She was given a sedative to calm her down before they could do any psychological tests. If they find out that she's

not well she will be admitted at a psychiatric hospital until she is well.

The woman I saw today scared me so bad.

Before I went inside the house I sat outside and called Thobile..

“My friend I'm still busy I'll call you later.” she said out of breath then hung up. I took out the scan and moved my fingers along it, I was going to be a mother? Indeed there's no such like, easy money.

I called Sedi's name the second I opened the door, there was no answer from her.

“Sedi?” our room opened, KB came out holding an envelope and papers on her other hand.

“So you are really pregnant GM?”

“I'm too tired for such Karabo, can we do this another time.” she blocked my way.

“Not until you tell me what's going on.”

Karabo was not going to let this go, maybe if I talked to someone I would feel less exhausted.

“Fine, I am pregnant and the father is a married man.”

Her eyes widened, she was not expecting me to say such. She laughed out loud then shoved me lightly. She realised that I was not kidding.

“Goitsimedi, a married man!”

“I didn't sleep with him..”

“Okay now I'm confused, how did you get pregnant then?”

“The plan was for me to be a surrogate, then give them their baby after birth...”

I told KB the entire truth and that there was a change of plans and she was going to be an aunt. All she kept on saying was ‘Yerr, Jesus!’ the entire time.

“So you're going to have a baby?” she said after a while of silence.

“That’s until Rachel gets well.”

“Did you see her getting well anytime soon though? Is there hope?”

“No.”

Rachel Ndlovu

I woke up in an unfamiliar room. The bed was smaller compared to mine. I looked around with hopes to recognise the place but it was very dull, this looked like a hospital. What was I doing here?

I stood up and tried the door but it was late—

“Help! Someone help me.” I banged on the door, someone would have to pass here and hear me. “I need help.” I banged until my palm hurt.

I went back and sat on the bed while looking around my room.

“I told you that you won't win.”

I recognised the voice, it belonged to Kuhle. I looked around the room then I saw her but this time around she didn't scare me. I was no longer afraid.

“I hope you rot in hell Rachel, for every little bad thing you have done.” Kuhle.

“I'll meet you in hell as well Okuhle. Keep my seat warm as I'm still breathing.”

The door opened, a tall slender woman walked in.

“You’re finally up Mrs Ndlovu?”

“What an I doing here?”

“You don't remember?” she wrote something down.

“If I did I wouldn't be asking now would I?”

“Your husband brought you here, you have been acting strange the past couple of weeks but yesterday you were extreme. you almost...”

“Where is my husband?”

“You won't be seeing him anytime soon Mrs Ndlovu.”

“No one is telling me what to do! I'm going to see my husband.” I attempted to leave but the tall woman had a firm hand. I really doubted her.

“Let go of me you slut! Let go.”

“You’re not going anywhere Rachel, until I'm pleased with your progress.”

“I’m not mad, get me out of here.”

I kicked, bit and swore a the woman.

“Nurse Ruth come and give this crazy person something to calm her down. She's very wild.” the tall lady said.

“I killed her and no one will ever know. I did it.”

“Who did you kill?” I let out a hard laugh and leaned back. This woman must really think I'm stupid. A nurse injected me and I felt drowsy.

Terrence Ndlovu

The hospital gave me a few days off to sort out my issues. It had not sunk in yet that Rachel was at a psychiatric hospital. I didn't understand what led her there. She was okay when we slept then the following morning she was a mess. The house was a mess, she was singing songs I had never heard before. She acted strange.

I texted Goitsimedi to ask if she was okay after the fall. She was pregnant and I couldn't even enjoy the pregnancy. A lot of things were not going accordingly.

Rosina was cleaning up the mess from yesterday. I wished I could help her out but I was very much exhausted.

“Rosina, if anyone comes looking for me, I'll be in my room.”

“Okay bhuti Terrence.”

Each step I took was exhausting. The house felt very empty.

Was I the cause of what's happening? Am I cursed to not date anyone?

I tried calling Goitsimedi but her phone just rang.

I tossed and turned on the bed until I finally closed my eyes and slept.

—

I heard voices downstairs when I woke up. I looked at my phone hoping that Goitsimedi would have called back but there was nothing. I lay back down while trying her again with no luck.. I washed my face in the bathroom sink then went downstairs, I smiled seeing my mother's face.

“Mah?”

“Woza ku mah ngani yami.. come here.” she tried standing up but her legs failed her. Kayise helped her up.. she gave me a tight squeeze, this is what I needed.

“Mah sit down you look tired.” Kayise sat next to me with a smile on her face but the smile didn't reach her eyes.

“Uphi uLindo?”

“He had rehearsals today, how are you bhuti?”

“I don't know honestly. I feel weird, I don't know how to explain this but I feel strange inside; as though something was occupying my body and it has left now. Strange I know.”

“What happened to Rachel wena Mthoko?”

“I really don't know, she started acting very strange after the insemination. She walked in her sleep and sang strange songs.”

I saw the looks my mom and Kayise exchanged when they thought I was not looking. Rosina came in with juice and biscuits, mom smiled at her.

“Rosina when do you want to go back home then I can organise transport.”

“I don't mind being here, I could help clean the house and cook.”

“Thanks but you only came here because you had to help out with Rachel. I'll manage the cleaning and cooking.”

“Are you sure? I really didn't mind and I could also help with the baby once ausi Goitsimedi gives birth.”

“When we need help, you will be the first person I call.” she nodded then disappeared to the kitchen again.

“It makes no sense that I get along with almost everyone from Rachel's side of the family except for her.” Kayise said looking at me.

“How is mom and baby doing? When will we meet this woman?”

Rachel really left me in a mess. Only Rachel and I had met with Goitsimedi and Rosina as well. I had no idea how they were going to take what I was about to tell them.

“Mah there was something I had to tell you actually regarding the surrogacy thing.”

“I’m listening..”

“Rachel’s eggs were not used. She also made it clear that if something were to happen to her, the surrogate would have parental rights as well.”

“What!” Kayise.

I looked at my mom and she was very shocked, it looked like Rachel actually knew that something like this would happen.

“I don't think I understand what you're saying. Why would she want someone to mother her child? She tried so hard to have your child and now this.” MaNdlovu.

“That’s what she wanted mah, there's nothing we can do to change that.”

“How is therapy?” Kayise.

“I had my last session on Monday. I wish I had started years ago but better late than never right?”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

Thobile would be coming over tonight but I felt very sick. I had not even left the bed, my body hurt and I was very tired. KB had been running up and down with the bucket due to me vomiting. I must have counted my chickens before the eggs hatched.

“You have plenty missed calls from your baby daddy GM.”

“Not funny KB.”

“Are you sure this woman did not know that she would lose her marbles once you fell pregnant mara? Why would she want you to continue being the mother when her mother-in-law and sister-in-law are still very much alive, they could take care of the baby.”

“What do I know about being a mother KB? I don't think I can do this.”

“Ahh GM mma stop crying.. shh,” she rubbed my back as I cried. “You have been a mom to us for such a long time I refuse to believe you would struggle being one to your own child. GM

any human would be lucky to have you in their lives, you're the best thing ever in our unstable lives. Do you really think we would be functioning like normal human beings if something had happened to you? Be so proud of yourself GM, very proud."

"This is different, we worked as a team. We all raised each other but with this baby," I rubbed my tummy. "With this baby.. I don't know, I don't know if I'll cope."

"As much as you say you did this for the money, I don't see it that way.. you took a decision to help a woman in need someone who was desperate for a baby. You did this for her." she rubbed my tummy and wiped the tears on my face. "This child is going to be lucky to have a mom like you. I know you don't see it now but you have a beautiful heart and for consolidation, at least got baby daddy is a doctor."

We both laughed. "You such an idiot wena Destiny Tholo, an idiot." I shoved her.

"I made you laugh, now call abhuti doctor and hear what he wants from you."

—

Once KB had left I called Brock Lesnar, this was going to be a weird pregnancy.

“Hey, I tried calling but your phone was off.”

“I was asleep, I feel very sick.”

“What’s wrong? Is it the baby? I'm coming there right now.”
one could not miss the panic in his voice.

“Brock Lesnar I'm fine stop panicking, it's just vomiting nothing hectic.”

“Are you sure, I could come over and drive you to the OBGYN.”

“I’m telling you that I'm okay stop worrying. If there's anything wrong I'll call you. How are you though, any news on Rachel?”

I heard him exhale..

“It’s not looking good, she had another episode at the hospital after the sedative worn off. They had to take her to a psychiatric hospital because she hurt one of the student nurse.”

“Has she ever been like this before?”

“No, this was the first time ever I saw her in such a state.
Maybe I'm cursed.”

“How about we you and I go window shopping tomorrow? Just to look at possible baby things and see how ready we are. No cheating though. Don't ask anyone for any help and yiu can't go

on Google as well. We just go shopping and write down a list of what we think babies might need, then we can ask someone who has experience and then we see who is more ready. What do you say?"

"How do I know you won't cheat?"

"How do I know you won't cheat?" I asked him while giggling.

We continued talking nonsense then we finally said our goodbyes. I felt way better after the phone call.

"Nana, you wanted mommy to talk to daddy didn't you." I lay back and touched my tummy, I hope I won't regret any of this.

Terrence Ndlovu

"It's late now, are you sleeping over?" I asked my mom and Kayise.

"We are waiting for Lindo to pick us up." Kayise.

"Did you speak to Goitsimedi, how is she?" MaNdlovu.

"I did when you were taking a nap, she said she's okay." I chuckled and shook my head. "She came up with a crazy idea."

“What did she say?” Kayise

“She wants us to go window shopping tomorrow, we must both write down a list of what we think the baby might need then we give the list to someone with experience to see who got the most right.”

“That sounds like something fun, you do need to get out of the house and breathe some air before you return to work.”

MaNdlovu.

“The trick is we can't ask anyone to help us, we can't even use google for help.”

“I already like your baby mama.” Kayise said laughing.

We were outside having dinner then Rosina walked in with Jackson, Rachel's lawyer.

“Jack?” we shook hands. “What brings you here at this time?”

“Good evening, sorry for just showing up but I had to come and see you. Can we talk somewhere?”

“We can talk here, sit down.”

“I have been waiting for Rachel to deliver some surrogacy papers but I received none. Where is she?”

“Rachel told me that you and her handled everything. The surrogacy route was not going to happen because the woman did not have any children. We had an insemination instead.”

“Terrence what are you talking about? All Rachel told me was that you were going the surrogacy way, you had found someone to carry the baby. Where is she?”

“She’s at a psychiatric hospital. Jack are you telling me that the terms and conditions Goitsimedi signed are void. Rachel and I have actually have no agreement?”

“Whose eggs were used and where is the contract?”

“I’ll for it later. Goitsimedi used her own eggs.”

“Legally you and Ms Tholo are the legal parents of this child. This could only be changed if she decides to place the child for adoption.”

“I did see that signed contract Jack. I read the whole thing, Rachel had some ridiculous point added to the terms.”

“I know.. she wanted Ms Tholo to be given rights if anything were to happen to her. Terrence you're a doctor and I'm assuming you do know that this entire surrogacy was bogus.”

“What!” Kayise and mom said after a being quiet for this long.

“Terrence, I told Rachel that legal surrogacy was not going to happen she should try adoption. Then she asked me to stipulate that once the adoption was about to happen everyone involved should sign that once anything happens to her the mother could still be involved.”

“So in other words, unless Goitsimedi wants adoption this baby belongs to Goitsimedi and I, not Rachel?” Jack nodded.

“She can't claim the baby as hers even if we find the contract?”

“Definitely not, that would be her admitting to committing fraud. To other people it's going to look like you cheated and had an illegitimate child unfortunately.”

“Why are you telling me this, you're her lawyer?”

“I found ridiculous transactions that she has made last year and just recently. I had to leave for a while and recommended someone to her. In a space of two months she transferred R50K to Ms Tholo’s account. If anyone had found this out.. all I'm saying is that I had to tell you this and to tell Mrs Ndlovu that I can no longer be her lawyer.”

Kayise showed him out while I was still trying to grasp what he just told me. What the hell has been happening right under my nose? My mom was awfully quiet.

Who did I get married to?

—

“Mah our ride is here let's go.”

“Is Lindo not picking you up anymore?”

“He can't.”

“I can take you..”

“No!” they both said. “What we're trying to say is that you look exhausted and our ride is here. Go rest.”

“Before I forget my son, this is from mkhulu. He said before you sleep, boil water and add a spoonful of these, and drink everything. You will sweat and vomit so don't worry.”

“What's this for?”

“Just drink this and stop asking questions.”

I walked them to the car then came to boil water for the herbs I was supposed to drink.

Terrence Ndlovu

From where I stood I could hear that the waterfall was not too far. I couldn't recognise this area, not a single person was in sight. I walked in further and all I saw were beautiful flowers and trees everywhere.

“Is anyone here?” I walked in further then I heard footsteps behind me, I turned but no one was there.

“Hello?”

“Follow your heart Gatsheni, just follow your heart.”

“Kuhle?”

If this was Kuhle’s voice did that mean I was dead as well? I continued walking until I heard someone humming beautifully. Okuhle had a beautiful voice, some days when I felt sad she would sing or hum for me. I loved her voice.

I heard frogs and knew that I was getting closer to the river.

“Don’t leave me.” another voice behind me said. It belonged to Rachel.

“Don’t listen to her Terry.. follow your heart.” Kuhle.

“She is dead my love, come to me I'm still alive. Come to me baby.” Rachel.

A part of me wanted to see Okuhle one last time but again Rachel was right, Okuhle was dead and I had to let her go. Yet my feet didn't oblige to my mind. I just stood there not knowing what to do.

“Rachel where are you?”

“I'm hear my love, follow my voice..”

“Terry don't it's a trap! She's been playing us all these years. Come to me.”

“How do I know that you're not playing mind games with me, both of you?”

“How can you speak to Rachel when she's still alive? I'm dead and I brought you here through dreams. Don't trust her Terry, Rachel is sick.” Okuhle.

Just when I was about to follow Rachel's voice my dad stood in front of me..

“Baba?”

He shook his head and pointed another direction.

“Rachel's voice came from that direction Baba.” he shook his head again while pointing a different direction.

“Don’t listen to him baby, follow my voice.” Rachel.

—

I followed my dad as he maneuvered through the thick shrubs. I could hear Rachel's voice fading away and Okuhle’s being very clearer. I tried talking to my dad but he was mute throughout the walk, we walked through a cave and the river came to view. There she was sitting on top of a log.

“Baba...” my smile faded once I noticed that he was no longer here. “Baba?”

Okuhle turned and faced me with a beautiful smile, I walked further down to where she was seated at. Tears had escaped my eyes, lips shaking. I tried touching her but I only caught air.

“I’m a spirit Terry you can't touch me. I'm only in this form because I don't want you to be afraid. This is how you knew me.”

“I want to touch you.”

“You can't.. Gatsheni we don't have much time, I need you to listen to me carefully.”

We sat down on the log, I still tried touching her but got disappointed.

“Terrence focus! I need you to focus... I will only rest once the truth is out. You need to know the truth.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I was killed Terry, I was killed. I did not just die. All those miscarriages.. someone was behind them.”

“Who?”

“I thought she was my friend, I trusted her with all my secrets not knowing that she secretly wished to be me. She's not as innocent as you think. Terry Rachel is the reason why we...”

I woke up struggling to breathe. I looked for a paper bag in the drawer and used it to help me breathe. Once I had calmed down I stood up and looked at the time. It was 07h00 in the morning. I should be getting ready to meet up with Goitsimedi.

I tried remembering what my dream was all about but everything was just misty. I remembered seeing Okuhle and my dad but not what we spoke about.

Rachel Ndlovu

We always had breakfast around 06h00 in the morning then we would do yoga. I used that time to check out our nurses and their shifts, who could be bribed.

I was not planning on staying here for the rest of my life. I needed to get out of here and get my baby. Goitsimedi should be 13 weeks pregnant by now, soon she will give birth then I'll strike. If she and Terry think they will play happy families with my child, they don't know me.

“Rachel you're doing great!” our yoga instructor said passing by me. I noticed the eye wink she gave me and I knew she would be my way out ticket. I'll have to be a good girl for a while until I have her where I wanted her then I'll be out.

Once our yoga session was over we all went to take a bath then returned to our rooms.

The nurse brought my medication, her phone rang disturbing her from seeing that I hid the pill under the pillow. I drank all the water then showed her that I had swallowed.

“You look much better, if you continue like this you might be granted a phone call soon.” I smiled then she left.

“Useless!” I lifted my mattress, retrieved the tissue which had the pills that I hid, I placed today's pill and returned the tissue where it was.

Just when I was about to sleep, I heard a faint whisper at the window. It really shouldn't be called a window because it was very tiny, so tiny only a baby could fit. I got onto the small drawer I had in my room. I looked out but I could see no one.

“Pshh, here..” I turned to where the voice was at but no one was still there.

“Stop being so slow Rachel.” the voice said behind me, I lost my balance, hit my head on the wall and screamed as I fell down. It was a muffled scream. I got to my feet and looked at Okuhle with shock.

“You’re dead what are you doing here?”

“You’re really crazy Rachy, very crazy.”

“You are dead I know you're dead. Why am I seeing you.”

“Yes I'm dead, you killed me remember! Did you think you would get away with what you did.” Okuhle stepped closer, I moved to another corner.

“Stay away from me otherwise I will scream! Terrence will protect me.”

“Terrence? He is not here to save you darling. It's only me and you here.”

I looked around and noticed that indeed I was not at home. Where was I?

I started hearing babies crying and seeing blood everywhere. The blood kept on rising all the way up to my knees. Okuhle just stood in the middle and laughed at me screaming my lungs out while asking for her to help me.

“Help me don't just stand there!”

“You killed me for no reason Rachel, help yourself!”

“I didn't kill you,” I tried moving but I was stuck. “Look we're best friends why would I want you dead? I loved you Okuhle and I would do anything for our friendship.”

“Stop lying!” the wails from the babies was too much for me, it drove me nuts and gave me a headache. All Okuhle did was sing amazing grace

my skin felt like someone had set it on fire.

—

The door flew open, the doctor and nurses rushed in looking spooked.

“Mrs Ndlovu drop that glass and get off that drawer.”
psychiatrist.

“No! She wants to kill me. I have to protect myself.”

“No one is here to kill you, please get off then we can talk.”

“You all think I'm crazy right? No one believes me when I say she's here. Look, look over there..” I pointed the bed where Okuhle was. “Do you see her?”

“Yes, yes I see her now please get off and we'll give you another room. What do you say?” psychiatrist.

“Another room?” I cackled. “That won't stop her, that will only make her more crazy. She wants me dead and I'm going to kill her first.”

“Mrs Ndlovu...”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“Friend where are you off to so early in the morning?” Thobile.

“I'm going to meet up with someone.”

“That someone does not have a name?”

I was definitely going to be late because of Thobile. She's been asking questions non stop from last night. I knew that I could not hide a pregnancy but I was not ready to explain how I'm expecting a child from a married man.

I checked how far my ride was so I could be free from Thobile.

“Am I annoying you GM?”

“No friend why would you think that?”

“Ever since I got here you have been very moody, I don't know you as a moody person. You're not the friend I know, you're just weird.”

KB gave me the side eye then left us in the room.

“Friend.. look I'm sorry for making you feel neglected. Can I get a hug before I leave?”

“I don't think you will find me here when you return.”

“Thobile!” she gave me a cold hug then sat on the floor. “Friend don't do this.”

“Just go GM..”

My ride had arrived, I looked at Thobile one more time then left...

—

As soon as I arrived at East Gate mall, I texted Brock Lesnar to ask where he was. Walking to Harpers restaurant, I could only wonder if I was really moody as Thobile had said. I was not ready to lose Thobile as a friend, I really liked her.

Am I really that moody? Like are my moods over the top? I texted KB.

The smell that hit me as I stepped into the restaurant, heavenly! It was still early and the pastries smelt very fresh oh not forgetting the coffee. How I would kill for a cup right now, I was not much of a coffee lover but ever since the pregnancy, the urge to drink it, very high. I noticed Terry at the far end. He stood up once he saw me,

“Hey baby mama.” we shared a hug.

“Brock Lesnar!” we laughed.

“You really need to stop calling me that, Brock Lesnar?”

“Oh shut up, unjani?”

“Hauw siyakhuluma namhlanje? I'm good though under the circumstances wena?”

“I'm craving a cup of coffee! Have you ordered?”

“A pot of rooibos because I know that you can't drink coffee, we'll both drink tea.”

“So considerate..” I smirked while calling the waiter. I asked for some blueberry muffins while we still waited for our breakfast.

“How's Rachel?”

“I have tried calling the hospital today but no one is giving me answers. I'll go and find out later. How is Junior?”

“Junior..? Ke mang Junior?”

“Our son!”

“Bathong wena.” I leaned back while laughing. Terry was not serious, Junior?

“You’re carrying a prince ntokakazi, our prince.” my smile faded once he called me ntokazi. Only one person could put a smile on my face if he called me that. I hope his plans are coming together.

“Hey are you okay?” Terry snapped his fingers on my face.

“Yeah...” our order came and the first thing I did was drizzle some honey onto the sausage and bacon. Terry tried my combo and he regretted that.

“Terry no.. why would a new born baby need a feeding chair? It's too early for such.”

We had been at the mall for a while, after breakfast we bought a few baby clothes which was not part of the plan. I couldn't resist once I saw some cute tutu skirts. We tried another restaurant and had lunch, then went back to window shopping. This was a great way to know one another as well. I got to forget about all the drama that I've been through and about Thapelo and his dad. I was just in a happy space.

Having a list for what we think babies might need was not a bad idea, we were both very clueless but I think I was the worst.

“Terrence who is going to check the lists for us because I don't know anyone who is experienced when it comes to babies.”

“My mom volunteered.” I stopped walking to look at him thinking of didn't hear him well the first time.

“Sorry what?”

“Goitsimedi we're going to be parents and we're going to need help. My mom and siblings know about you and the baby. They can't wait to meet you.”

I started feeling light headed so we had to cut our outing short. He held me as we went to his car. I closed my eyes for a while just to breathe. Throughout the drive he would ask if I'm okay, hold my hand and rub the back of it gently. This reminded me of the second time we bumped into each other again, we just clicked easily until he mentioned that he was married. Terry was good looking, he spoke with a voice that was soothing. His eyes as well, nothing compared to Him but he was good looking as well.

I raised my brow once I realised that we're at his place.

“What are we doing here?” he opened the door for me.

“I needed something and you can rest for a bit as well as I look for it.”

“Or you could just take me home then return and look for ‘it’..?”

We walked in and I went straight to the couch. My feet were complaining.

“Do you want anything to drink?”

“Do you have mango juice?”

He returned with the juice then sat next to me and massaged my feet. The massage was exactly what I needed.

“Didn’t you say you're going to look for something?” he nodded.

“So?” I shrugged.

“I will go after I'm done with what I'm doing.”

I leaned back and closed my eyes enjoying what he was doing. A nap was calling my name..

—

Something vibrating next to me woke me up. I noticed that Terry was laying behind me on the couch. He looked very relaxed. I touched his face with a smile on my face, I couldn't understand what was happening to me. I just wanted to stare at him the entire time. He slowly opened his eyes and found me staring—

“Hey you're up..” he held onto me as tried getting up.

“Yeah.” the couch was uncomfortable with the both of us on it, Terry had me laying on top of him. No one said a thing, he wrapped my lose braid around his finger while I played with his beard.

“Am I not heavy?”

“Brock Lesnar is strong don't worry.” I smiled at him. Our faces were so close, if one of us moved, our lips would touch. I should be getting up before anything happens that shouldn't happen yet I didn't. I wanted to taste his lips. It looked like we both were after the same thing when our heads moved forward, about to interlock our lips..

“Terry..”

“Hmm.”

“We can't do this.” my nipples were already hardening and if we kiss, it would not stop there.

His ringing phone saved us from crossing a huge line. I got off him and wore my shoes, it was time for me to head home...

Terrence Ndlovu

After dropping off Goitsimedi, the hospital called and said it was very urgent. There was not much traffic something to be grateful for because I didn't know how bad the situation was. It's been a few days of Rachel being there yet it looked like she was getting worse with each passing day.

I was not given a hard time at the reception. I found a nurse waiting for me to take me where Rachel was. I knew things were bad but not this bad. Rachel looked as though someone had beaten her up. Her face was rearranged, she didn't look like the Rachel I knew. I turned to her doctor and she had scars, it was a boxing ring in here definitely.

“Doctor what happened in here?”

“She has totally lost it! I have never seen such in my life. She looked possessed. It took us a while to restrain her and give her a sedative.”

“I tried calling this morning but no one gave me an answer.”

“Terrence, your wife said very strange things. She kept on saying someone was trying to kill her and she would kill the

person first. Look at that tiny window over there.” the glass was broken.

“Did she do that?”

“She was on top of that drawer and managed to break that window. She banged her head against the wall while she waved the sharp glass in the air. She also mentioned a Okuhle and that she's not afraid of her.”

“Okuhle was my first wife.”

“Do you know a Kevin as well?”

“Not really..”

“She’s asleep now maybe you could come first thing tomorrow morning and she would be in a better state to tell you more about Okuhle. I couldn't understand what she was trying to say.”

“I’ll do so.” we walked out of her room the one she was assigned to at first. I glanced the opposite room she was now in, she looked peaceful.

—

The drive back home was exhausting, I had no idea what Rachel was going through and how to actually help her. I had to be back at work on Tuesday and nothing was going well in my life.

I should be happy that I was finally about to be a dad but after all the disappointments I've had, I was not fully happy.

I switched off the lights as I went inside the house. I grabbed a beer in the fridge then went up to my room. My phone vibrated twice in my pocket, I smiled faintly seeing the images Goitsimedi had sent of the bump. It was not huge but one could notice it. I called her immediately and she answered.

"I didn't say call me."

"Yet you answered on the first ring?"

"Shut up!"

"Why are you not asleep yet, it's late."

"I ate a lot now I feel like I'm about to burst so I can't sleep. What about you?"

"I'm about to sleep, good night baby mama."

"Sleep well Brock Lesnar." then she immediately cut the call while giggling.

I removed my shoes then drank two strong sleeping pills with my beer then got under the cover.

*

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I woke up with a banging headache the next day. It was definitely a bad idea to drink strong meds with alcohol, a very stupid one.

There was no time for a jog, I did a few push-ups and sit-ups then a cold shower. While I showered I heard my phone ring, if it's important they will call again. Once done, I made the bed got dressed and hit the road. I would get something to eat on the way. The person called again, I didn't know these numbers but I answered either way.

“Terrence Ndlovu hello?”

“Abhuti Terry it's me..”

“Rosina..? Why are you calling me with a different number, what's going on?”

“I had to borrow someone's phone at the hospital.”

“What are you doing there? Did you get hurt?” I stopped on the side to avoid being the cause of any collisions.

“I’m fine but mama is not okay..” Rosina had no parents, they were involved in a awful car accident and no family wanted her but Rachel's mom took her in. She didn't sound fine.

“What happened to mama and where is Mokgadi?”

“She’s the reason mama is here!” she started crying, what the hell was going on.

“You remember that when she was there she had to return home because Mokgadi was not well?”

“Yeah..”

“Yoh abhuti Terry, yoh!” the hysterical cry again. I heard someone telling her it's going to be okay.

“Rosina...”

“Mokgadi was involved in some shady business while she was still a nurse. She used to steal meds and sell them at a cheaper price, someone reported her and investigations began... She went to prison for two years but no one knew this, she got bail on the third year. Her nursing career was over just like that, who would want to hire her? A man was interested in her but he was married, he had money but he was married. She knew that he would never be hers fully unless, unless you know..?”

“No I don't know.”

“She went to see some man in the village to give this man so that he could only see her. The wife noticed that something was wrong with her husband, she found out that he was

bewitched then she did her own witchcraft as well on Mokgadi. That's how her drinking started, before we realised it, Mokgadi was a shebeen queen. She would disappear for days and return looking and smelling like a dead dog. You know mama is a praying woman, all she did was pray and believed that God would intervene.”

That was so true, that woman believed in prayer so much, no one could tell her a thing.

“I think that woman felt sorry for her because Mokgadi’s drinking became better but that meant she functioned well. She returned to that man again to get something that would attract money, men with money. I'm so ashamed to be telling you all of this abhuti Terry..”

“Just talk Rosina

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all families have their fair share of nonsense.”

“I don't know the full story but this woman had put some spell on her husband that every women he slept with, they would grow something in their stomach until eventually they take

their last breaths. Mokgadi was rushed to the hospital last night and she died early in the morning.”

“What!”

“That woman came to us as we came from the hospital to tell us what happened. To tell mama and I went out to make tea so I heard bits and pieces of the story. I heard loud screams and things crashing. Mama’s heart couldn't take the news and she was also rushed to the hospital.”

“I’m very sorry Rosina, is she going to be okay?”

“The doctor said she's going to be fine. She didn't really suffer a stroke her body just went into shock mode but she will be fine. How's Rachel..?”

I started the car still shocked at what Rosina had just told me. Witchcraft! That didn't look like something Mokgadi would do, all she wanted was to have fun and drink her beer. This made no sense at all.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“Thobile..” I shook her but she pulled the blanket over her head. “Thobs?”

“What do you want from me?”

“Are you still angry at me?”

Silence.

“Friends are not supposed to be angry for this long, come on talk to me.”

“No.”

“You are kind of talking to me though.. listen if you talk to me, I'll make you those vanilla cupcakes.”

“Really?” I nodded. “Fine, but only if you promise that you won't act the way you did again.”

“Pinky promise?”

“Come here you marshmallow..” she tickled me until I couldn't breathe. Tears were just coming out from my eyes.

“Thobile!” the tickling had stopped, I found her staring at me. I pulled the top down, she slapped my hand away.

“Are, are you pregnant?” I heard KB coughing on the floor. She and Sedi decided to take the floor because we were not going to fit on the bed. We all had thick bodies.

“No I'm not.. I'm going to start preparing the ingredients.” she held my hand firmly.

“I'm not stupid GM, that's a bump and how I missed it last night is a miracle. That should explain you cancelling our appointments all the time and the mood swings.”

“Friend I'm not pregnant..” I let out a nervous laugh.

“Is it Mabutho's baby?”

“What?” KB asked standing up in a rush. “Mabutho?” she turned to me.

“Thobile is crazy there's no way, you know..”

“I saw you sneaking out in the morning on Friday, after the partying we did the previous day.”

“It's not what you think babe, look yes I slept there but..”

“No buts! You should've slept in my room then.”

I had no way out now.

“Okay fine I'm pregnant but it's not his baby.”

“Then who is the father?”

“I don't want to talk about him. Can we please drop this now before Sedi wakes up?”

“Okay fine, but you should've told me friend.” she hugged me.
“I'm going to be a godmother!” she squeezed me hard.

“Why must you be the godmother?” KB asked with a frown.

“Stop being selfish, you're an aunt so let me be.”

I left them in the room as they argued about who should be the godmother. Sedi was definitely going to find out that I'm expecting as well.

—

A wave of sadness hit me as I took out the first batch from the oven. I missed mama and wished she was here. Things were not good between us but in her last few days we reconnected, for those few days my mom was back.

My baby would not know her grandmother just like we didn't. Was this a curse? I didn't want my baby to go through what I went through.

I felt hands in my shoulder.

“Hey, why are you crying?” Thobile.

“I'm not crying.”

“Now I know the truth so what has you crying, is it part of the pregnancy as well?”

“I miss our mother Thobile. I miss her so badly! Why did she have to die so soon, why?”

“I don't know my love, I don't know. Shh, stop crying now.” she rubbed my back. I tried to stop crying but the tears wouldn't let me.. I let the tears fall until my heart was no longer heavy.

“I'm fine now.” KB helped me with the baking while Sedi and Thobile made breakfast. I quickly Ren to our room and puked my guts out. Nothing came out, I had still not had any breakfast yet. KB came in with a glass of water.

“Thank you.”

“Just rest and I'll continue with the orders. Sedi will help don't stress.”

“Are you sure?”

“You taught us how to bake remember? Just rest before your baby daddy thinks we're overworking you.” she whispered then left.

Rachel Ndlovu

I smiled facing the wall proud of how I attacked Okuhle yesterday. She never saw me coming. I shoved her hard and she lost her balance then hit her head on the edge of the table. When the nurses and doctor came in, it was already late for her and those wailing babies of hers. She won't mess with me ever again.

“Rachel..” the whispers began again. I sat still not moving an inch. “Rachel..” the voice cackled while calling my name.

“I’m not stupid, you can't fool me.”

“We can protect you Rachel.”

“No one can protect me, no one.”

“Rachel!”

I blocked my ears with a smile on my face. They think they can fool me, no one will fool me. I'll get out of this place on my own.

“Soon we will see daddy my angel, soon.” I rocked the baby in my hand. “Mommy loves you okay.”

The wailing began again, I dropped to my knees while crying asking them to stop. The wails were much louder today. Okuhle’s laughter was just as loud, I couldn't take it. I stood up

then banged my head against the wall. I did that for a while but her laughter could still be heard, why was she back so soon.

“Rachel stop!” I recognised that voice. I slowly turned and it was Terry.

“You came?” my body was very numb and weak. Every step that I took felt like I would not reach him. Something was holding on tightly to my legs, I faced down and saw tiny hands grabbing onto my legs.. I screamed while trying to run but I couldn't move.

“Confess! Confess! Confess! Confess...”

“No!”

My legs were on fire as well as my chest. I couldn't take it anymore. Someone was trying to help me up but I couldn't stand, the buzzing in my head was making things worse as well.

“Rachel stand up what's going on with you?” Terry.

I could hear different voices all at once and that drove me crazy. I used my hands to block the noise away but that only worsened the situation.

Rachel Ndlovu

“Rachel stand up what's going on with you?” Terry.

I could hear different voices all at once and that drove me crazy. I used my hands to block the noise away but that only worsened the situation.

I tried so hard to block everything that was happening around me but everything came rushing like a ton of bricks. The flashbacks hit me very hard. How everything happened and started.

“Rachel it's me baby please stop doing that to yourself. Stop banging your head like that.” Terry.

“Mrs Ndlovu listen to my voice.. listen to me, breathe in slowly and hold it in. She's not here, she can't hurt you. Breathe out, only your husband is hear, lift your head up.” psychiatrist.

I did exactly what the doctor said, it took a while for the sounds to die down but they did. I looked around and my arms had

scratches all over. I touched my head which was throbbing, my hand had blood. My nose was bleeding as well, I felt very tired. "What happened here?"

Terrence held me and walked me to the bed.

"Calm down my love, it was a mistake I know you didn't mean for that to happen. It's okay I understand."

"You do? I didn't think you would understand."

"Shh, I understand baby, everything is going to be okay. Calm down." we sat on the bed with Terry holding onto me. I still couldn't believe that I trashed the room and hurt two nurses while they tried sedating me. I had broken another window and hurt myself while doing that. My body was covered in bruises. I looked around then I saw her at the corner, she laid still in a pool of blood and at a distance from her, Kevin was also down.

"No, no, no please get them away from here. I don't want them here, it was a mistake. I didn't mean to do it, Terry tell them it was a mistake." I started feeling drowsy, someone had injected me with something strong. "I don't want to sleep, they will come for me. I didn't mean to do it..."

—

Waking up, my limbs were throbbing. Every piece of my body hurt, I tried getting up but one of my hand and leg were restrained to the bed. I could see bandages on my body, judging from how my chest was on fire she was here, Okuhle was still in this room.

“I will not confess.”

“You will but if you don't, Terry will eventually find out the truth. I will lead him to the truth.”

“He can't see you, I'm the only one who can see him.”

“Terrence has been seeing me quite a lot bestie. You're losing touch with reality and soon they will give you stronger meds. You will be a zombie of yourself. Then I will rest.”

“You think you're smart Okuhle but I'm smarter.”

With no warning I felt hands around my neck, I couldn't do anything due to the hand and leg that was restrained. My head began throbbing again.

The door opened as I tried kicking. The hand around my neck was still gripping onto my neck.

“Are you going to confess?” Okuhle. I nodded, her hand loosened.

The nurse checked my wounds then changed the bandages.

“Can, can I speak to my husband?”

“Mrs Ndlovu I don't think he is still around after what you did. You scared the poor man and hurt him badly.” nurse.

“I hurt my husband?”

“He was trying to grab the glass that you had in your hand but you stabbed his arm with it.”

“No! Is he okay?”

“It was not a deep wound. He will be okay.”

“Please it's urgent I need to see him. Please.”

“I'll go and ask your doctor if it's okay, here drink your meds.”

A minute later Terry walked in with my doctor. The terror was still very much visible on his face.

“Confess!” the voice said.

“I have something to say to you Terry.”

“What is going on with you Rachel?”

“I have a confession to make.”

He walked closer and sat on the drawer, far from me. The doctor was in the room as well.

“What confession Rachel?”

“I’m ready to tell you everything.. but before I do that I need you to know that I didn't mean for any of this to happen. I was in love and love can make one do stupid things.”

“What did you do Rachel?” he turned to the doctor and asked if it was okay for me to talk.

“Mr Ndlovu we only have her something to calm her down. What she says right now, she would be saying with no influence.” psychiatrist.

“I was the reason Okuhle had that second miscarriage.”

“Rachel don't do this, I'm begging you don't joke like this.”

“Terry please listen to me..” I let out a sigh. “I was very jealous of her, I wanted her life. She had everything and did everything right. I have always been her shadow, no one noticed me and if they did they treated me as though Okuhle was better than me. I tried to ignore the feelings I had for you, I really did.”

“What did you do?”

“She once told me that she had an abortion when she was sixteen and when she had a miscarriage at 21, she thought it had something to do with that abortion.”

“I know about the abortion Rachel, what did you mean when you said you were the reason for her miscarriage? Did you two have a fight?”

“Just after she had that first miscarriage, I told my sister that no had string feelings for you and I couldn't keep them buried anymore. She said I should give the person love potion and make the other disappear.” I saw Terry’s eyes widen not believing what I had just said.

“Mokagdi said that?”

“She must have been joking but I found a traditional healer at our village to help me. He gave me a red and black liquid that I would have to pour in Okuhle’s drink, something that she would drink almost every day. He said that she would miscarry every pregnancy, she would not be able to carry a baby for a

full term. There was a possibility for her to give birth to stillborn babies as well.”

“Rachel no! What did you do, she was your best friend?”

“I saw you first Terry, I saw you first at a party and you rejected me as though I was beneath you. I was hurt by that and when Okuhle introduced you to me as her boyfriend, something dark inside me took over. Why did all the guys that I like prefer Okuhle over me? What did she have that I didn't have huh? Why did you not notice me then Terry?”

“You, you killed Okuhle because I rejected you? Are you crazy! People get rejected all the time but that's not good enough reason to actually like someone.” Terry.

“I always got what I wanted Terry, always. No matter the cost but I would get it and you were the end goal. I wanted you, pity that Okuhle loved you as well but she had to go.”

“Who are you? Who did I get married to?”

“Too late to ask such don't you think..? Back to our confession— I poured the liquid into her mango juice, she could not live without drinking it. A few weeks later she had the miscarriage and I knew that the healer was not a scam. He would come in handy when I needed him again. Okuhle was good at pretending, she always acted like everything was okay but deep inside she was dying. She always came to me crying about how she didn't want to lose you and how you were the best thing in her life.” I rolled my eyes.

“No one suspected me

Advertisement

well Kayise and Dekka never liked me. They must have sensed that darkness had engulfed me. Dekka always pretended to like me only when Kuhle was around but she and I couldn't be in the same room for an hour, she was the light I didn't need and I was the darkness she couldn't stand as well...”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

“Is it only me or is it very hot today?”

“It is hot but not that hot, you're sweating profusely GM.” KB said passing me a wet cloth.

“Have you not seen my nude bra KB?” Thobile asked walking around naked. I admired how comfortable she was in her body and skin. She was so comfortable, her skin was perfect.

“Friend that is so creepy!” she threw her top at me.

“What did I do?”

“You were staring at me like a hungry lion seeing it's prey. Sies!”

“Have you seen yourself babe..? You're so hot I wouldn't mind being that hungry lion.” I made purr sounds, everyone in the room laughed.

“How's Junior doing today?” Thobile rubbed my tummy and kissed it.

“I'm definitely carrying a princess not a prince.”

“Are you sure?” KB.

“Yes.”

“Ausi Goitsi so I'm going to be an aunt?”

“Yes muffin.”

“Nope, this baby will call me ausi until I reach thirty then she can call me aunty.”

“Hebathong Lesedi, why?”

“I’m still young to be called an aunt. Me? Look at all of this...”
she did a few swirls for us.

“But you used to call me mommy?”

“That’s different and please don't ask me how.”

“GM are we not baking today?” KB.

“Nna ke lapile yoh, ke lapile girl.” (I'm tired..)

“So what now because during the week nna ka bereka girl.” (I work..)

“Will you go and deliver them ko go MmaTshepo?”

“Yoh!” Sedi.

“Eish GM mma.. I don't want to see Tshepo yoh.” KB.

“Then there's no use baking, she's the only one who ordered a 5l bucket of biscuits. I'll bake them tomorrow morning.”

“You need to take lesser orders now until you have given birth. You have been crying about a back pain.”

“Yes mom.”

Thobile returned with her clutch bag and wore her heels. She had a lunch date.

“Girls I'm leaving my luggage here, I don't know when I'll visit again but I know it's safe here. My date is almost here.”

“You look great in that dress Thobs.” her phone rang, she said her good bye while rushing out.

“Ausi Goitsi your phone is ringing.” Sedi.

“Please bring it..”

“I already answered she said she's Kayise Ndlovu, Terrence young sister.” Sedi whispered.

Terrence sister?

“Hello.”

“Hi Goitsimedi sorry for just calling. I was wondering if you wouldn't mind if we met?”

“If I mind what then?”

She heaved a sigh. “I just want to meet the woman carrying my niece or nephew, nothing much.”

“Who did you say you are again?”

“Ntombikayise Ndlovu.”

“I'm busy this week ask Terry when my next appointment is then we could meet for a cup of tea afterwards.”

“Thank you, bye.”

Rachel Ndlovu

“As I was saying Terry, my dear loving husband– somehow Okuhle fell pregnant again after that miscarriage. I was furious! Why are you two still trying for a baby so soon? I returned to get another concoction, I could go in and out of your house I was her best friend afterall.” I shrugged.

“All I'm saying is that no one was going to give you children except me, well that's what I had thought..” I wiped the tears that escaped my eye.

“I don't believe you, you are not that evil.”

“You remember the last pregnancy.. that one scared me. I thought the concoction was no longer doing its job, I thought she would give birth. After that accident, I invited her to my small apartment. I had no plan but something in me said I should and I did.

I told her every tiny little thing I had done to her. How I would live her life once she was no longer in the picture. I hated her

and you choosing her over me, that hurt a lot! You hurt me Terrence.”

“Then why didn't you kill me instead! Why did you have to hurt me like that? You knew how I struggled after her death and you pretended to be a caring human. You're sick!” he said crying. He held his abdomen and let out a scream from pain, I knew the herbs I had been giving him were wearing off. I had not been feeding him well ever since my episodes began. He held his temples and fell on his knees while screaming.

The doctor rushed to him not knowing what was happening, all I did was watch. My chest was no longer on fire I turned and saw Kuhle crying, the love of her life was in pain and she felt it as well. How weak!

“Should I carry on baby?”

“Mrs Ndlovu that's enough! Can't you see that he is in pain?” psychiatrist.

A nurse came in with water and some pain meds, not that they were going to help him. In a few minutes the pain would be

gone. If I was not restrained I would've ran out of here. This would've been the perfect time.

“Don’t worry you're not dying.. the pain will be gone soon.”

“Did, did you do this to me as well? Did you!”

“Save the energy my love.”

“You’re evil!” Terrence.

“I was in love.. but you didn't love me. We would've been so perfect baby, a power couple. You know Okuhle, she had a loose screw, without any warning she jumped on me and beat me up. Remember when I said I was mugged?”

“You piece of...” a nurse held Terry from approaching me.

“Okuhle was a fighter that I'll give her, if she was not pregnant chances are she would've killed me. We shoved each other around the apartment, I shoved her hard; she hit her head against the wall then fell on her stomach. She still had a fight in her, we found ourselves on top of the stairs. She lost her balance and fell all the way down. I rushed to her and she was

bleeding, she also cried of abdominal pains that's when I bashed her head n the floor until she stopped moving. There was no time to feel sorry for myself, I called Mokgadi and she asked a guy named Kevin to help me out. I don't know how they knew each other but he helped me carry Okuhle to your house. It was raining on that day and I knew that people would be in their houses– we messed things around the room, placed a chair a distance from her to make it seem as though she hit her head and broke her neck as she fell. Brilliant I know.” I smiled looking at the nurse and Terry.

“You killed her..”

“Bingo! He finally smells the coffee. I knew that you never liked me so I fed you herbs every time I offered to cook for you. Little by little you started developing feelings for me and you married me. What I didn't know was that I would not carry full term because of what I did to Okuhle. I paid with my babies.” I wiped the tears. “I started seeing her and it drove me crazy, I had to up the dosage I added into your food– that was the reason why you sometimes woke up not remembering what had happened to you.”

“Was it worth it? Look where you are now, do you think it was worth all the trouble?”

“She’s dead and I'm still alive..” I shrugged. “I really thought my life was going well, but Kevin came back into my life and blackmailed me. I killed him then burnt him!” I couldn't help but to laugh out loud, I was proud of myself.

“You are sick! You and your sister Mokgadi. Your mom will not survive if she hears this. She has already lost one daughter and if she finds out what you did..” Terrence.

“What about my mother and sister? What is going on?”

“Mokgadi paid with her life, she thought she could play people but it never ended well. You're sick Rachel and I'm so glad we didn't use your eggs to get pregnant. I'm so glad that baby will not be yours. No child deserves to have you as a mother. You're sick!”

“Mokgadi is dead?”

“Yes my dear wife, she died this morning and your mom is fighting for her life as well. I hope you are proud of yourself, very proud.

“I will be back for my child Terry, this is not the end of me. I'll come back. I'll come back!” I screamed as he walked out of my room. It was not over it would never be over until I had my baby. Terrence Ndlovu does not know me, if he thinks these walls would keep me from my child he was crazier than me...

“Nurse, give her another sedative. This one belongs to a bigger hospital, she is crazy.”

“I'm not crazy doctor!”

“You are a mental case Mrs Ndlovu! You have been acting crazy ever since you got here but today, today you took the trophy. It's 20h00 at night and you have been driving us crazy from morning. Nurse give her the sedative!”

The drowsiness came, I saw double faces and it was lights out for me...

Terrence Ndlovu

Three months later...

I could tell that someone was in my room and disturbing my peace. I did the double shift yesterday and all I wanted was to rest today.

“Whoever you are can you please stop what you're doing.”

I turned to the other side but the person was very adamant on what they were doing.

“Terry for how long are you going to stay in bed and feel sorry for yourself? Get up and go have breakfast.” Kayise said pulling the curtains.

After what Rachel revealed to me in that psychiatric hospital months back, I was a mess. I lost my wife because I rejected someone. I had to attend a few more sessions to deal with what Rachel had said. I married someone who was capable of murder, cold blooded murder.

Okuhle’s father had a heart attack after I told them what Rachel told me. Deka was not surprised, she told me that she gave me a flash drive that had an unfinished confession recording from a Kevin that she gave me. A lot of things were very unclear to me.

I had to go and see mkhulu for a cleansing that's when he told me that I would not remember some of the things that happened.

“Terry are you still in bed? I said get up!” she pulled the blanket off me, sprinkled some water on me.

“Kayise I'm tired I was doing the double shift yesterday. Can I rest?”

“Did you forget that today it's Goitsi's appointment?”

“How could I forget? Her appointment is at nine, I still have time.”

“I really like her bhuti.” she sat next to me. “She has a good heart, you should hear her sisters speak of her, they adore her.”

“I know you like her, you talk about her every day.”

“Is there something going on between you two?”

I kept quiet remembering the kiss we shared last week. It was not supposed to happen but it just did. She spent the night in my arms— we stopped at the kiss, she said I was broken and not thinking straight. She might have been right but she's all I think about. We spend a lot of time together when we can. Her lips are so soft, how she likes biting her bottom lip and smile. There was something about her but I couldn't figure what.

“Terrence!”

“What?”

“Judging from how quiet you were, there is something going on am I right?”

“You are wrong dade, very wrong. We obviously have a bond because she's carrying our child and we see each other every now and then.”

“I have seen how you look at her Terry, it's clear as day light that you're interested in her. Not that I blame you she's gorgeous, very gorgeous and her smile is the icing on top.”
Kayise.

“Get out of my room I need to get ready.” I hit her with a pillow.

—

After my shower I went downstairs and joined Kayise and Lindo for breakfast. I sold my previous house and moved to one that was sold opposite me. I couldn't continue staying, the place gave me nightmares. As we packed I found a diary that belonged to Rachel, I read it and what I found in there was highly disturbing. Okuhle's family opened a case against her but because she was already at a mental institution, she was now

-serving a double murder sentence. Her diary was taken as evidence but I had already read it and knew that indeed she was being honest about the murders. Rachel's mother could not handle the news, her heart gave up on her and she passed away. The only person I felt for was Rosina, she didn't deserve any of this but somehow the house was under her name and no family member could come and claim it as theirs. I sent her some money just to help her out. She did nothing to me.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“That is my queue to leave family!” Lindo grabbed his toast and left.

“When are you two going back to your apartment?”

“Is this the thanks we get after helping you?”

“I’m just asking, over here you can't have your boyfriend over like you would at your own place.”

“Own place..? I live with Lindo who is a mini version of you big bro. No boyfriend could come over.”

“I understand that you two are twins kodwa umdala nawe Kayise why have you not moved to your own apartment or ask Lindo to find his own apartment then you stay at the current one?”

“Our father bought us that place when we went to varsity and we both don't want to move out. I like it there.”

“How about you rent it out then you and Lindo get apartments, extra income as well.”

“That sounds way better than your first suggestion, I'll pass it by him if he returns today.”

After cleaning up I left to get Goitsimedi for our appointment.

Londeka 'Deka' Gumede

I watched Kevin's confession one more time and could not help myself but cry. I've never liked Rachel but murder was not something I thought she was capable of. Knowing that she killed my Okuhle just because Terry rejected her was very ridiculous! Indeed crazy does exist, it exists.

“Baby you have been watching this from last night, let it go now.”

“Keneilwe how do you expect me to let this go that easily? We're talking about my sister right now.”

“Babe look at me,” she turned me around and held my hands.
“You would never forget that your sister is gone, no one wants to accept such news but the truth is finally out and she can finally rest easy. You watching this video won't bring her back.”

“I want to go and visit her today.”

“Who?”

“Babe no, no Deka you can't go and see her. Why are you doing this to yourself?” Keneilwe.

“Neilwe I have to do this, I just want to see her one last time and then I could finally close this chapter and focus on us.”

“I'm not going anywhere, take all the time you need baby, all the time.”

“How's Khumo and her husband?”

“She called me last night and basically told me, not asked but told me that I need to come and fetch Zendaya and Imani this weekend because she can't take it anymore.” we both laughed as I held Neilwe closer.

“I'm so glad that we fixed things, I missed you so badly. I hate it when we fight.” I kissed her forehead.

“I hate it when we fight too

so..?”

“So what..?”

“Your flat is not really suitable for children, so maybe we could spend this weekend at my apartment.” she kissed me on the cheek.

“You know I don't mind being wherever you are nurse bae.. and I really adore Zendaya and Imani. It's been a while.”

“I love you but I have to go now motho waka, I'll see you when I get back from work. And please be careful with Rachel okay.”

—

Once Neilwe had left I cleared up the table then drove to the mental institution where Rachel was. I had to beg them to let me see her. Once I told them that Okuhle was my sister they agreed to let me see her. My parents do not know any of this, they would think it's a bad idea like my girlfriend. At least one good thing came out of this mess— Keneilwe and I had broken up but we found our way to each other.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I've lost count of how many times I've been here yet I still couldn't get over the coldness of the gel they applied on me every time we had to do the ultrasound scan. Terry held my

hand as we listened to the strong heartbeat. I noticed how Terry quickly wiped his tears away then turned to me—

“Thank you so much for this, thank you..” he leaned over and pecked my lips, I was so embarrassed.

“Everything is perfect! The heartbeat is just as strong.”

“Thank you so much.” Terry used the wipes to wipe off the gel then pulled my tank down.

“Should we go and grab something to eat?” Terry?

“Actually I have to return to work, I didn't take the day off. I only asked for two hours off, another time?”

“Do you think it's a good idea to be working right now? What if something happens to you and our baby?”

“Terrence don't start, even if I was not working, anything could happen but nothing will happen because I'm extra careful. And.. the perks is that Kayise's boyfriend is very kind. He lets me rest all the time.”

“I know sometimes I get a lot but I can't help it. I'm afraid that something bad will happen after I finally bonded this much with Junior.”

“You really need to stop calling my baby that.” I had a frown on my face. “I understand why you a t the way you do, I do but time it down a bit and enjoy this pregnancy. It's my first and I

don't want to be reminded of how many miscarriages your wives have had. It's not healthy for me." I rubbed his shoulder.

"Okay, I'll time it done. Should I drop you off at work then." he pulled me in and pecked my lips. "Did I tell you how gorgeous you look today?"

"Terry you need to stop messing with me like this. My hormones are all over the place and you're not making things easier. I know that you're no longer a married man but still.."

He shut me up with a kiss, I kissed him back and if we were in a private space I would be on my knees. We broke the kiss then smiled at one another.

"We don't have to put a label on us then.. let's see where this goes." Terry.

"I, I, I don't know Ter..." my ringing phone disturbed us.

"Goitsimedi hello?"

Silence.

"Hello?"

I could hear someone breathing but they remained quiet, just as I was about to hang up, he spoke.

"Ndoni yamanzi, unjani?"

The devil is testing me!

“Bhengu..” the look Terrence was giving me, he was definitely going to ask questions.

How could I still feel like this for someone I have not seen in months, or heard from? The heart was a backstabber, a backstabbing cockroach!

“Please don't hang up Mma Tholo, please...”

“I won't.. how's business?”

“It went better than we had anticipated. I wish you would have been by my side when we opened.”

“I'm glad that everything is going well for you and your family.”

“Are you still angry at me, Mma Tholo..?” look at me blushing like a school girl. Terrence was so annoyed.

“Can we talk later?”

“Is that you giving me permission to call?”

“Ahh Mabutho, yes I'm giving you permission, bye.”

—

“Mabutho?”

“Terrence don't start, please don't now take me to work.”

“Is he your boyfriend? Is that why you don't want to give us a chance?”

Silence.

“Goitsimedi!”

“Yeyi.. yeyi, you must never! Don't you dare talk to me as if I'm your child Terrence.”

“Sorry but..”

“No buts, you must not dare.”

Londeka Deka Gumede

The institution was almost in Pretoria and the traffic was horrible. I arrived after she was given her meds and had to wait until she woke up.

She finally came with her nurse. She looked different, she was the definition of crazy. She grinned and did twirls all the way to where I was seated. I noticed how her nurse was getting irritated by what she was doing.

“Ms Gumede you know that you're not supposed to be here so please keep this short.” nurse.

“Thank you for this and I promise I'll keep it short.” I looked at Rachel scratch her arms. She had lost a lot of weight. She sat across me then looked at me and cackled.

“Are you here to gloat? What do you want, I confessed.”
Rachel.

“You killed my sister just to end up in here, a looney bin? You could have had any human but it had to be Terry.”

“I wanted him and I got him. How's my baby?”

“What baby?”

“Did you hear that..? Soon they're coming for me. Soon I'll be out of here and I'll be with my baby.”

“You have really gone crazy and I don't feel sorry for you. You deserve every single thing that's happening to you!”

“Shhh... Keep quiet then you will hear them. Listen...” the giggling began. There was no use talking to Rachel, she no longer existed— only her shell did. Signalled the nurse to come and take her back. She screamed then laughed when she was returned to her room.

She hated Okuhle for no reason now she lived in hell.

I looked at the time, it was 13h00 and I was going to be late for work. The new boss already disliked me now I gave him more reason to hate me more.

I drove like a maniac, I texted Terry to inform him that I was from the institution.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

Months ago Terrence sister called asking to meet up with me. I did and we got along! She was a free spirit just like Thobile. I told her that I was not working and she told me to take my CV to Royal hills catering services. A week later I received a call that made me believe that things were about to change for the better. What she didn't tell me was that Royal hills, belonged to her boyfriend.

It felt so good to cook and bake for a crowd or just families. I still had my baking side hustle but I took less orders. KB and Sedi helped me on some days.

Arriving home from work I found Sedi cooking. I wrapped my arms around her waist and kissed her on the neck—

“It smells nice in here.”

“I tried to cook in a hurry because I was not sure how the smell would treat you.”

“I’m good, what are we cooking?” I opened the pots— creamy spinach and livers greeted me, the other pot had fried rice.

“This looks so delicious!”

“I hope it tastes good.”

“Wena you take after me.. don't tell KB I said so.” we laughed.
“So I know for a fact that it's going to be delicious. How was school?”

“Not bad, how was work?”

“Leave those pots, let's go have a seat. Are you okay, like really okay?”

She heaved a sigh.

“Marshmallow, I need you to know that I'll always be here when you need to talk. I don't want you to think that I'm neglecting you, now that I'm about to have a baby. You're still my baby. Will you tell me if anything is bothering you?”

She started crying..

“Nana what's going on, you have been acting strange.”

“Thapelo was here two weeks back when you and Sedi were still at work.”

“Sedi did he do anything to you?”

“No but he freaked me out ausi Goitsi. I didn't know what to do and I thought he would, he would you know..”

“Shhh, it's okay sweetie I'm here he would never do anything to you. Next time if tries coming in, there is pepper spray over

there and in our room. Use it and show him no remorse.” she nodded.

“I’m going to rest call me once dinner is ready.”

—

I had a quick bath before resting. I had a strong urge to call Mabutho but I didn't want him to think I was desperate. How I missed him and the sex. I laughed out loud. Then there was Terry as well, he was starting to catch feelings and I was afraid that my hormones were the reason why we thought we have some connection. What would happen after I've given birth and I realise that we're actually not in love? All I want for us, is that we raise our baby and be civil, mjolo could wait.

Londeka Deka Gumede

After work I drove straight to Neilwe’s apartment because she was babysitting today. Zendaya gave us a hard time before she could sleep. After the day that I had, all I needed was a bed then it would be lights out. We finished the last batch of dishes then I grabbed a beer and walked to the balcony where Neilwe was. She looked like she was derp in thought.

“Babe are you good?”

“I’m thinking about how far Khumo and I have come. Who would've thought that we would be this close after the pain I put her through? I'm so lucky to have her.” Neilwe.

“Babe we can't change the past, you did your utmost best to get her to forgive you and she did. I think it's time you did the same.”

“You know when I look at Zendaya and Imani, I can only wonder if I would've been a great mother as well. Will I ever become a mother.”

“Ohh ginger don't do that to yourself, it's been years now and you were a child yourself, how were you going to look after those children? You are a mother baby, Zendaya and Imani’s mom. Come here..” she disappeared into my embrace

I kissed her on top of the head. We stayed like this for a while then we looked at the passing cars.

“How did things go with Rachel?” Neilwe.

“Babe I still don't understand how a gorgeous woman like Rachel let hate overpower her like that. Yes I said gorgeous, she and I might have not got along but she was still gorgeous.”

“I never said anything.”

“Your face did all the talking.” I poked her forehead. “She looks like someone who, I don't know how to explain this but she's not the fierce Rachel that I knew. That Rachel no longer exists.”

“Did you at least get what you were looking for?” Neilwe.

“One could say that. I'm ready to accept that Rachel is the reason why Okuhle is not here with us. Such is life.”

“I love you MaGumede.”

“Haibo Keneilwe, yho.”

“Keng baby?”

“MaGumede pho..? It doesn't sound right.”

“What would sound right..?” Neilwe kissed my hand, then the arm and my neck. She flashed her beautiful smile then attacked my lips with a sloppy kiss. She did all that while squeezing my boobs, I let out a breathy moan..

“Neilwe the kids...”

“Asleep..” we went inside with our lips interlocked; clothing was flying around. She pushed me to the couch and straddled me.

“I love you so much Deka.”

“I love you too Neilwe.”

I moved her underwear to the side, then used my thumb to rub her. She didn't need much, just a lot of focus on her clit— soon she would erupt like a volcano.

I slid two fingers still very much focused on her clit. She threw her head back as she squeezed her boobs.

“Deka, Ahh.. dammit!” the door flew open, Khumo and Zakhele walked in. He immediately turned and faced the door.

“I told you that we should knock first, caramel.” Zakhele whispered to Khumo. All she did was giggle.

“We are decent, you can turn around now..” Neilwe said after we put on our clothes. The second Khumo turned around, she and Neilwe had a fit of laughter. Zakhele and I were just staring at them as they laughed.

“I apologize Deka for just rushing in without knocking. Neilwe and I need to learn to knock when visiting. She once caught me and Khoza in a weird situation; that's why we were laughing.” Khumo.

“It's okay I understand.”

“No it's not!” she said. “Where are my babies?”

“Khumo I told you that you will fetch them in the morning!” Neilwe.

“Ohh, my bad. Khoza let's go then..” Khumo and her husband rushed out of the apartment. Neilwe and I burst into laughter, “that was so awkward babe.”

“Tell me about it. Let's go to bed now, I'm tired.” Neilwe.

“Not even a quick round baby?” I whispered as I squeezed her ass.

“Tomorrow is another day MaGumede.”

Terrence Ndlovu

I was in my room trying to get a hold of Goitsimedi but her line was busy. Either she is asleep or avoiding me after how I spoke to her after her appointment. I didn't mean to raise my voice but I did and regretted it immediately.

Mah kaJunior, I hope you have forgiven me about my rudeness. I didn't mean to shout. I hope you're well. I sent the text.

“Why do you look like someone just stole your girlfriend?” Kayise said entering my room without knocking as usual.

“What if I was masterbating Kayise? You need to learn how to knock.”

She frowned. “Euw Terry.”

“Am I too old to masterbate?”

“No but I don't need to know that you do. That's just, yucky!”

“Knock next time okay.”

“So, Thobile and I have been planning Goitsi’s baby shower. We're planning on doing it at Durban.”

“Why so far?”

“She needs a breather and I heard that there's some 21st they need to cater for at Durban and this would be perfect.”

“Do you know someone called Mabutho?”

“Nope! Who is he?”

“Just asking, now get out it's late and I need my sleep.”

“You such a bore yoh.”

“Hamba!”

—

Just when I felt sleepy, my phone rang.

“What did you want Terrence?”

“Are you still angry?”

“No.”

“You sound angry.”

“Then why did you ask in the first place?”

“Just to be a hundred percent sure.”

“Terrence I'm too tired for such nonsense at night. I'm going to sleep now, do the same as well...”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

A few months later...

“GM do you really think it's wise to be traveling around to Durban, then to Eshowe in your state really?”

“What is my state?” I was going up and down packing my clothes. The team would come and pick me up here when we leave in the afternoon. KB and Terry have been on my case ever since I told them that I'm leaving.

“GM, you have reached your third trimester; you're what.. 33 or 34 weeks pregnant now. Anything could happen to you.”

“I would be with people KB, and nothing could happen. You and Brock Lesnar are just jinxing things, why are you both so stuck on something happening to me?” KB held my hand and sighed.

“I don't want anything happening to you GM. I've seen how you have bonded with Junior. I also don't want to lose you.”

“You won't lose me, now help me pack so that I can rest. I have like an hour or two before we leave.”

“I don't like this, I really don't.” she continued packing the remaining clothes. I returned to our room carrying two glasses

of mango juice. KB stared at me with a frown, “GM you know I don't like mango juice.”

“I know, I'm going to drink a glass now and another later.”

“What about me!”

“Well, you never told me that you're thirsty.”

“Ahh GM, you need to give birth soon! Very soon yoh.”

“Please bring those lemons when you return.” lemons had become my favourite, well after apples and pears.

“There's no lemons here.” KB.

“I just put them in the fridge, what do mean..” she must have hid them, she keeps on telling me how I should not be eating so much lemons. KB really wants me to die from hunger.

I ran to my ringing phone and smiled while picking up—

“Hello.”

“Ndoni yamanzi, unjani?”

“I'm good, tired but good. Wena?”

“I miss you... I wish I could see you every day.”

“I miss you too.” KB gave me an evil eye. I could smell a lecture coming.

These feelings I had for Mabutho were growing stronger and stronger with each passing day. After that phone call I had from him while I was with Terry, a week later he was on my doorstep. We were both shocked— I was shocked to see him because I thought he was actually joking when he said he would come and visit me. Then it was his turn to be shocked when he realised that I was pregnant. I just froze by the door not believing that he was really here.

He took me out for lunch, we talked then went to our spot in Westdene. It felt like he had not left, we just clicked and I hated it because he had to return back to KZN. He just came to ask that we give each other a chance because it was clear that we had a bond. Why didn't he say that when he left the first time though...Why now? I wanted to say no but my mouth said yes. The heart and mouth were such betrayers yerr!

“Mma Tholo, angazi zenziwa kanjani lezi zinto, uma ungekho matasa this weekend; ngingakukhiphela isidlo sasemini yini?” (I don't know how these things work, but if you're not busy.. can I take you out for lunch?)

“I'm heading to Durban today but I'll be back before Saturday so.. yes I would like to go out for lunch with you.”

“Should you be traveling when you're this close to giving birth, uthini lowomfana wakwaNdlovu yena?”

“Mabutho yoh just stop it. You don't even know him but you already hate him.”

“Why did he get you pregnant before me? Uyadelela lowomfana finish!” I shouldn't be laughing but I did, I fear the day the Zulu dudes meet each other, I don't want to be there. I had to be friends with their sisters as well.

“Mabutho I have to finish packing, we'll talk later okay.”

“Ngiyak'thanda..” (I love you.)

When did we get here so fast? What if things don't work, I hope I'm not testing fate.

“Lenna kea go rata. Bye.” (I love you too.)

—

“Don't you dare KB please don't. Are you done packing?”

“Does Terry know that you're dating?”

“KB am I married to Terry? Is he my father? Why should he know every tiny detail that's happening in my life?”

“Don't bite my head I was just asking.”

“Sorry but you know I've tried ignoring Mabutho, I really have but nothing seemed to work. I'm not going to date Terry because I'm carrying his child. That's not happening.”

“I just need you to be certain of what you're doing. Are you sure that you don't have any feelings for Terry? I know how you feel about Mabutho we have been telling you that you love him but you always disagreed.”

“I'm not in love with Terry, we have a bond I won't disagree but.. a relationship wouldn't be a great idea trust me!”

“Because of Rachel?”

“Because I'm in love with someone else and I'm willing to explore this fire that's burning between us. I'm ready and if we don't work, I will not have any regrets.”

“Whatever decision you take, you know I support it. I just don't want you getting hurt.”

“Then let me burn, I will learn.. we all have to start somewhere.”

“Halala Mrs Mabutho!”

Terrence Ndlovu

The idea of Goitsimedi traveling to Durban was not sitting well with me. She shouldn't be working but relaxing and taking walks. Who was I kidding, Goitsimedi doesn't listen to anyone.

“You were good in there Terrence.” Dr Robinson said as we got out of theatre.

“I learn from the best what can I say!”

“Yes please, make my head even bigger.” the nurses and I laughed at Dr Robinson. She was fun to work with, she was always ready to help where she could. She knew she was the best surgeon but she never gloated much.

“Robinson, do you know if Warona is here yet?”

“Why do you want to see a gynaecologist?”

“I need to ask her something.”

“I can't believe that you're about to be someone's dad. Are you ready?”

“I don't know, I'll try my best.”

“That's what I wanted to hear, don't stress this is your first child.. you're allowed to make mistakes but to also learn from them.”

“So is she in?”

“Uhm, I'm not certain Terrence, I think her shift ended while we were still in surgery but Francie is there..”

“I'll pass..”

“What’s the story between you and Francie and don't say there's nothing because everyone can see that there's bad blood.”

“I have nothing against her, she has a problem with me.” I shrugged.

“Are you going to do your rounds now, maybe we could grab something to eat at the cafeteria?”

“Let’s go..”

We bumped into Warona at the cafeteria just as she was leaving. I stopped her then asked Robinson to order something.

“Sorry for ambushing you like this but I need to ask something.”

“How can I help Dr Ndlovu, I'm really exhausted and I want to go home.” Warona.

“So.. is it safe for a pregnant woman to be traveling a long distance like Durban?”

“There’s nothing wrong with a pregnant woman traveling but depending on how far along she is.”

“34 weeks..?”

“Damn!” I saw the frown and hesitation on her face. “That’s very risky Terrence, very risky. I wouldn't suggest her traveling but what did her OBGYN say?”

“She said the same to her but Goitsimedi doesn't listen.”

“Try convincing her, it's really not a good idea. I'm not saying anything will happen to her but she should be taking things easy now.”

“Thank you, I'll try.”

“I’m glad that I helped, bye.”

I walked to where Robinson was and she had ordered salads for us.

“Really? A salad?”

“We lead by example Terry. Now sit down and eat, lunch is almost over.”

“I know that but after that surgery, salad is the last thing I need. Wait, did you say lunch? Shit!” I removed my phone from my pocket and dialled Goitsimedi’s number. I hope she has not left just yet.

“Terry what's wrong?”

“Shh..”

Her phone went straight to voicemail. I tried Karabo but her line was busy.

Have you left already? – I sent the text.

“Baby mama ignoring your calls?” Robinson.

“I had hoped to change her mind but she knows me too well, so she switched her phone.”

“Stop stressing Ndlovu, some women work until they give birth and nothing happens to their baby.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I could hear my phone ringing in the other room but I was in so much pain

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I couldn't stand to fetch the phone.

After KB left to meet up with her friends at the mall, I started feeling pain in my abdomen. It felt like I was about to give birth. One minute I was cold the next I was burning. I had already

called the team to tell them that I couldn't go because my OBGYN told me that it was not a good idea. I was just being stubborn and I really wanted to leave but I couldn't.

I didn't even know what the time was, Sedi had a netball match and would only arrive after 18h00. KB didn't mention when she would arrive— I was going to give birth on my own. It was too early for me to give birth, way too early.

I slowly got up from the bed but my back was on fire. I did a few breathing exercises as I took each step..

It felt like forever but I reached the phone then tried calling KB but she didn't answer, I tried Terry as well but he didn't answer as well.

The pain hit me again and I abruptly stood up holding onto my back, then I fell on my knees thinking that would help.

The door opened, Sedi walked in then ran to me once she saw me on the floor. “Ausi Goitsi why are you laying on the floor? Karabo o kae?”

“Why, why are you back so early, didn't you have a netball match?”

“I did.”

“What time is it?”

“18h15.. are you in pain? Must I call abhuti Terry?” I nodded. The pain was much better but it was still there.

“He is not answering.. who should I call, the ambulance?”

Why didn't I think of that earlier or my OBGYN..

“Yes!”

—

After waiting for twenty minutes the ambulance arrived and I was rushed to the hospital. I called my OBGYN on our way to the hospital. The pain would come and go.. my entire abdomen was burning. Was I dying? “Oh God please don't take me before I see my future husband. Please heavenly father, amen.” Sedi faced the other way but I heard her giggling, I didn't care but I was not dying before meeting my husband.

The perks of having a baby daddy who was a doctor, I was rushed in and attended immediately.

“How is the pain mommy?” OBGYN.

“Right now it's bearable but a while ago it was a lot.”

“Well the good news is that you're not in labour. Just Braxton Hicks..”

“Fake contractions? That felt so real, I thought I was really in labour.”

“Don’t get too excited.. your due date is nearing so try taking things easy. I'm happy that you listened and did not go to Durban.”

“I’m glad I listened because if this had happened while we were on the way to Durban– I wouldn't be this calm.”

“Goitsimedi, I hope you still take five minute walks as I had suggested during your second trimester visit. They really help, I know on some days you're too tired and all you want to do is sleep but take those walks okay?”

“I still do.. well not every day but I try to walk four times a week.”

The door flew open, Terry ran in with sweat all over his face. “Is the baby okay? What happened?” he said in a rush. He held me and inspected me.

“Woah calm down tiger, I'm fine and the baby as well.”

“Is this true doctor, is everything fine?”

Monna o! So he does not believe me? The OBGYN laughed and nodded.

“Everything is okay, I promise you Dr Ndlovu. It was just Braxton Hicks.”

“I tried calling you Terrence where was that phone!”

“I’m sorry I was still busy with my last round. Please forgive me...” he tried kissing me but I turned my head. Sedi and the doctor left the room.

“I said I'm sorry Goitsi, I should've been there with you but..”

“It’s not that Terry.”

“What then?”

Ntate modimo he must not freak out.

“I don't know how to say this but I have to before one of us gets hurt. I'm not in love with you Terrence, I have feelings for you but they're not that strong to actually be the reason to start a relationship. I'm in love with someone else...”

Silence.

“Terry?” he shook his head then laughed, not a pleasing laugh.

“So what should I do with these feelings, huh? What must I do because I love you.. I love you.” he held my hand.

“You don't love me, you think you do but you don't. You just found out news that rocked your boat when did you start developing these feelings?”

“Now you're telling me that my feelings for you are invalid? Goitsimedi no.” he walked out of my room.

*

*

*

A month later...

“Goitsimedi I need you to push for me. After three.”

“Doctor it's too painful, I can't do this.”

“You can, hold on tight to Terry and give me a strong push mommy.” I nodded with tears streaming down my face. I was too weak and tired. Yesterday the girls planned a baby shower for me and just as we took pictures my water broke. This child had no timing at all!

Mabutho was here as well, him and Terry argued all the way to the hospital. One played the boyfriend card while the other played the baby daddy card. I was in pain, referee was not something I was going to be. I let them scream at each other and I focused on my pain. I was a week late, I was meant to give

birth last week but this baby said nope, I'll tell you when I'm ready to come.

“Push, push, push!”

“I can't! I can't, please give me something for the pain. I think I'm about to die, it's not supposed to be this painful right?” I was squeezing Terry's hand so hard, it was his fault that I was here.

“I can see the head, a few more strong pushes please. One.. two... Push!” on one hand I held on to Terry's hand with the other I was holding a gown rope that another nurse was holding. It was a tactic they used to help mother's give birth.

I gave her a strong push... Then I heard it faintly. I faintly heard a cry. I couldn't keep my eyes open any longer, my head fell back on the bed.

—

I could hear movement around me but my eyes were too heavy to open. I finally did but I saw blurry images for the first seconds then everything came to light. I held my tummy and panicked.

“Where, where is my baby?”

“Hey, shh GM calm down before you faint again.” KB.

“Where is my baby, where is my baby stop telling me to calm down. Karabo ngwanaka o kae?” (where is my baby?)

The door opened, a nurse wheeled in a baby. Terry and Mabutho walked in. The tension was very thick.

“Is, is that my baby?”

“Congratulations mommy, you gave birth to a healthy baby boy.”
nurse.

“A boy?” I turned to Terry and he couldn't wait to tell me ‘I told you so’.

“Are you comfortable, it's time to bond with the little one.”
nurse.

They helped me lay comfortably then placed him in my arms. I was afraid that he would fall, I was still weak but hearing his little cry as I held him brought tears of joy. I was someone's mother. I brought him to the world. I turned to Mabutho and his smile was charming as always— he walked to the bed and held my hand.

“You did good ndoni yamanzi..” he kissed my lips. Terrence clucked his tongue on my other side. “Ngiyak'thanda Mma Tholo.”

“I love you too.” KB kept on clearing her throat the entire time. Sedi, Thobile and Kayise walked in with my doctor.

“Welcome to the world of the living mommy, you gave me a fright in there. How are you feeling?” OBGYN.

“I’m tired...”

“That’s to be expected, I’ll leave you and check on you later.” she left then Thobile and Kayise started screaming. The baby cried.

“Really?” I asked them while I rubbed his tiny back and buttocks.

“Have you two thought of names yet?” KB asked. Terry looked at me—

“Well.. I really believed that it would be a girl but I once had a dream of me holding a boy child. Ke Boikanyo, baby Boikanyo.. I don't know any Zulu names.” I looked at Terry.

“Langa..” Mabutho and I chuckled because he was Nkanyezi. How Terry would act once he finds out that Mabutho is Nkanyezi, lord have mercy!

Terry’s family went to my family to pay for damages and all that would be needed for the baby to take his surname.

I was sleepy, Kayise took the baby from me and I slept...

Terrence Ndlovu

Two years later...

Goitsimedi was really testing me today. During the week I'm always at work and don't get much time to spend with Langa, but I do my best to spend time with him during weekends. I tried her again with no luck.

I felt arms around my waist, I turned and it was my girlfriend, Boipelo. We met a year ago and I'm at peace.

"Babe, you can't keep on calling Goitsi like this, it's creepy and just not cool. She'll get back to you." Boipelo.

"Babe, she promised that she would return this week and I would get to see Langa. The least she could've done was let me know they won't make it."

"I understand but look at things from her side.. after she gave birth to Langa, she went through something and she didn't get time to bond with her son. She's trying to make up for lost time."

"With Nkanyezi!" I can't believe that Goitsimedi let me name our son Langa, while her boyfriend's name was Nkanyezi. Goitsimedi was very sneaky.

"Babe should I be worried? You're acting like you're still in love and I'm not here to nurse your broken heart."

"Babe no, listen I'm sorry if I made it seem like I'm still in love with Goitsimedi but.."

"No butts Terry, you need to know whether you want me in your life or the mother of your child."

"I want you.. give me a kiss baby." she started giggling while she dragged her feet to me. "I love you okay.."

"I love you too. Now where's that breakfast that you promised me?"

"I had something else in mind, how about we..." I nibbled on her ear then kissed her neck then her lips.

"Breakfast before breakfast..?"

"Yes.." I picked her up and placed her on the dining table while I kissed her. We removed each other's clothing without breaking the kiss. I left her lips and sucked on each of her nipples then down her tummy to the waistband of her underwear. Boipelo had her hand on my head; gently massaging it as I went down on her- I spread her pussy lips and gave her clit some loving.

"The door.. the door."

"What about the door?" I kissed her inner thighs.

"Someone is at the door." I lifted my head and heard the knocking.

"No timing yerr!" we quickly got dressed then I went to attend the door.

"Kayise yho, ufunani la?"

"Good morning to you too big bro.. hey Pelo." I have her a bored look.

"Kayise?"

"Ohh, I forgot my dress here. The one I need to wear for GM's 24th birthday. Will you be there?"

"I could have brought the dress. Her birthday is tomorrow. Did she tell you why my son is not here?" I noticed the discomfort on her face.

"Yoh I must have forgotten to tell you, I'm so sorry."

"What did you do Kayise?"

"Eish! Look it's not her fault, GM called me two days ago and told me that she tried calling you but your phone was not going through. She asked me to tell you that she would be returning on her birthday and she would bring Boikanyo on Monday. Sorry."

"Do you understand what you did..? This should explain why Goitsimedi has not been answering my calls. We got into a heated argument about Langa. Kayise yho!"

"Ngiyaxolisa.."

This was not good, I had to make things right with Goitsimedi. We have been doing well until recently.

Londeka Deka Gumede

"Babe switch it off!" Neilwe said while pulling the cover over her head. It's my weekend off but someone didn't get the memo. All I wanted to do today is watch movies with my girl and not do any detective work. Journalism had to wait today.

"Londeka tlhe, answer that phone I want to sleep."

"Babe it's 11h00 in the morning we should be getting up now."

"You can wake up but I'm sleeping in. It's not every day one gets a day off on a weekend."

My phone rang again, if one could punch someone through the phone I would. The look Neilwe was giving me as well was threatening.

Mr Kumar? What does he want now!

"Hello."

"Ms Gumede I've been calling you non stop, why have you not been answering my calls?"

"Incase you have not noticed, it's my day off today. I have no business answering any calls."

"I need you at the office in an hour, it's urgent."

"Did you not hear me, I said it's my day..." he didn't let me finish, he told me that I should come in and that's it then hung up.

"Unbelievable!" did he just hang up?

"Babe what now?"

"Mr grumpy just demanded that I come to the office because it's urgent."

"Just like that?"

"Yep, you will have to make your own breakfast." I kissed her on the cheek and left. I had a quick shower wondering why Mr Kumar would want me at the office. Some people really don't know peace. I wore casual clothes then used Neilwe's car and drove to work.

-

I didn't bother knocking on his door. I pushed it wide open and invited myself in. He didn't even look annoyed or ask me to get out and knock again. That was a first, whatever it is that made him call me must be really serious.

"I hope your reason for calling me in to work is valid. It's a Saturday."

"Ms Gumede sit down." what the hell was going on here..? He is calm and not shouting at me. That's a first. I hesitantly pulled the chair then sat down.

"I'm afraid it's not good news Ms Gumede. I got a tip off from the mental institution.."

"Uhm okay.." what business did I have with mental institutions though?

"A Rachel Ndlovu, well now she's Thobejane. Rachel Thobejane escaped from the institution and no one knows where she is."

This had to be a joke, a very bad joke. I looked at Mr Kumar expecting him to tell me that he was joking but he never did. How does one escape from that institution, the security is strong and the walls are very high.

"Did you hear what I just said?" Mr Kumar.

"How sure is this source of yours, can you trust them?"

"I trust this person."

This couldn't be good, what was Rachel up to? "Thank you for telling me but I, I have to go." we both stood up.

"I understand, take the day off on Monday."

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

I watched how Mabutho took care of Boikanyo as though he was his. They got along so well and that warmed my heart. I didn't think Mabutho would take it so well that he found me pregnant but things have been so smooth between us.

After giving birth, my mental state was not in its great state. I struggled connecting with Boikanyo. I was afraid that I would bond with him, only to leave him alone once he was older. My siblings, Kayise and Thobile were a great help. Terrence and Mabutho as well.. I had to see a therapist and I'm glad that I did.

I've never spoken to anyone after both rape incidents, not a professional. I got to unpack and relive those days before I could start healing. Mabutho was very understanding, he came every second week to check on us.

Sedi was doing her first year in varsity studying Dental therapy, unless she changed her mind again. KB was now the manager of

the club she worked at, meaning she could save for the course she wanted to do. I was very proud of her and Sedi, things were finally looking great for us. After all the pain and sufferings we've been through, we deserved all the happiness.

As for me

I stopped working for Royal hills and started my own small business with Mabutho's help. We offered catering services but we also offered deco. The business was still new and slow but I was happy with the progress.

I looked at my ringing phone and it was Terry again. I was not in the mood for him, especially after the words we exchanged days ago. Terry could be exhausting. He acts like I come with Boikanyo all the time when I visit Mabutho, I never mind when he comes with his girlfriend to fetch our son but it's a big deal when I'm with Mabutho. He was such a hypocrite. I just got engaged last night, "early birthday gift" as Mabutho put it. I didn't expect such especially with us living apart. We were still about to discuss the way forward for our long distance relationship then he said we would talk after dinner- then he proposed, my Zulu Prince was full of tricks.

I packed our last luggage in the boot and waited for Mabutho and Boikanyo, so we could leave.

"Sthandwa sami, ngik'tshelile ukuthi umuhle kanjani namuhla? Ngifuna ukuk'buka nje. Jesus!" Mabutho.

Silence.

"Mma Tholo?"

"Keng Nkanyezi? Can you please drive."

"Akumele ube luhlaza uyakwazi lokho. Vele uthi Mabutho angifuni ukukhuluma nawe- ngizok'yeka uphefumule. Kodwa ungangikhulumisi engathi uwe esihlahleni."

"Sorry." I tried touching his hand as he drove. "Babe I'm sorry but Terry.." he didn't let me finish.

"Woah! Mma Tholo, ucasukile kanje yilowo mfana wakwaNdlovu?"

"Baby calm down."

"Usho uk'thini uma uthi ngehlise umoya? Udlala ngomlilo uGatsheni."

-

We arrived very late at Thobile's place. Mabutho was not talking to me. Thobile noticed the tension and locked herself in her room. We just got engaged yesterday but we're already fighting because of my baby daddy. In a few hours it would be

my birthday and my husband to be was ignoring me. How great! Speaking of the devil he called;

"O batlang Terrence?"

"Ngiyaxolisa mah kaLanga, I'm so sorry for how I spoke to you the other day. Kayise only informed me today that you would bring Langa on Monday."

"Terrence you need to learn how to speak to me. I'm tired of telling you the same thing over and over. I'm about to be someone's wife, I don't need to be dealing with an inconsiderate baby daddy as well."

"You are, you are engaged?"

"That's not the point but yes I am. I'll bring Langa tomorrow in the evening, is that okay?"

"I would appreciate that.. where is he can I talk to him?"

"We had a long trip, and it's late so he is asleep." we said our goodbyes then he cut the call. I looked at my son peacefully sleeping and he was Terry's photo copy, I was betrayed by someone I carried for nine months. MaNdlovu and Terry's aunt didn't need me to tell them that he was Terry's son. I picked him and took him to Thobile. I knocked twice softly then she opened.

"Can he sleep here tonight?"

"Boikanyo is still young please don't make another baby." she said taking him from me while giggling.

"Thobs!"

"Also don't be too loud these walls are very thin and congratulations!" she said looking at my ring, I was in love with it. I walked back to our room; quickly changed into a red lacy lingerie then sat on the bed. Mabutho should be done in the shower now. I had lost some belly fat and the confidence was much better.

The door opened and he walked in with a towel wrapped around his waist. I swallowed hard imagining what he would do to me. He ignored me on the bed and dropped the towel to lotion himself. How his beautiful beast stood firmly between his thighs, I licked my lips. I crawled on the bed to him, squeezed some lotion onto my palms then applied some on his back going lower. He didn't stop me so that should be a good sign. One thing about Mabutho; staying angry was not something he was good at. He was a happy soul, that didn't smile with everyone but he was a happy person.

"Mma Tholo wenzani?" still on my knees on the bed, I stroked his beast slowly while massaging his balls. He looked at me with his lazy eye, I fell in love all over again. I got up from the bed and kneeled in front of him. My tongue swirled around his beautiful mushroom head. I tried to maintain the eye contact

as I gave him a blow job. His fingers were massaging my scalp while I took him in, he stretched my mouth, just half of him.

He stood on his toes as I used my teeth to scrape him from the top to the bottom- I did so gently. My other hand was still massaging his balls. I struggled to breathe when I swallowed him whole- I loved the popping sound his beast made when he came out of my mouth. I shoved his shaft back into my mouth, Mabutho fucked me back and I loved how he touched the back of my throat. I squeezed my breasts as I sucked, and licked.

"Shit!" he removed his shaft then helped me up. The look that he gave me, there would be no love making. I smirked at him as he roughly removed the lingerie then picked me up. I was definitely not heavy for him.

My back was against the wall, our lips interlocked. He put me down then wrapped one leg around him. His fingers going in and out of my core, I let out a moan as I arched my back. He bit my neck then sucked on it. What his fingers were doing to me, I had no idea where to touch. I scratched his shoulders, kissed him roughly then bit his shoulder. I wanted more!

"Mma Tholo.."

"Baby.." I said in a low tone.

"Ufunani?" he used his mushroom head to rub my clit, my toes curled.

"Bab.. bab..." I could not form a word or sentence. Mabutho inserted half of his shaft, my juices flowed like a waterfall.

"Ufunani?" he pulled out and I whimpered. He kept on teasing me while his thumb rubbed me as well.

"I, I, I want you, I want you to fuck me..." he rammed into me, this time I couldn't hold it in. I moaned out loud while my toes curled. The leg that was wrapped around him was getting numb. Mabutho pulled out only to ram into me again.

"Aah.." we both moaned. He had me in his arms again, placed me on the edge of the bed as he fuck me hard. My orgasm was close..

"Harder!" he gave me exactly what I asked- my orgasm followed. It came rushing in waves and left me having a mini stroke on the bed. Mabutho continued going in and out of me with rage, as he chased his own orgasm. I felt his warm seeds as he reached his goal; he collapsed on top of me. He remained buried inside me.

He kissed me on the forehead, "ngiyak'thanda." my throat was too dry to say a word but I did.

"I love you too."

-

Once we had a little more energy, Mabutho sat on the edge of the bed and I straddled him. I slowly went up and down on him to get our pace right. Hands on his biceps, sloppy kisses as I bounced on him. He would curse when I moved my waist in circulation.

He fucked me from underneath- "Aahh, fuck!" I moved faster then he told me to get on my knees. He groaned as he slid his shaft in...

"Fuck!" Mabutho.

He spread my ass then spanked me-

"Mab.. Mabutho!" I screamed his name throughout my orgasm, he followed soon after I had mine. He pulled out then returned with a towel and wiped us clean. He pulled me in then kissed my shoulder.

"Happy birthday ndoni yamanzi. I love you so much."

"I love you too.."

Londeka Deka Gumede

After what Mr Kumar told me yesterday, I couldn't sleep a wink. It made no sense, how did she escape? I've called the institution to get more information but no one gave me straight answers.

I have not told Terry yet and I had no idea how he would react. He was starting to get his life in order now this! I was in a bad mood yesterday, I didn't return to Neilwe's place. I drove to my flat and drowned in alcohol and I was paying the price. My head felt like someone sliced it into two halves. I needed something very greasy to cure this headache.

I took out two pork chops, marinated them then made some pap with a tomato, onion, green pepper and chilli salsa. While I waited for everything to be ready, I took out a can of beer and walked to the bathroom. The beer would give me the energy I didn't have.

“Babe where are you?” Neilwe.

“In the bathroom.” she opened the door and looked at me with a disapproving look. “Already drinking?”

“Neilwe please, it's one in the afternoon.”

“And you just woke up.”

“I’ve been up for a while.” I wrapped a towel around my naked body, then went to my room with her hot on my heels.

“Don’t lie because I was here two hours ago and you were snoring like a pig.”

“Pigs don't snore.”

“Whatever Deka, I brought your car I'm taking mine. Where are the car keys?”

“What’s wrong with my car?”

“Nothing but I prefer my own car.” she looked under the bed.

“You smell so nice.” I pulled her mini dress up.. “Should we pick up where we left things the last time?” I had my fingers buried inside her. She was trying so hard not to moan.

“Deka.. oh fuck...”

I was about to knock but the door flew open; Boipelo came out holding a black plastic bag.

“Hi, is Terry here?”

“Hi, go in I'll call him but let me throw this first.” I nodded then went in. I was so nervous as if I helped her escape.

“What would you like to drink? Sorry that I'm rushing like this but it's Goitsi's 24th birthday and we have to leave soon. It's a surprise party.”

“I understand, sorry for not calling first. A beer would be great.” she returned with the beer then rushed up the stairs to call Terry. They both came down, Terry smiled once he saw me.

“MaGumede, what a lovely surprise.” we shared a hug.

“I wish I came here with good news.” we all sat down.

“What's wrong?” Terry.

“Rachel escaped.”

Silence.

Boipelo and I looked at him, he was not blinking.

“Terrence did you hear what Deka just said?”

“How did this happen?”

“I don't know, the institution is not giving me answers.”

“She's probably out of the country. Why would she stay after what she did. She's gone.”

“I hope so.. I just came to warn you, bye.”

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

Mabutho gave me one last deep stroke then we both reached our peak. He pulled me on top of him, sweaty body against sweaty body. I played with his beard then gave him a kiss. His shaft was getting harder. We laughed then I got off him.

“Uyaphi manje?”

“Babe it's 17h30 and I need to get ready. Where did you say you're taking me again?”

“I said it's a surprise stop trying to act smart!”

“Can't blame a girl for trying.” we heard a loud banging on the door—

“You two must not return to my place tonight! The noises that came from this room kept Langa up last night.” Thobile shouted from the other side.

“Sorry friend.”

“No!” she left, Mabutho and I laughed. I couldn't imagine how Thobile feels, I wouldn't want to hear any of my siblings having sex. Very nasty and awkward.

“Babe have you not seen my phone anywhere?” he helped me look, it was under the bed.

“It looks like your baby daddy was trying to call, so many missed calls?”

“Don’t start!” I called KB, I wanted to hear her voice. We spoke for about twenty minutes then I cut the call. I thought of calling Terry but decided not to. I could do that after my bath.

My husband to be and I took a bath together and helped each other lotion up. Boikanyo was on the bed smiling at us; my son was the most cutest baby ever. Mabutho fed him while I tried calling Terry. The network was very terrible. The call went through after four tries—

“Goitsi I've been trying to call you, where was your phone?”

“Hello what did you say?”

“Goitsi, hello can you hear me?”

“Terrence what are you saying I can't hear you.” I moved around the room with hope that I would hear him.

“I don't know what is happening with your line. I wanted to tell you that Rachel has escaped, please be careful.”

“Hello..? Terry?” this was useless, I hung up. I sat on the edge next to the love of my life then stared into his eyes.

“Yini?” Mabutho.

“I hit the jackpot with you motho waka, you're so handsome I could stare at you the entire day.”

“Obvious..” he stood up holding Boikanyo, then twirled. I rolled my eyes.

“Remind me to call Terry again later, I couldn't hear him. The network is bad I can't even send a message.”

“I will now please get ready, I'm taking Boikanyo with.”

I had no idea where he was taking me and how my outfit looked like. I hope it fits. He returned with our outfits while I did my makeup, KB and Thobile were great teachers. I didn't have to ask them to do my makeup anymore. I could do that on my own.

I watched him as he wore navy blue fitted suit pants, a white shirt and left three buttons open. He wore blue and white loafers then finished the look with a slim fit blazer that matched with the pants. I tried whistling but that was a disaster!

“Monna waka, yerr flames baby flames!” I took him a few pictures then posted the one I like the most in WhatsApp with a caption that said; ‘indoda yami’ with fire emojis. There was still no network.

I was done with my makeup, I looked at the dress on the bed and I loved it before it went on my body. It had a silvery shimmer criss-cross in the front. It had a fitted corset but was flowy from the waist down. I liked that I could breathe with the

corset on. The navy blue had sparkles but it complemented Mabutho's outfit.

"Kodwa umuhle sthandwa sami yho!" Mabutho whistled once I had the shoes on. Thobile took us pictures.

Terrence Ndlovu

What Deka said was true, Rachel had indeed escaped. I had been trying to call Goitsi to warn her but I had no luck. It seemed like the network was giving us trouble.

"Boipelo are you not done yet we can't be late at a surprise party!"

"I'm almost done sugar bear." sugar bear? I chuckled, every week I got a new pet name. Some were not bad but some where just ridiculous. Like sugar bear.. where does she get such weird names?

I looked at the time and we were running late. When it came to time management, my girlfriend was the worst. She is always late, even for work.

"I'm giving you five minutes, if you're not down here in five minutes we're no longer going."

"That's not fair!"

"There is no such thing as fair baby."

Boipelo came down the stairs in her blue mini dress looking like a model. She looked perfect.

“How do I look?”

“Like a mode!” I held her closer then kissed her forehead. “I love you Pelo..”

“Where you not the one complaining about us being late now let's go! And I love you more.”

“Impossible.” I locked the door on our way out.

“Did you finally get ahold of her?”

“Yes but I couldn't hear what she was saying, same goes with me.

Goitsimedi GM Tholo

The car came to a stand still. “Babe whose house is this and what are we doing here?”

“Do you like it?” he opened the door for then held my hand as I climbed out.

“Are we allowed to go in?” he said yes. We walked around the garden and I like that it had a garden. I could see Boikanyo, running around the garden. There was shade, the house looked great but I definitely couldn't afford a house in Northcliff.

“Babe..?”

“Do you like it?”

“I can't afford it but it's gorgeous.” I saw a smile on his face.

“How about we view the inside as well?” Mabutho. It was dark as we walked in.

“Babe please switch on the light

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its so dark I can't see.”

“Surprise!” everyone shouted once the light went on.

“What, what is going on here?”

“Happy birthday princess, this is our home. Me, you, the girls and Boikanyo.” he said the girls, I was tearing up..

“You mean KB and Sedi?”

“Of cause. I know how badly you wanted to move out but couldn't. Now you don't have to live in fear of bumping into them anymore.” them meaning Frank and his son, I told him what happened to me while I attended therapy. I thought my past would push him away but it didn't.

“Thank you so much for this motho waka.” I cried on his chest, we heard loud cheers. I had totally forgotten about everyone in the room.

After all the crying, I greeted everyone that was here. Not a lot of people were here; I didn't know many people. I walked to KB and Sedi, I didn't even know that she was here as well.

“You two knew about this and kept quiet!” I pinched them. They laughed showing no remorse.

“This is where we will have our new beginnings.. the past remains in the past. We have gone to therapy to heal our wounds. We move forward now. I love you so much!” we had a group hug.

“Come on stop crying GM, it's your birthday and we have a new home. It's time to smile now. No more tears.”

“That’s asking for the impossible!” Sedi said laughing. “Ausi Goitsi cries for anything, whether she's happy or sad she cries.”

We had a good laugh. I looked around the house admiring it.

“Are you happy my love?” Mabutho.

“Very.” I sighed. “This is definitely the new beginning my siblings and I, needed.”

“I’m a happy man if you're happy.”

“Does this mean, does it mean no more distance between us?”

“No more my love, no more.” we held each other and moved to the song that was playing.

“I love you..” I whispered.

I had been looking around for Terry to find out what he wanted to tell me. He was not inside so I went outside maybe he couldn't handle the noise.

I smiled looking at the front of the house, this was all mine. I wrapped my arms around myself while I looked up the skies—

“I hope that you're proud wherever you are mommy. I also forgive you and I never stopped loving you.” I heard noises at the back. I lifted my dress and followed the noise.

“Who is it?” my chest tightened as I looked around to see where the noise came from.

The end of a knife was placed against my neck. This was not happening. I raised my hands in the air then turned, well the person turned me around. My eyes widened.

“What, what are you.. what are you doing here?”

“I came to collect what belongs to me.”

“I have nothing that belongs to you Rachel.” she pressed the knife harder, I closed my eyes and said a short prayer.

“I don't have the entire night cupcake! Where is my baby?”

“I don't have your baby Rachel.”

“Stop playing games with me, I know you gave birth to a boy child. Where is he?”

The look in Rachel's eyes brought terror in my soul. I knew for a fact that she wouldn't hesitate or think twice before killing me. Screaming was not an option, the music was loud.

“Give me my son then I will leave forever.”

“Rachel how did you get out?”

“That’s not important, all I came here for was my child.” she twisted my arm then pressed the knife against me again.

“Let’s try one more time.. where is my baby?”

“He is not yours!” I shouted repeating the same words over and over again. I was also trying to wriggle out of her hold but she was very strong. Why was I fat if I couldn't push Rachel off me?

I didn't stop wriggling and shouting, someone would hear something definitely.

I managed to get free but she tripped me as I tried running away.

“Where do you think you're going?” she sat on top of me with the knife on my neck.

“I will never give you my baby, Rachel. You can go to hell!” I gasped for air... Rachel had launched the knife in me, she took it out and stabbed me again.

“All I wanted was my son!” another stab... and more.

“Ne.. nev.. er!” I saw a figure grabbing the knife from her, when she was about to stab me again. I was in pain, I was struggling to breathe as well. I didn't know what to focus on.. the pain or me struggling to breathe. I started seeing things double, a tear dropped down my face as I thought about my son. What was going to happen to him and my siblings when I die.

I could hear a lot of noises around me.

“GM no, no, no.. don't close your eyes. Stay with us.”

“Kar.. ka.. KB.”

“Yes it's me, please don't leave us. Don't do this fight GM.”

“Se..di...”

“I'm here ausi Goitsi, I'm next to you.”

“The ambulance is on its way!” I heard someone shouting.

“My love! Ndoni yamanzi, don't close your eyes help is on its way. Soon this will be over. You can't leave me nana.”

All I heard was noises and saw blurry images. My breathing was very shallow. Each breath that I took, was painful. I was tired. I heard sirens but I had no hope, I tried to keep my eyes open and fight but I was fighting a losing battle.

“KB, Sedi you will come with Thobile in my car. I'm going with ndoni in the ambulance.” Mabutho.

Bright lights kept on blinding my vision. There was this manly voice that was begging me to fight and not leave him. The voice became clearer.

“Ba.. bba.. y?”

“Yes it's me my love, it's me.”

“I.. I ..” I started coughing blood.

“Don't you dare think of leaving me Mma Tholo. I love you and we promised one another that we would grow old together. You can't leave us..your siblings, your son. Please my love, I know you're in pain but don't leave us. You see we have arrived at the hospital, stay strong.” he kissed my hand.

As I was wheeled out of the ambulance, I saw our mother holding my hand.

“Ma..ma..??”

She shook her head with tears on her face. Why could I see her, and talk this clearly.

“Are you here to fetch me? Am I dead?”

“Goitsimedi ngwanaka, fight! You're still young to die now. Fight!”

“I’m tired, I'm tired of fighting. I want to sleep, I'm tired...”

“Doctor her levels are dropping! We're losing her, do something. Do something doctor we have to save her!”

.....**THE END**.....

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