

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 1

“The world lasts for two days, one day it's against you, another other day it's with you. The day it's against you, have patience. The day it's with you, be humble.” Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib

“Do you hear that?”

I look up frowning from the book I've been reading and give Avuyile a blank stare. She breezes into my room and plumps herself, uninvited on my bed causing it to dip and my scowl to deepen. But of course she doesn't care, she's not one to regard my constant need for personal space.

“The silence! I would give everything to have the brood away for another week or even a month!” she flaps her hands dramatically and I roll my eyes staring at her big bump.

She's one to talk; most of the brood consists of her children and she's bringing another child into the brood soon. But she's glowing even with the bead of sweat on her forehead. She keeps talking even though I am not responsive.

“I love those children, bless their beautiful hearts but if the grandparents hadn't taken them to Ushaka I would have strangled all of them. Especially Thobeka, that child will be the death of me!”

Without meaning to, I find myself smiling. Thobeka's relationship with her mother is comical, Avuyile claims that child talks too much and loves attention which is exactly how I would describe Avuyile. It doesn't help that both are competing for Lungelo's attention, Lungelo is Avuyile's husband and Thobeka's father.

You are just happy to have Lungelo to yourself, I sign teasing her.

Avuyile instantly turns into a tomato. Her love for her husband is just too cute to watch. It's taken almost the entire five years that I've known her to teach Avuyile how to sign. Granted I haven't been the

most patient or willing of teachers but she bullied me out of my shell. It's safe to say out of my whole adoptive family, which is huge, I'm closest to Avuyile.

Short and sweet Avuyile, who chatters a mile a minute like a chipmunk but can scream like a banshee when provoked. I've long accepted that it's usually the crazy ones who are drawn to me. I would say Avuyile is a cross between Nathi and Bongiwé.

"I know that look, you are thinking of your past life aren't you?" she asks bluntly, concern clouding her big eyes.

I stare at her big eyes while I shrug dismissively, Avuyile has the whitest eyes I have ever seen. It makes her look like a new born baby almost angelic and they are always shining with life.

"You know you can always talk to me right?" those eyes have taken a serious glint and she's holding my hands.

I'm rescued from her soul searching gaze when someone knocks once at the door and pops his head in. Lungelo has developed his wife's street maat tendencies of just budging in my room. At least he knocks once.

"The grandparents bayanifuna," he announces only looking at his wife who is also smiling like I'm not in the room and she's still holding my hands. Ncoooh, this love lives here couple are so sweet it's sickening.

"Eh on Skype." He adds after remembering the purpose he budged into my room.

We move to Lungelo's office and the parents are smiling widely from the screen, I smile back and their faces widen into grins. I sense some relief from their smiles.

"There you are baby! I still don't understand why you didn't want to come with us," mama says pouting then her expression changes to concern. "Are you ok now?"

She's referring to my last depression episode. I smile to reassure her and show her two thumbs up and her husband decides he's been neglected enough.

“That's my girl! You are the strongest person I know mntanam, which is why I really think you should see that therapist. She comes very highly recommended.” He looks so hopeful, I sigh.

I guess there's no dodging this time around. I've been refusing therapy since our year in Nigeria, where I was in and out of hospital and on suicide watch. Even the four years we spent in Cape Town and the year that we have been in Johannesburg after they decided to move. All I want is to bury the memories and feelings so deep and try to live as normal a life as I can. But they have really done so much for me without asking for much in return, maybe I should just do it for them.

“Plus Muzi says speech therapy won't work without you fully dealing with the trauma you experienced,” Lungelo adds and I feel the tears threatening. I blink them back and force a smile back on my lips. I nod and see the relief in everyone's faces. Maybe therapy is what I need so that they can stop worrying about me.

“We will book an appointment for Friday,” dad says and that's just two days away, I'm already feeling anxious but I won't back out this time.

“Therapy helps it helped me deal with Nokuzola...” mama's voice drifts as pain flirts across her face. Then she clears her throat and smiles at Avuyile. “And how is granny's bun treating you mntanam?”

I'm relieved that the topic has shifted and we are all smiling as Avuyile complains about how her back hurts, her legs are swollen and Lungelo refusing to talk to her bump. The grandma scolds Lungelo and he just laughs and says that's white people stuff, he will talk to his son when he's born.

“I told you it's a girl and after this one I'm done Lungelo!” Avuyile pipes up.

“But baby this is only boy number five and you promised me my soccer team plus another princess,” I have a feeling he's not joking.

“Yey' nina we didn't call to hear you bickering about your family planning,” the man of the house speaks and everyone laughs, I smile enjoying their interaction. “We called to tell you that Xhinta wants us to come and spend a week with him after our mini holiday here. So we are going to PE after Durban.”

Avuyile tries very hard to suppress her joy at this news and fails dismally. Her mother-in-law laughs at her beaming face.

“Hayi noba we can always send these brats to Jo'burg while we go to PE,” she says and Avuyile looks like she's about to burst into tears. More laughter and I admit it's just not the same without the parents around. But they deserve this holiday more than anybody.

“Do you want to see the babies?” mama's voice brings me back from my thoughts. I had drifted away to my thoughts, I do that often now. I shake my head and even though they are disappointed, they don't press the matter which is a relief. I say my goodbyes and leave Lungelo and Avuyile to catch up with the kids while I wonder back to my room and pick up my book.

I have to submit my assignment next week, giving me plenty of time to study and prepare. I'm doing my honours degree in Social Work with UNISA via correspondence. Education is a big thing in this family what with dad being a former headmaster himself and his wife used to be a nurse. They both retired at the ripe age of 50 shortly after Nokuzola's disappearance.

My anxiety made it impossible to have the “normal” college experience. But it didn't stop me from obtaining my first degree last year.

“Hey we have a sonogram appointment at 12, wanna tag along?” this time Avuyile only pops her head into my room.

I shake my head and she regards me clearly worried because she's even chewing on her bottom lip. I'm never left alone, there's always someone hovering around me.

Go, I'll be fine. I also have a session with Muzi in an hour.

Avuyile immediately brightens, she has a soft spot for Muzi.

“Muzi likes you, maybe with no one around he will finally have the courage to make his move!” her excitement is evident from her voice and she's even rubbing her hands together in glee. I've heard the Muzi gospel so many times now I just roll my eyes at her.

“Now don't be making babies while we're away!” she squeals in laughter as I throw a pillow at her and she finally leaves. After a while I hear Lungelo shout that they are gone and I'm left alone with my thoughts.

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Morning family, remember insert 2 will only be posted after 4000 likes and 300 shares.

Love and light💕💕💕

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#Insert 2

It's not long after Lungelo and Avuyile have left when a text comes through via WhatsApp.

Baby, are you sure you are ok? Thobeka and Thoba were really sad that they couldn't see you over the computer. Love, mom.

I laugh silently at the sign off, of course I know it's mama because she's texting under her contact. She's still getting the hang of chatting and she's really funny. At first she used to start her chats like she's writing a letter or e-mail;

Dear Avuyile,

Don't cook tonight uTata is getting takeaway.

Yours sincerely,

Mama

We even opened a group chat to share her texts and would laugh at them. Until I took pity on her and explained chatting to her. But maybe we still have some way to go.

I'm fine mom. Don't worry, I'm a little overwhelmed after my last episode and I didn't want them to pick it up. Now please enjoy your holiday, I'm fine. Cross my heart and hope to die- heart emoji.

I press send and log off WhatsApp, she will only respond much later. She's really the sweetest human being and she's trying to build our relationship. I remember our rocky start back in Nigeria. I woke up from my unconscious state to find her shouting at the man who rescued me.

“Does she look like Nokuzola to you? We paid you a lot of money! For what? Do you think we are running some charity organization here?”

She had been very adamant about not wanting me there and if it wasn't for her husband I probably would have ended up in a refugee camp with other Boko Haram survivors. From what I've read about these camps, the survivors are shunned and called Boko wives because most of them come back with children or escape when they are pregnant. There were also reports of them being further victimized. But in my case even the social worker didn't want to place me in their camps because frankly those camps were overcrowded and I wasn't a Nigerian citizen.

It was really horrible at first and it took some time for mama to finally accept me. One day as I was lying in a narrow hospital cot after my first suicide attempt she broke down and cried.

“I don't hate you baby... it's just I feel like by accepting you I'm replacing my only girl, Nokuzola. I feel like I'm betraying my last born.”

It was a hard time for all of us, like the aftermath of a Tsunami we had to start building afresh. I understand now what she meant then. Because at times I hold myself back from being a part of their family fully because I'm scared they too will be torn from me and it feels like I'm betraying Nura and the Lunikas.

My phone flashes another text. This time it's Muzi asking me to buzz him in. I'm startled at how long I've been zoned out with an open book in front of me. I snap out of my funk and leave my bedroom. After buzzing Muzi in, I get some lemonade and snacks and move to the lounge where we usually hold our speech therapy sessions.

“Hey,” he says opening his arms and I hug him.

He smells expensive yet it's a welcoming scent and it draws you in. I let go after a brief hug but he holds on to me a bit longer before letting go and now his scent lingers on my clothes. I sit across him on the carpeted floor, legs crossed as I always do during our sessions.

“How's your heart today?”

He always asks that at the beginning of each session. The first time he asked that I was perplexed. He saw my face and explained Maslow's Hierarchy to me. In order for healing to take place, the healer must start at food, shelter, clothing, safety and then create a space that gives the patient a sense of love and belonging. “...you have to win the heart to win the head.”

Anxious and a bit overwhelmed. I sign in answer to his question and he nods his understanding.

“Is it because of the school holidays and all the children being here?” he knows all about my anxiety and depression. I always feel that Muzi goes above and beyond his duties as my speech therapist. Though he prefers the term SLP.

I think about his question and he's partly right. Mr and Mrs Shabangu have a big family. Nokuzola was the last born and the only girl and they have 5 boys before her, Lungelo being the oldest. Then comes Xhinta who is in PE, Lwandile some mine big shot in Kimberly, Kumkani who is still in Cape Town and Banele the family black sheep who relocated to London a year after Nokuzola went missing. They all have kids except Banele and Nokuzola and I won't burden you with the names of the children, even I forget some of their names at times.

So during every holiday, the kids are sent to their grandparents and chaos reigns. I get overwhelmed and my fear of being around people is triggered. It also makes me think of my brother, I wonder where he is and is he happy and a little savage like all the Shabangu brood or is he shy and introverted? Does he look anything like Nura? And they remind me of Khanyo, my sweet Khanyo. He's almost a teenager now and I wonder how he is at school. Is he still bubbly?

Muzi clears his throat bringing my attention back to him.

“It's ok to be overwhelmed, it doesn't make you a bad person. You are still in the process of healing and there's no timeframe for that.” He clears his throat again this time looking nervous.

“There's nothing more I can teach you Farrah. Your head now holds all the tools of speech but you keep your heart locked up and hidden from everyone.”

His words bring a big whooshing sound to my ears and I feel faint. He's leaving me! No! Not Muzi too.

“Hey, hey breathe ok. Count to 10 with me. Focus on my eyes Farrah!” his words are coming as if from a tunnel and I oblige by staring into his eyes.

The warm honey-gold tone of his irises appear too bright against his really dark chocolate skin tone. His eyes pull me from the pit of anxiety that I'm tottering over and it might just be me but something shifts in our locked gaze. The staring becomes more intense and heated. I'm hypnotized by his beautiful eyes. He leans in and I make no move to back away until his lips gently graze mine. My lips are suddenly dry and I sneak my tongue out to wet my lips.

He captures my tongue in his hot and needy tongue, what started as a gentle peck blazes into a full blown tongue on tongue action. He groans like he's in pain a contrast to how steady his hands are as they hold me in place. His kiss is sure yet desperate, gentle and hard; my senses are overpowered by his heated passion. This is good but he kisses so differently from Banzi... Banzi! It's as if someone just poured a bucket of ice water on me.

What just happened? I push him away from me and quickly flee to the toilet locking myself in with shaky hands. The swollen lips I see in the mirror are proof that I didn't dream it. I just kissed Muzi and it feels like the worst betrayal of my bear. My hands are still shaking as I wash my face, wave after wave of longing hits me hard. I try so hard not to think of him or remember him...

A loud knock on the bathroom door breaks me away from those thoughts.

“Farrah I need to know that you are ok, please open up.” Muzi's voice sounds panicked.

I sigh and dry my face before opening the door, only to be crushed in a bear hug. I try to respond but it all just feels so awkward. He catches on to my tense mood and he let's me go but still holds my shoulders.

“I shouldn't have done that, you're still fragile. It's just... just that I couldn't hold myself. You're so beautiful Farrah. But I had no business kissing you, I'm sorry. It won't happen again.”

Strangely that makes me feel very lonely. But he's right, I'm in no mental state to pursue anything with him or anyone and I'm still very hung up on Lubanzi. I would call him a lot while in Nigeria just to hear his voice. Until one day he just disconnected his number and shut down all his social media accounts. That's the day I tried to commit suicide.

I'm not even aware that I'm crying until I feel Muzi's warm, big hand wiping the tears off my cheeks. He's so gentle and I just wish I wasn't so screwed up and twisted inside.

“It's going to be ok. Let go and let God.”

I want to believe him so much, but I've been burnt way too many times. I don't think I will ever go back to being the Farrah who loved without reserve. That Farrah feels like she's lost forever.

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Next post after 300 shares and 2.5K likes. How many days that takes is completely up to you.

Love and light💎💎💎

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#Insert 3

“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.” Tori Amos

I take a deep breath before I venture out of the Uber. This is it, my first time outside of the protective walls I call home. Avuyile was sceptical when I told her I'm going to the mall alone. I just woke up with a little resolve, you know. I've been a prisoner Of my fear for way too long. I'm nervous and almost ask the Uber driver to turn back and take me home.

“It's going to be ok. Let go and let God.”

These words ring in my mind and I control my breathing as I step out and the soles of my shoes touch the pavement. I chose Melrose Arch because it's not too busy or too crowded. I tentatively look around me, my Agoraphobia creeping in. The paranoia that those horrible men will come back and abduct me again. At one point my Agoraphobia was so severe, I would refuse to get out of bed and refused therapy and treatment. That's the reason why I was homebound for so many years. And only studied online because I feared leaving the only protected place I now knew. The fear of being back in that camp, my hair shaved off my head and my feet cracked and bleeding, is crippling. But that's what today is all about in my next stage of healing, facing my fear head on.

Muzi wanted to accompany me but I have to do this on my own and maybe it will also create a breakthrough in my speech therapy as well. Muzi is so sweet and loving, handsome too but he can only just be my speech therapist and friend because my heart belongs to someone else. Just thinking of Banzi pierces my heart, physically but also calms my creeping anxiety.

I've been standing on this pavement for too long and I'm starting to draw attention to myself. I start moving not sure exactly where I'm going but I need to move. The first shop I get into sells silk and other materials. The shop assistant or the owner is a tiny older lady. Her leathery skin wrinkles into a welcoming smile.

"Hello dearie, how can I help you today?" her voice is quiet and soothing, my anxiety comes back but I control my breathing.

I smile back at her and sign that I'm just browsing. She smiles back and hands me a beautiful gold cloth. I'm not sure what material it is but it's fine and the embroidery is exquisite. This would be perfect for a Shayla for Nura, a special head wrap for whenever she feels like dressing up. I feel the tears coming and I furiously blink them back. I wonder if she's eaten, when was the last time she had any meal, if they are still hurting her or if she is still alive. I quickly hand back the material before I cry all over the expensive looking material. I abruptly turn and leave the nice lady calling after me.

I stand outside breathing heavily, I'm short of breath and I feel dizzy. Coming here alone was a bad idea, I just want to curl up and die. How can I go on living while my mother is in hell because she chose to protect me? I would trade all the comforts and riches I'm now surrounded by to go back to the simple life I had with Nura in our shabby Safari flat. I stopped praying a year after my escape, Allah turned his back on me and no matter how hard I prayed Nura and Obiacha weren't found.

The camp I remembered was found abandoned. And in the coming years women and girls were rescued but not the women who saved my life. Survivor's guilt has riddled me for too long now. I feel like the walls are closing in on me, I can't breathe. I clutch at my chest and hear voices droning around me.

"Miss are you ok?"

"She's having a panic attack!"

"Breathe dearie, breathe. There you go, easy does it..."

And I swear I hear Nura's voice above the crushing sounds in my head.

"Fatima you're an Omar and Omar women are made of steel."

I hold on to that phrase as a drowning victim grasps for air and I slowly surface from another one of my episodes to the worried eyes of the nice lady and a young couple who seem worried. I smile at them and assure them I'm fine, thank Allah for this voice app. The nice lady is sceptical but finally let's me continue on my way. I'm stronger than my past demons, I'm alive and it's time I started living again.

First stop is to get my coming niece a gift, yes Avuyile is getting her princess and I know her face will light up at whatever I buy. I spot a baby shop and let myself into Mamas and Papas. I fall in love with the cutest tutu skirt, babies are so precious at that age. I'm looking for a tiny tee to go with the tutu skirt and I see a couple in the next aisle, the man reminds me of Banzi but he has dreadlocks. I'm only seeing his back as he is bent over a visibly pregnant lady, brushing her belly. She's gushing and truly beautiful, she has a pregnancy glow. I feel a pang watching the young expectant couple and my heart aches imagining me and Banzi like that. We were robbed of the chance to fully love each other, maybe we would have broken up by now or we would be like that couple.

Snap out of it Farrah! I chide myself, there was no point in torturing myself like this with what could have been. Resolutely, I turn my back on the happy couple and continue with my search.

I see butterfly wings and I smile at a distant memory as I trace my fingers on the details. I'm getting the wings every princess deserves to be a butterfly or fairy. I grab a cute onesie that catches my eye, it's cream, fluffy with bunny ears and a cute short bushy tail. I don't dare look at the prices but I know the card that dad gave me will cover everything. Ballerina shoes to go with the tutu skirt, perfect.

I'm so absorbed in the baby clothes that I don't notice someone in front of me till I crash into a massively broad chest. My purchases go tumbling to the ground and I have to go on all fours gathering my scattered items. The chest bends down to help me and I catch a whiff of his cologne. It awakens

feelings in me, feelings I had thought dead and buried. My curiosity is piqued, I lift my eyes to look at him and I freeze. He feels my eyes on him and he also looks up with a bemused smile on his face while holding the tutu skirt. The smile quickly disappears and he looks like he just saw a ghost.

“Freckle-face?”

Oh Allah, is this real or am I hallucinating? He lifts his hand and trails it on my cheek as if to reassure himself that I'm also real. It really is him. He is older now, he's voice has deepened. He has a beard, neatly trimmed and locks on his head.

You have locks now, I sign as I tug one and roll it around in my hand.

He smiles that panty-dropping smile of his, his dimple was always my weakness.

“Do you like them?” he asks softly as if afraid to dispel this moment.

Not really, they make your head seem bigger. Not a fan of the beard either. I respond honestly and he bursts out laughing.

His laughter takes off the years from his face and the fresh-faced Banzi I fell in love with makes a reappearance. Our surroundings have shrunk into oblivion and nothing else matters except this moment and our hearts reconnect. His laugh also fades as his eyes lock into mine and he pulls me towards him. He's now sitting on the floor and he makes me sit on his lap.

Just like old times I hook my arms around his neck, this feels like home. His lips descend on mine, his breath warm and minty. I'm starving for this kiss, many nights I tossed and turned yearning for these same lips. There's nothing soft about this kiss just raw hunger, passion and all the hurt we have both suffered apart. I'm clinging on for dear life, my legs crossed over him, straddling him. I swallow his groans and the heat of the kiss almost consumes me. I can feel his erection beneath me and I tease him by humping him lightly and he moans into my lips.

A scream bursts into our bubble and my eyes shoot open to find the pregnant lady standing over us holding her belly in obvious pain. Banzi takes longer than me to come back from the land of lust. It finally clicks to me! Banzi was the guy I saw earlier brushing this woman's belly. Allah, what have I done?

I try to scramble up from his lap but he holds me and the lady cries out in pain. Only then does her presence register to Banzi and somehow he manages to stand up while still carrying me. Now that he's facing her I can't make out her facial expression but Banzi looks guilty.

"Baby, are you alright?" those four little words and the concern in his voice pierce my heart and it feels like someone poured a bucket of ice water over me. I get off him and he rushes to her side.

She's crying and screaming and the shop attendants rush to us and I'm just frozen not knowing what to do. She's bleeding and that can't be good.

"Take her to the hospital!" one of the shop attendants who is Nathi's age shouts to Banzi and he seems torn. He lifts her up gently and walks out and I'm left fighting back my tears.

What did I expect? That we would just start off where we left off? Its been years and he deserved to move on, I chide myself. All the reasoning in the world doesn't make it hurt any less. I pick up my scattered items as I furiously blink back the tears. Now is not the time or place to break down. I avoid the curious stares and decide to go and pay.

The cashier is packing the tutu skirt when Banzi comes running into the store looking around wildly. When his eyes land on me his shoulders sag in relief. He strides towards me.

"Please come with me to the hospital," he's looking down at me with so much desperation. Is he crazy?

Are you crazy? I ask raising my eyebrow.

"Please Farrah, I can't lose you again. I wouldn't be able to live with myself."

Banzi your baby needs you right now, I sign.

He's not budging and the cashier is looking at us with so much interest. Allah, why me?

“And I need you Freckle-face, I can’t...” his voice catches and he's almost in tears. I take my purchases and head out of the store. Banzi is on my tail.

Have you called the ambulance? I ask him when we are outside.

“No, she's in my car. I couldn't leave without you,” I stare at him in exasperation and he looks at his feet. Arguing about this was wasting every precious second that could save that baby's life. I follow Banzi to his car. Its no longer the sports car we used to make out in, it's a huge car and the poor lady is groaning in pain in the backseat.

I contemplate whether to sit with her and try to comfort her but she probably hates my guts. So I opt to sit in front with this stupid crazy man. He drives like a madman and in under 15 minutes we are pulling into Netcare Rosebank Hospital. It's been a hellish ride with the lady screaming curses and insults at me the whole way. Banzi tried holding my hand while driving but I shrugged my hand away from his. All I want is for the baby to be saved and I will gracefully bow out of Banzi's life.

He finds a wheelchair and wheels her in while I follow. There's just too much blood and I'm scared for them, guilt floods me. This is all my fault, I should have just stayed home. All of this wouldn't have happened. Dammit I saw them together but got pulled in by my own need. Maybe I'm just a curse, why can't I ever be happy.

I don't notice the tears until I feel Banzi's big warm hands wiping them away. He pulls me into his arms and I weep into his chest. Silent sobs wrack through my body and he holds me, his hands tangled in my hair. It's different from Muzi's embrace, this is home.

“Shhhhh it's not your fault baby, I'm happy I found you again. It's going to be ok, I promise.” I want to believe him, I do but even he can't fix this.

I shouldn't be clinging on to someone's man like this but I need him. I know that if I let him go I will crumble to the floor. That's how weak my knees are right now. In all my fantasies of finding him again, none of them involved standing in the hospital waiting to hear if his baby and his woman made it through. I cry till my tears are spent. When I've calmed down enough, he leads me to a chair and sits next to me. He's still cradling me in his chest and it feels so good.

“Your hair is shorter,” he muses softly and I shrug my shoulders. How do I tell him that my hair got shaved off.

Someone clears their throat and we separate and look at the solemn doctor.

“Mr. Lunika, I'm sorry but the baby didn't make it. Your wife is in...” I phase out the doctor's voice after that. His wife? This was it, I had lost him forever. I look at Banzi, he's in pain I can just tell. He's now the spitting image of Vuyo. I hold his hand offering him the little comfort I could muster. He squeezes my hand hard and it hurts but I bear it.

“Can I go in and see her?” his voice is gruff with unshed tears.

“Yes you can, we sedated her though. She was hysterical.” There's pity in the doctor's voice and it intensifies my guilt.

Banzi looks at me and I nod letting go of his hand. He goes into the room just next to the chair I'm in. There's nothing left for me here so I take out my phone and text Muzi.

Please come and get me. At Netcare Rosebank Hospital

The response is immediate.

Are you alright? Stay there, I'm coming.

I'm fine don't panic.

After that text I put my phone in my bag and stand up. I peek in the room, the door has a window. I see Banzi standing over her, he's crying. He brushes her hair from her face and kisses her forehead. His tenderness is killing me softly. I can't help but resent that he wasn't there with me when I was lying in a similar hospital bed. I shut my thoughts from going to that dark time in my life. I walk away from the love of my life and his wife. It kills me, each step I take away from him but I persevere. I go and stand outside and wait impatiently for Muzi.

I hug myself, trying to warm my chilly heart. This was more painful than the times I lay on the floor in that bunker thinking that I will never see Banzi again. I saw him today but he's no longer mine. He's not my grizzly bear anymore. It hurts like hell right now but I will have to teach my heart to stop yearning for him. I will always love him and maybe he still loves me too but we need to learn to live without each other.

I'm here.

A text from Muzi finally, I spot his car at a distance and I almost run towards it. He gets out of the car as I approach and opens his arms wide. I don't hesitate, I throw myself into him and he envelops me in a bone-crushing hug. I welcome the familiarity of him. My heart is still bleeding but it helps to be hugged. He kisses my forehead then opens the door for me. I get in and he buckles my seat belt before getting into the car as well.

He stares at me before starting the ignition. His warm honey-gold eyes relaying his worry. I brave a smile and even though he doesn't seem convinced, he starts the car. I love how he gets me, when I need someone to talk to and when I need to be left alone with my thoughts. I remember that I left the clothes I bought in Banzi's car, I'll have to buy new things. At least the parents and kids are away I can mop around Lungelo and Avuyile without being asked too many questions.

Dad would probably want to shoot Banzi if he hears what happened. But it's not his fault, life just colluded to keep us apart. I'm just grateful that I once had him in my life and that I got to see him again. That he's found someone to love him. There's no use being bitter about things I can't change or have control over. Some of us are lucky to grow with our soulmates. Some of us not so much. It's the circle of life.

Muzi tires of the heavy silence hanging over us because he turns on the radio. It reminds me of the countless times Banzi had sang along to the radio as he drove. The lyrics of the song playing caught my attention.

"And I won't be far from where you are if ever you should call

You meant more to me than any one I, I've ever loved at all

But you taught me how to trust myself

And so I say to you, this is what I have to do

'Cause I don't know who I am, who I am without you
All I know is that I should
And I don't know if I could stand another hand upon you
All I know is that I should
'Cause she will love you more than I could
She who dares to stand where I stood
She who dares to stand where I stood”

I've held on too long to the dream of me and Banzi becoming a family and the song is right it's time I find myself without him.

“And that is Missy Higgins with Where I stood, ladies and gentlemen wrapping up Jabulujule, standing in for mam' Dudu Khoza you have been listening to Thembeke wakwaZondo. Love and light.”

I wonder how it feels like to be a radio dj. Do you have to sound bubbly even when your heart is breaking into two? I've faced a lot in my short life and I'm sure I will survive even letting go of Banzi. I hope his wife loves him more than I would have and that they can get over their loss. Resolutely I close all thoughts of Banzi and focus on the news. Letting go and letting God.

.....

Happy weekend family. Thank you for the likes and shares. Keep them coming. Love and light💎💎💎💎

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 4

“Aezam hadiat yumkinuk taqdimuha liealamik hi alshifa' alhasu bik: - The greatest gift you could offer everyone in your world, is your own healing...” Unknown

“Where did you find her?”

“At Netcare Hospital in Rosebank.”

“But she said she was going to the mall. Did she say why she was there? Maybe she's feeling sick, we should call uTata and Mama.”

“No Vuvu she's fine, she'll talk to you when she wakes up she's probably feeling overwhelmed . She took a big step today.”

“I agree with Lungelo, I have to go now. Please let me know when she wakes up.”

“Sho bro thank you. Let me walk you out.”

I continue closing my eyes, feigning sleep just so I can avoid their questions. I know I'm a coward but I need to regroup my thoughts and figure out how the hell I'm feeling after meeting Banzi today.

You know it still feels like a very bad dream, one unending nightmare. Strangely I've got no tears in me, the sadness, acceptance shifted to anger in the car ride home and morphed into denial before I dozed off to sleep. Exhausted by my own thoughts. I woke up when Muzi was scooping me out of the car seat but chose the cowardly route of faking sleep while he carried me to my room.

What if I had texted him whilst I was still in Nigeria? Looked for him when we moved to Cape Town? Done something to find him at least. This is all my fault! Dammit Fatima look what you've done! You've ruined so many lives. You've lost him. Your bear is gone forever. The last thought cripples me and it feels like my heart is going into cardiac arrest. Seeing him was supposed to give me some sort of closure but it's left me wide open again.

“You can stop pretending to be asleep now and tell me what the hell happened.”

Avuyile startles me and my eyes shoot open to find her standing akimbo, looking down at me. Her arms are folded rather uncomfortably over her large belly and I know she means business.

I sigh and sit up, resting my back on the headboard and she sits close to me grasping my hands. Now I really can't tell her anything without the use of my hands, I eye them and she gets it, immediately letting them go.

I slowly and painstakingly tell her everything from the start, when I was still Banzi's Freckle-face. I watch as the emotions dart across her face, Avuyile has the most expressive face. I hadn't told the Shabangu family of the Lunikas. They only knew that I was the daughter of a single mother and a religious fanatic. Vuvu was the first person I was offloading my whole past to. Then I tell her of today and her face is excited when I mention our chance meeting. Her features are crestfallen when I mention the pregnant wife having a miscarriage from finding us humping on each other in the middle of the shop aisle.

It's been hours and Lungelo only knocked once to bring us food and Avuyile's Vitamins and iron supplements. She's cried at some intervals of the story but I've been dry eyed throughout, distant from the emotions of retelling and reliving each moment. It feels like a burden has been lifted from my shoulders. I had to write at some point of the story because Avuyile can't sign that deeply. And now it's all out. No more secrets and she's speechless. Our heavy breathing fills the room accompanied by a few snuffles from Avuyile.

"Why didn't you text him at least?" she asks quietly after a while. I contemplate one of my biggest regrets in life.

At first it was the fear that my father would stop at nothing to find me, what if they were tracing Banzi's phone. Then the fear that I was too broken for him and that I would only burden his life. Then my hospitalisation and my stay in a psychiatric hospital. Yeah it was a dark time, but I'm failing to put all this across to Avuyile. So I settle for just one word that encompasses every reason; fear.

She nods though I'm not sure she fully understands how crippling the fear of rejection really is.

Realisation crosses her face and she opens her already big eyes even wider, as she places her hand over her mouth. I knew it was only a matter of time before she connected the dots.

"Is he.....?" I nod before she even finishes her question. She utters a sound that is between a cry and an exclamation. All I can do is hang my head in shame.

"Yhini kodwa Thiza! Did you tell him?" I forget when Avuyile is being dramatic she goes full fledged Xhosa mode. She's wringing her hands and tapping her foot anxiously. Geez it's not like we sat down and

caught up on each other's lives while his wife was in shock and his baby was bleeding out of her. I just give Avuyile the eye and she raises her hands in defeat.

“Did you exchange numbers at least? You must find him! And his family! You still know where they stay right, we can take you there.” She bombards me and I feel a migraine already coming on.

They moved, I asked Banele to look for them while we were still in Cape Town. I write on the small board I'm carrying.

She reads with this sceptical look on her face. I totally get why she's sceptical. Banele hates me, out of the whole family he made his non-acceptance of me very vocal. Which was why he asked if I didn't have anyone to go to instead of leaching on his family. I gave him the address and he went to the Lunika townhouse complex and he was told they moved out and there wasn't a forwarding address. He was so pissed and shortly afterwards left for London.

The dull thudding headache has turned into a full blown raging migraine and I feel dizzy. Avuyile notices and helps me take off my clothes and puts me in bed, the same way she does to Thobeka and all the other kids. She brings me some tablets and makes me drink them, then she kisses me on the forehead. She's such a mother all this is second nature to her.

“Don't be too hard on yourself Lala, we'll figure everything out together. Sleep,” she commands gently and I try to smile at her but sleep overtakes me and I'm out like a light.

I wake up feeling like I've been in a coma for days. I stretch myself and feel ten times better. The shower helps relax my muscles. I even venture out of my room and find Lungelo and Muzi playing video games while Avuyile watches on. She's the first to spot me and smiles prettily before exclaiming;

“Oh! You're awake finally. I was beginning to think those sleeping pills I gave you were too strong.”

That explains why I didn't dream or toss and turn throughout the night. The guys have paused their game and they are both staring at me. I ignore them and ask Avuyile what time it is. She says it's just after 2pm on Friday. I'm shook!

What about my therapy session? I ask.

I was supposed to start therapy this morning at 11 and I know I wasn't keen on it a couple of days ago but after yesterday I need to move on from my past. There's no use cowering and hiding for the rest of my life. I owe it to myself and those who love me to heal and move on.

“We called and rescheduled for Monday. She wasn't impressed but I managed to convince her.” I feel relief but for some weird reason I can't look Muzi in the eye today. My stomach growls and I head to the kitchen to dig for some food.

Avuyile comes waddling in as I heat yesterday's leftover dinner and she has her journalist expression plastered on her face. If she ever decides to stop making babies and being a housewife; she'd make a stellar reporter. She's like a bloodhound when it comes to prying information out of people.

“What's the weird vibe between you and Muzi?”

You see? Maditaba strikes again. I shrug and dig into my fried rice while she eyes me. I down three more spoons and she's just looking at me with a wounded Chihuahua look. Damn those baby eyes of hers.

He kissed me and I kissed him back for a while before I pushed him away. I finally fall prey to the owl eyes and confess.

She shrieks and claps her hands stating how she knew it, maybe if she said it a little louder the family in PE would hear her. She swoops in demanding details and for a moment I forget the look of love on Banzi's face as he brushed his wife's hair from her face and kissed her forehead in that hospital room.

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Target still on: Next insert after 250 shares and 2K likes. Seriously considering bringing in new Admin to just weed out the silent readers. Namaste🌸

The end of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 5

Avuyile is talking my ear off as I'm washing my dish and putting it away. I don't mind her chatter, I've grown to love it. Muzi pokes his head in the doorway and asks that today we have our session outside. Which is not a strange request, at times we hold sessions outside. But today it just feels awkward or maybe it's me. Avuyile is grinning like an idiot until I frown then she pretends to be swatting non-existent flies. This pregnancy has made her even worse.

I follow Muzi outside and find him already sitting on the bench and I perch my arse a distance away from him. Awkward tension hangs between us and I'm getting this nervous energy from him. I look at Muzi, study his features.

He's your typical Zulu stud except for his bright eyes, I've never seen eyes like his before. His dark melanin dripping skin, is stretched without wrinkle, over his firm jawline. His forehead is a bit high; but not high enough to make his hairline look like it's being eaten by maggots. It's just the perfect length you know. His features are more ragged than my bear... ummm Banzi's softer Xhosa look; could be that he's darker. And his body while not as athletic as Banzi is...

My trail of thoughts is disturbed by Muzi clearing his throat. I've been caught staring and I hastily try to make it look like I was looking at something else.

"I was way out of line when I kissed you. I don't regret it but I'm sorry," aww that Zulu charm and he's even frowning a bit as he talks.

"Your parents trusted me enough with your healing and I betrayed that trust. My objective is to get you talking and until then I have to be as professional as possible. But I hope now my intentions to you are clear. I don't want to be your friend Farrah, I want to be your man."

His eyes are intense and darker as he stares at me and I feel this frisson of excitement at his deep stare. Then just like that the moment is over and he's back to being the Muzi I have grown to know over the years.

"I want to tell you about a little girl around 8 years old. Her name was Marguerite Ann and she lived with her mother. She was sexually abused and raped by her mother's boyfriend, a man named Freeman, at the age of 8.

She told her brother, who told the rest of their family. Freeman was found guilty but was jailed for only one day. Four days after his release, he was murdered, probably by Marguerite's uncles. Because of this, she became mute for almost 5 years, believing her voice killed him.

In her own words later on she said, "I thought, my voice killed him; I killed that man, because I told his name. And then I thought I would never speak again, because my voice would kill anyone."

He pauses and I want to urge him to continue, on one end I understand this little girl and relate so much to her story; on the other hand I feel like maybe he's just making the story up.

"During this time, this period of suffering, this period of shame and guilt, this period of silence that she developed her extraordinary memory, her love for books and literature, and her ability to listen and observe the world around her.

A teacher and friend of the family helped her speak again, introducing her to the world of books with authors such as Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare. When she finally did speak, she said she had a lot to say. Can you guess who that little girl was Farrah?"

I'm blank, how does he expect me to know who Marguerite Ann is; it sounds like those old English names. I shake my head and he has this annoying little smile on his face.

"Her name was Marguerite Ann Johnson. Later in life, she would change her name . . . to Maya Angelou." No freaking way!

I look at Muzi in astonishment. Maya Angelou had one of the deepest, strongest voices I have ever heard and I listened to all of her poem recitals in high school. That woman was iconic, a legend even and my mind can't reconcile the image of one of my sheros with that little mute girl. Afraid to speak because she thought her voice killed her rapist. It's mind blowing.

"As you know already, Maya Angelou became a voice for women, a voice for the black community, garnering respect and admiration for her honesty.

She would say, "There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you." When I look at you Farrah I see the same fire in your eyes, the same strength. You have been through things that would have broken and killed anyone else.

But you are still here. Still standing. And yes, you may have lost your voice for longer but that doesn't mean it's not in there or that it's less stronger. You just have to dig deep to find it. And I swear I won't rest until I help you find that voice."

By the time he finishes his speech, I find myself crying. Crying for my mother who lost Saffiya and had to be Nura; holding down three jobs in a foreign country. Who was raped and forced to give up her son. I cry for little Samira, her peaceful soul that was cruelly driven out of her little body, my twin; my other heartbeat. I cry for me, Farrah the kid who was bullied for so long she thought she could only exist in the shadows.

I cry for Banzi; my crush who grew into my only friend and only love. Who somehow managed to coax out my voice, and made me confident enough to deliver a speech for UNESCO. I cry for the family I had found in Nathi and Khanyo. I cry for my loss in Nigeria. I even cry for Nokuzola who's life I have borrowed.

A myriad of emotions pile up and come out with the tears and still I cry. I've never cried this hard before and the tears keep coming until they dry out on their own. Muzi hasn't made a move to touch me or wipe my tears. He just lets me let it all out and I feel drained afterwards. Drained by the tears and remembering.

There's so much I had locked into tiny compartments in my head and in my heart. Now it is all out leaving me open and bleeding. There's still more but my emotional system has shut down, I'm vulnerable and raw.

Muzi takes out some books, I hadn't noticed next to him on the bench, and hands them to me. I accept them and page through them. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" written by James Baldwin, an autobiography on Maya Angelou, "Letter to My Daughter" written by Maya and a compilation of her poems.

Thank you.

That's all I have the strength to sign right now and he smiles, then stands up and leaves me sitting on the bench. I don't think I'm strong enough to read the memoirs of Angelou's life right now so I page through "Letter to My Daughter".

I immediately become engrossed in it and in my mind I can hear her voice reading it out loud to me. It's comforting and finally I feel like someone understands my agony. Her penmanship is magical and I'm lost in the words. Have you ever read a good book and become so immersed in it, that it becomes an echoing sound in your mind?

One part speaks to my soul; "You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them." I reflect on how I've let what I saw and went through in that camp reduce me to a shell of my former self. I don't find humour in much anymore and my smile never quite reaches my eyes.

At some point I have to work, I can't keep relying on Mama and Dad's kindness forever. How will I work if I'm still afraid of people? Going to the mall I almost had a panic attack and fortunately those people helped me with my breathing. I had dreams, such big dreams and I've been so caught up in my fear I've let them go. I have to heal. Not for Nura, not for Samira but for me.

What happened in my past, happened but I'm done being reduced by it. I'm done with survivor's guilt and feeling sorry for myself. And I'm done torturing myself with blame. I had no control over what happened to me, none whatsoever and I can't blame myself for reacting as I did. For breaking down. I have to start forgiving myself, for almost killing myself and the subsequent loss...

I'm so engrossed in the book that when Avuyile lightly touches my hand I jerk in surprise, almost knocking her down. Luckily she balances and sits next to me. She looks at my swollen eyes and I know she's worried. Only now do I notice that the sun is about to set and it's now casting a beautiful glow around the garden. I wasn't even feeling the cold that's how lost I was in the book.

"Are you ok?" she asks in her sweet voice.

I'm healing, I sign before squeezing her hand.

She gives me a side embrace and I cling on to her for a little while, comforted even though she hasn't said a single word.

“Come on and help me cook you lazy child. Then we will Skype the parents and the brood, ok?” she's wiggling her eyebrows at me and I smile as I nod. Today I actually miss the kids and I can't wait to hear what they have been up to.

“You're beautiful nana,” she says looking at me like she's never seen me before, my smile widens.

I stand up and help the pregnant lady stand as well before making our way into the house. Me clutching my books and Avuyile stealing glances at me, for once she's quiet. Healing is still a long way off for me; but the first bandage has been ripped off and the wound left open to be cleaned.

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Morning! Have an awesome day ahead. Meet after our 250 shares and 2K likes. Spread love and light💖

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 6

“The truth is unless you let go, unless you forgive yourself, unless you forgive the situation, unless you realize the situation is over, you cannot move forward.” Steve Marabodi.

Thank you Khosi Nkanyezi Buthelezi for the quotes on healing and lessons on forgiving and letting go🙏

I'm happy. I finished my assignment and handed it in way before deadline. I Skyped the parents and talked with the kids and got all the low down on their holiday. Of course Thobeka was the one talking the most until Thoba called her to order and told her to give them a chance as well to talk. My babies are happy and that also rubbed off on me. I have been engrossed in "Letter to My Daughter" and it's made me dig deep inside to realize I will always carry home in my heart, those I've loved and lost are all there inside of me.

“Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud. Do not complain. Make every effort to change things you do not like. If you cannot make a change, change the way you have been thinking. You might find a new solution.”

That's my challenge for this week from the book and I'm going to start with trying to be as open as possible to the therapist. Am I disappointed that Banzi didn't come looking for me this weekend or somehow manage to track me down? I am but I'm not heartbroken by it. I haven't allowed myself the luxury to wallow in the what ifs and maybes, I turned all my energy into helping Avuyile decorate the nursery of her coming princess. I understand her excitement; the Shabangus are dominated by male children. I suggested she go with the rainbow and unicorn theme instead of just plain old pink, you see I'm really taking this being a rainbow in someone's cloud very seriously and literally.

The therapist comes sweeping in on time looking urbane and sophisticated. She can't be that older than me but her hourglass figure accentuated by her clothes make my now slim body look like that of a waif next to her. Her strides were as brisk and confident as her movements now as she sets up her voice recorder; which I find out of place unless she just loves to hear the sound of her own voice. Then wielding her notebook like a machete, she smiles at me and I smile back like the charming rainbow I am.

"Hello my name is Zimkhitha..." I zone out from the rest of her sentence, put off by the way she enunciates each word slowly and loudly like my hearing is partially impaired.

Remember Farrah, be a rainbow, be rainbow my subconscious reminds me and I unclench my teeth and relax my jaw, even my shoulders had coiled in agitation. I breathe in and out then focus back on what Zimkhitha is slowly saying.

"...but today I just need you to be as comfortable as possible and feel free to ask me anything. Ok?" I nod my head and smile.

"Excellent so how are you feeling today?" she's still talking at me and I feel like breaking my board over her head. Of course I don't but I do sign:

I'm feeling hopeful.

She looks at me like I've developed 3 heads and asks me to write down my response. I want to tear my hair from the roots by now. It's going to be a loooooooooong one hour, so much for being a rainbow in someone's cloud.

The therapy session was horrible and so was the second one which I only went through because Avuyile said I should give it another try. Zimkhitha is just too quick to diagnose me; I have chronic depression coupled with agoraphobia and an acute case of PTSD. It's a miracle she hasn't had me sent back to a mental institution yet. Right now I would give an arm and a leg to have Dr. Brown as my therapist again. But maybe having Banzi as a translator there made our sessions smoother.

Yesterday I got sucked into depression. You see the thing about depression, it doesn't knock or come with a flurry of drum beats or horn blows. It just shrouds you like an unwanted fog and you can't see past it and no matter how hard you try to shake it off, you can't dispel it. Until the clouds part on their own accord. When I get like that; getting out of bed is a struggle, my lips stretch but instead of a reassuring smile they form a grimace. I could see the worry hooded in Avuyile's big eyes, she didn't blink as often, afraid to let the tears drop. I wished I could assure her but my own body was in limbo, my mind falling and falling into an unending blackness.

As close as we are, she had never been alone with me during one of my episodes but she handled it well. She didn't crowd me or bombard me with questions. And she squashed her natural urge to smother me with attention or constantly checking if I wanted food. She just handed me a writing pad and pen, kissed my forehead and left.

I spent the whole day staring at that pad and pen. Then in the middle of the night, I just woke up and started pouring out my emotions onto the pad. A jumble of words with no coherence or direction, no format.

I wrote until the sky began to lighten up indicating that the sun was about to make its appearance. That's when I put my pen down and shoved the writing pad into my chest of drawers and crawled into bed. I just woke up and I feel lighter. My stomach growls its grievance, reminding me that I haven't eaten in close to two days. Bath and breakfast are the tasks at hand and thankfully I manage to get up.

"I can't make that call Farrah you know that," Avuyile says firmly not, at all moved by my pleading pout.

We're in the kitchen and I'm begging her to let me stop these therapy sessions because they are only making me feel worse about myself.

"You'll have to wait for uMama and uTata, they'll be back on Friday just two more days ok?" I sigh silently and nod.

It really isn't her call to make so I can't blame her much. After cleaning up I retire to my bedroom. I find the pad and go through what I wrote. The anger, despair and disappointment all jump out at me from the words I wrote. I can feel my frustration from the words and it's hard to even read through it. But I still do and I realize I'm mad at myself, at Allah and at the universe.

Avuyile budes into my room, startling me and I shove the pad under my pillow and watch her struggle to lower herself on my bed. For the first time, I notice the taut lines around her mouth. I make her rest her back on my headboard after propping some pillows behind her back and a stuffed doll underneath her feet. They are swollen, especially her ankles and I gently massage her. The wincing turns into soft moans as I work silently on the left foot then move to the right.

She doesn't make small talk and the silence is comfortable. I get the ointment mama uses at times on dad's knees and I knead it into Avuyile's feet. The soles of her feet are so hot they scare me a bit. I find myself praying for the first time for Avuyile and her unborn child. I remember a trick I learnt when my own feet were swelling so I go into my bath and bring cold water in a bucket. I ask her to put her feet inside. She complies and moans as her feet get into contact with the cold water.

"It feels like a thousand needles are being stuck inside the soles of my feet," she confesses and I know that feeling well. I just hope the swelling goes down, if it doesn't I'll have to text Lungelo and ask him to come take her to the hospital.

"Do you think my life is wasting away? Having all these children and no career. I have a diploma in Hospitality management you know. I met Lungelo at one of the hotels when I was still doing my internship. Then Luminovuyo came along quite unexpectedly just after I graduated and I couldn't go back to work. They offered me a permanent position, me. It was a five star hotel too. The hours were just too much though, there's no holiday breaks in the hotel industry. And the babies kept coming even when I used contraception. Don't get me wrong I love my children. I just wonder if I could have been more, you know?" her voice is poignant with longing.

I nod and squeeze her hand. I know all about broken dreams just because life happened. Look at me, I had it all planned out. I was intelligent, a good girl that got straight distinctions and a scholarship but where am I now?

"I just can't stand Noxolo's condescending remarks you know. She's a straight up bitch but sometimes it gets to me."

Noxolo is a Shabangu makoti as well, a paediatric and she doesn't let us forget it. I'd never thought her words got to Avuyile. I mean, when the whole family was there and Noxolo started with her snide remarks, Avuyile would simply smile and ignore her. But I guess each of us carry our pain differently. Even the bubbly ones like Avuyile suffer with a smile plastered on their faces.

Do you want more babies? I ask.

She thinks about it for a minute and slowly shakes her head. "I never really wanted a big family, it's always been Lungelo's dream. I was ok with just 2 or 3 kids."

Then talk to Lungelo and get your tubes tied. Then you can start something with your diploma, something where you can work your own hours.

She's thinking about my suggestion, I can just see the wheels turning in her head. "I always did want to start my own spar you know. But that would cost a lot of money that I don't have." The spark that had ignited in her eyes dims a little.

I'm sure Lungelo could sponsor you or loan you the starting capital, I sign and her spark is re-ignited.

I can see she's getting excited by the idea but she's also nervous because she's biting her nails.

"Do you think he'll agree? I mean his heart has always been set on a soccer team and Lungelo doesn't like change. He'll freak out." I give her my best baleful glare.

Stop using Lungelo as an excuse just because you are afraid of pursuing your own dreams.

Her cheeks heat up and I know I'm right. Lungelo loves her and would do anything to make her happy. He just doesn't know how she feels because she's never told him. It seems like I might be a goddamn rainbow in someone's cloud after all.

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You know what to do to get to the next insert 😊😞🍷

I recently started working with Access Africa and I wrote my first blog for their website. Please check it out if you're interested and don't mind my Colonial name 😊.

<http://access-africa.co.za/should-a-guy-pay-for-child-support-if-he-asked-you-to-abort/>

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 7

I've been surfing the worldwide web after my talk with Avuyile. I felt like a hypocrite urging her not to use Lungelo as an excuse while I've also been hiding behind my abduction and depression from getting work experience. Truth is I'm also scared of being rejected, how many people would want to hire a mute? I typed in Social Work internship for children with speech impairment and most of the options which opened up were in America and some in Canada. In South Africa the only available vacancies were in schools and one or two NGOs.

I have my motivational letter all drafted up and my CV updated and I send to all the posts available even the ones in America before I lose my nerve. There, done. Now all I have to do is wait and hope something comes up. It's funny having to go under the name Fatima Shabangu. The Shabangus legally adopted me after we came back to South Africa, even though I was already an adult according to the law. Mostly to protect my identity in case I was still being hunted. Fatima is a common enough name unlike Farrah.

The more I think about it, maybe a move to America or Canada is just what I need to start over and start a new life, stand on my own two feet. The parents won't be too pleased but at some point they will have to let me fly. I search some more and I can feel the excitement bubbling up. A fresh start. A new life. I haven't been this excited about anything in ages.

Avuyile pokes her head in my room and I turn to look at her.

"And that smile on your face?" forever nosy she is, I just shrug and widen my smile.

"Mmmmh I would grill you further but your therapist is here and this one looks friendlier than the last one."

My smile turns into a frown, who got them to change Zimkhitha? Before I can even ask questions I'm being dragged out of the bedroom by the pregnant bully. She shoves me into the lounge and even before I've turned to glare at her, she has disappeared. I turn and find the new therapist buried behind a file. I'm familiar with the file it's the one Zimkhitha was jotting down notes on. There's something familiar about her posture.

"I'm sorry Fatima, I hope Zimkhitha did inform you that I missed our sessions because of a family crisis. But I will take over from where she left off. I can't tell much from these notes... you know what let's just afresh and I will give you an extra hour today for free."

I've been frozen from the moment she started talking, even afraid to breath in case it's all a dream and just a huff of my breath will make her disappear. She puts the file back in her bag and she still hasn't looked up. But I would know her anywhere with her sweet throaty voice.

"So let's start afresh shall we? I am doctor..." she's finally looked up and she gasps midsentence, the colour drains from her face like she's seen a ghost. Nathi. It really is her. I don't know whether to cry or fling myself at her.

She let's out a low guttural sound which sounds like a cross between a wounded animal and the wail of a mother who just lost her young. My eyesight is immediately blurry as the tears crowd my eyes and fall faultlessly down my face. I don't know how we both stood up or when we fell into each other's arms. All I feel is her arms clutching me fiercely and her sobs racking through both of us. Our tears blend into one stream across our faces.

This moment here I prayed for until I stopped praying and it really feels like I've come home. I don't know how long we hold each other and cry before the tears dry out and her tiny hands are wiping them from my face. Without the fog of tears I can see her face clearly.

Her face is narrower and she has more lines around the corners of her mouth and her eyes. But she's still the beautiful woman who effortlessly became my second mother. She hasn't let me out of her embrace and she smells like she always did. I dip my head on the hollow of her neck as fresh tears start. She's rubbing my back just like she did when my nightmares started all those years back and I messed Banzi's sports car.

"Hush baby, it's ok now. I'm here. It's ok." Her words are barely audible as her voice is croaky.

Avuyile clears her throat and we all turn to her startled. I don't know how long she's been watching us but her nose looks suspiciously red and her ears, signature indicators that she's been crying too. She hands us warm wet face cloths and I gratefully wipe my face. I'm sure there's snort mixed with the tears and I must look a mess. Nathi's eyes are puffy, in fact her whole face and she seems reluctant to let me go even to wipe her face.

We're now sitting on the double couch and she keeps holding my face as if reassuring herself that I'm really in front of her. I feel the same way it feels surreal.

"So you two know each other?" Avuyile finally asks unable to contain her curious nature anymore.

"Yes, Farrah is the daughter I thought I'd lost forever." Nathi responds but she's smiling at me, a sad little smile. "I don't understand you've been here all this time? Just underneath our nose."

"No she hasn't always been here. She was rescued in a Nigerian forest and she was in such a bad state they had to stay with her there for close to a year. Then when they came this side, we were still staying in Cape Town and we only moved this side beginning of this year." It's easier to let Avuyile talk because my hands are shaking with so much emotion.

"Why didn't she look for us?" there's slight accusation in Nathi's voice and I kinda expected it.

"My brother-in-law did look for you when we were in Cape Town and they said your family had moved from the townhouse complex without any forwarding address. We didn't have your phone details and Banzi's number had been disconnected." Avuyile says smoothly and I'm just glad she hasn't revealed everything.

Some details Banzi deserves to hear them from me first and I just know Nathi wouldn't be able to keep everything to herself.

She has been nodding as Vuvu spoke and now she sighs deeply and squeezes my hands. "I'm sorry we moved. It's just... after your disappearance so much happened and it was a dark time for us all. We needed to move to start on a clean slate without all those horrible memories."

She suddenly seems old. Like just thinking about it has aged her and I really wish they hadn't had to go through that because of me. In a bid to make her feel better I ask of my little man Khanyo. Her eyes light up and I'm relieved.

“He's not so little anymore, in fact he's always reminding me that he's not a baby anymore. I'm not allowed to kiss him or even hug him outside the house. He's still bubbly but closer to his father now. He's in grade 6 but acts like he's in Matric. He still asks about you but he asks less each year. Losing you really hurt him...it hurt all of us.”

We are back to being sombre, it's unavoidable I guess. And we are all struggling so hard not to cry.

Can I see his pictures? I ask because I really miss Khanyo, my dance partner.

I wait as she grabs her iPad from her bag and scrolls to the gallery. I lean in and my mouth automatically smiles as I see Khanyo in his navy blazer frowning at the camera; obviously resisting taking a picture. He looks like a younger version of Banzi with Nathi's eyes. In another he has his hands tucked in his jeans while he leans across the wall, legs crossed in some weird gangster wannabe pose. Then he's covering his face with his hand while Nathi smiles in a selfie. There's no doubt that he's gorgeous. I want to swoon when I see a picture of Banzi and Khanyo clearly taken unaware at some family function, it's clear that they are still super close.

While Nathi is scrolling through the pictures she comes across one of Banzi and his wife laughing into the camera as he cradled her bump while she leaned into him. I feel a lump in my throat and I don't fail to notice the cloud that passes over Nathi's face. I'm afraid to ask how she is, what if Nathi blames me for the loss of her grandchild. They seem so happy in the picture, you can't miss the protective way Banzi was holding her bump nor the happiness shining from both their eyes and her glow. Pain slices through my heart and I shrug it away, I destroyed that for them too.

The air becomes heavy and tense with unsaid words hanging between us or is it just my guilt? I wonder if she knows what happened at the mall. I'm sure one of them told her. And another part of me is stupidly jealous because Banzi's wife may have also replaced me in Nathi's heart. It's all so awkward and difficult.

Thankfully Nathi breaks the silence and shows me a picture of Bongiwe smiling with a pretty girl hanging shyly by her side. The girl looks mixed race with small beady eyes, an oval face and the smoothest face I have ever seen. Her hair parted in pom-poms makes her look young and carefree. Bongiwe hasn't changed much though she looks like she's been hitting the gym pretty hard.

“Whitney managed to tame Bongiwe, they got engaged last month,” the fondness in Nathi's voice is unmistakable.

Wow. I've really missed so much of their lives, who would have thought that Bongi would one day settle down. The same Bongi who taught me how to perform my first blowjob with a cucumber. I'm happy and sad. I don't know where we'll go from here.

.....

Don't torture yourselves and me, do the right thing. We'll meet after 2K likes and 200 shares.

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 8 (18) SLNS

“We wanted to be adults so bad, now look at us...

Just freaking look at us!

How are you going to get us out of this mess?” Fuckology

He's here. Standing in front of me and breathing so heavily like he ran all the way here. Eyes bloodshot as he stares at me steadily unblinking. I knew once Nathi found out I was here, it would only be a matter of time before he came. But I wasn't expecting him to come so soon. I'm not ready. I'm not prepared to see him. I'm still too raw from my talk with Nathi. She hadn't wanted to leave and she spent the whole afternoon. We talked, cried and talked again.

Nathi finally opened her own practice and it has grown over the last 2 years. I could tell from the way she glowed when she talked of her work, that she was really happy and I'm proud of her. I'm also inspired to venture out into the world now. The monster-in-law is still alive unfortunately and she's grown into an even worse pain, Nathi's words not mine. She cried when I described the conditions in that camp we were in and when I told her how Nura had helped me escape. She couldn't look me in the eye when I told her of my hope to find Nura. I guess like everyone else she doesn't think we will ever find her alive, but I still have hope.

“You just left again and you left these.”

His voice still makes my heart start pumping wildly and he wasn't even talking that loudly.

I take the shopping bag from him, fingering the little tutu skirt even afraid to look at him. Afraid of the emotions in his red eyes. Afraid of my body's yearnings, I can't cross that line.

He tilts my face up, holding on to my chin. Forcing me to look at him and I'm so weak. The staring lasts for barely a minute but it feels like my soul is bared to him just as his is bared to me. That soul connection it's still there. I'm beginning to regret taking Avuyile's suggestion that we move to my bedroom to have some privacy while we talk.

You cut your locks.

Great Farrah is that the first thing you can say? Come on ask about his wife. Apologise for the loss of his child. Anything else besides his haircut! His dimple shows shallowly and I feel butterflies in the pit of my stomach.

“You said you hate them,” he says shrugging like that's the most rationale explanation in the world.

His hand moves from under my chin and trails it across my cheek, caressing it slowly before tugging at a stray curl. I'm barely breathing as he tucks it behind my ear. He's got me under his spell and I'm mesmerized by his gentle touch.

We need to talk. I sign jerkily anxious to stop this spell he's weaving. The devil holds my hands captive and presses them on his chest.

“We'll talk but right now I just need to feel that you're really here. I've wanted to hold you for the longest time. I've kissed you countless times in my dreams...” Allahabad! His husky voice renders my knees weak. What little restraint I still had goes flying out of the window as he leans closer to me.

His warm breath fans my face and he still has my hands caged close to his thudding heart. His heartbeats has skyrocketed, or is that my heartbeat? I'm not even sure anymore, our hearts have synchronized their own wild beat and I'm lost. Even if I had the voice to stop him I doubt I would tell him to stop. He's

taking his sweet time and I'm growing impatient, I stand on tiptoe trying to reach his lips. And he chuckles before swooping in and attacking all my senses with his lips.

While our last kiss was soul searching and coming home, this one is searing with passion. He's staking his claim on my lips, my senses and my soul. I respond with just as much hunger, my tongue darting in and out of his heated mouth. He groans and frees my hands. I don't waste time in snaking them around his neck. In one smooth movement he hosts me up, wrapping my legs around his lower back, without breaking our kiss.

I find myself feeling his bulge through my jeans and the wanton inside me grinds against him. He grunts in response and bites my lower lip. This chemistry between us is potent, it's a raging bush fire, uncontrollable and all consuming. Our lips are still latched together, like patched nomads who've run across an oasis. The clumsy flinging off of clothes follows, my poor t-shirt is bunched up and ripped off while I claw off his t-shirt.

Our torsos are sleek with sweat yet we cling to each other and my bra follows the t-shirts and becomes a heap on the floor. He moves towards the bed while still sucking face with me and I hang on for dear life. He lowers both of us slowly onto the bed until my back hits the bed. He peels himself off me and stares down at my exposed top. Only then do I come crushing down to earth and remember the long angry scar on my abdomen.

He opens his mouth to say something but now it's my turn to silence him with a hand over his mouth. He's the one who said no talking and I don't know if he'll still want me after my revelations so I'd rather have him just one last time. His eyes show how torn he is but lust takes over. He shrugs off my hand and takes my nipple into his wet heat.

The contact shoots straight to my toes, they curl in pleasure and I ache my neck as I clutch his head to my chest. It's been so long, he was my first and last. He lathers the same attention to my left breast and I squeeze his shoulders so hard he groans. It's all heat, hunger and passion mixed in the way we desperately explore each other.

Then he trails kisses down my scar, so gently I feel the tears sting my eyes and I blink them away. It's like he wants to kiss the pain away and it's the most intimate he's ever been to me. He takes his sweet time, each kiss is a tiny butterfly that flies straight to my heart. He opens my jeans and I help him wiggle them off me. I don't even know when the rest of the clothes come off. All I can do is gulp at his engorged manhood. He looks bigger than the last time, doesn't it stop growing at some point?

He doesn't give me much time to ogle him, he kneels just next to the bed and drags my tush to the edge of the bed. No words are uttered just his murmurs against my nirvana. He tightens his arms around my thighs before he darts his tongue inside me without any preliminary warning. Pleasure jerks my body from the bed but my legs are secured in his strong arms. I squirm as he sucks on me as if I'm his last supper, my thighs quivering on their own.

Goosebumps have broken out throughout my body but he relentlessly pleasures me with his tongue. I'm steadily building up to an orgasm. One gentle tug of his tongue and I come undone all over his face. I'm shaken to the core and he barely gives me a chance to recover before easing into me. At first, my body resists his unaccustomed intrusion and he struggles to sheath himself in me. He's still kneeling and I'm wide open on the edge of the bed fully exposed for him.

I can't keep my eyes off his face, he's biting his lower lip in concentration and my juices on his face have mingled with his sweat. I can see the concentration etched on his face and the control until he's fully buried inside me. He groans like he's in pain before he buries his wet face on my neck muffling his groans. I'm getting accustomed to having him inside me again and I know it's taking everything in him not to move. I arch my back urging him to move and he lets out a string of muffled curses against my neck.

His first thrust is shallow and preparing me, easing me to open up even wider for him. His second thrust goes a bit deeper and my nails also dig into his sleek back. He fills me fully and the discomfort has long given way to pleasure and I'm screaming in my mind as his thrusts become more uncontrolled, faster and more urgent. I meet him thrust for thrust and that seems to drive him even crazier. I clamp my walls around him and he lets out a sound very close to a howl.

"Fuck Farrah I can't hold it in anymore," he whimpers close to my ears and I don't want him to hold it in.

He tries slowing down but I gyrate my hips against him and he groans again before going wild with the thrusts. He's pumping into me madly, once, twice, thirdly and the fourth time he silently screams "Oh shit!" so close to my ear and the sound also pushes me over my edge. I'm with him as he shakes from the throes of his passion, clinging onto him.

He plops on top of me spent, I also have very little energy left in me. We lie like this until he starts getting heavy and I gently shove him. He grunts and shifts us and now I'm on top of him and he's still buried inside me. Part of me can't believe I'm really on top of my grizzly bear even as he wipes my damp forehead and tucks in my unruly curl again.

He looks like he's going to say something but then he changes his mind and kisses me deeply and I feel him growing inside me again. My body reacts to him and I shut out any thoughts of guilt and misgivings as I give myself up to his kisses and his loving. Every inch of our bodies is touching from our pelvises to our chests and I wouldn't have it any other way.

.....

Good night and thank you for reaching our target so quickly 🥰🥰🥰🥰

Meet after our next 2K likes and 200 shares

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 9

I untangle my legs from his but in his sleep he draws me closer as if afraid to let me go. I give up my struggle to get out of his web of limbs. He looks so peaceful in sleep and I can't believe he ended up spending the night. At one point our lovemaking was so intense and slow, he broke down and sobbed. I just held him as my own tears flowed. I'm selfish aren't I, I should have told him to go back to his wife but I needed him too. Being in his arms everything feels like it doesn't matter.

A knock on my door disturbs my thoughts and I'm glad I remembered to lock when the person rattles the door handle.

"Sis, Vuvu told me you aren't feeling well. Get better and I'll see you after work. If you need something just text yeva?" Lungelo says behind the closed door before I hear his foot falls recede.

I wonder how Avuyile managed to keep him out of my bedroom. He usually checks up on me after work. Banzi is finally awake and rubbing his eyes, he smiles and I can't help but smile back at him. I feel his hand sneak towards my nether parts and I swat it off. Not only am I sore but we can't continue bonking each other like rabbits while wishing our realities into oblivion.

We need to bath and talk. I sign with a determined look on my face.

He pouts sulking but we can't keep avoiding this and sex as great as it is, won't solve our situation. We take the bath together and I fall prey again to his charms. His mission is to get me waddling like a duck again! I can just see right through his act. I'm struggling to get off from the high of being with him again. I have totally blocked the thoughts of him doing the same with his wife.

Avuyile gives me that look which says; once he's gone bitch be ready to spill and I don't even smile back. I feel down now, the euphoria has passed. The nerves are kicking in and I twiddle with my breakfast and so does he. Him and Avuyile are getting along but I'm drowning in my thoughts. He squeezes my hand and kisses it. That little action makes me feel less anxious and I eat some more.

We're now on my favourite bench in the garden, I refused to go back to the bedroom. We all know what's going to happen once me and Banzi are alone in a room with a bed. He's sitting next to me and he's also beginning to be anxious, I can tell from the nervous energy he's emitting. I might as well go into this guns blazing.

You have a wife? It's hard even signing the question without crumpling into tears.

"No... yes. I don't know," he sighs while running his hands through his hair.

Only Allah knows how I'm able to sit here with a passive face while my heart is almost beating out of my chest. While all I want to do is fling myself into his arms and hear him telling me that he doesn't know that woman. I want to burst into tears and beg him to leave her for me.

But I sit still and stare at him blankly and wait for him to stop his pacing and continue talking. I have detached myself from my emotions and I'm an unwilling observer. Finally he stops and crouches in front of me, he's holding my hands like he's scared I might run off. If only he knew, I'm done running.

"Mandisa was, is a colleague from work. I met her last year when I started work. I was a mess and closed off but she was always smiling and bubbly. She'd listen to me ranting and call me on my bullshit and we'd hang out. She was different from all the other girls who expected a relationship and commitment from me. Then one night we were both drunk and one thing led to another we woke up naked in her bed. That was the start of our no strings attached situationship.

She was cool and we were always careful and had no labels or expectations from each other. Then during our office Christmas party, we were wasted again and not careful... she told me she was pregnant

beginning of February. I thought it was time I let go of the fantasy that someday I might actually see you again and give Mandisa a fair shot on a clean slate. The kid was already on the way and I didn't want our kid to grow up being co-parented. She accepted that I wanted us to have a relationship.

I introduced her to the family and they urged me to do right by her. I wanted to pay damages first but her family demanded ilobolo as well, she's their only princess. I agreed, lobola was paid and she became my wife traditionally but we haven't had a white wedding yet. I wanted us to wait until the baby was born and a bit grown."

I've been looking into his eyes as he said his speech and his eyes told me he was being honest or am I just being hopeful? But it doesn't change the fact that they are married whether just traditionally or not civil; it was still a marriage union. I still haven't shed a tear and I have to ask him the next question.

Do you love her?

He breathes hard but doesn't look like he's surprised by the question.

"I care about her a lot. I hadn't really opened up my heart fully to her because a part of my heart had always belonged to you."

This admission doesn't make me feel any better, I saw the look of tenderness on his face that day at the hospital and he cares about her a great deal more than he's even willing to admit to himself. But I'm a sucker for pain because I still have to ask;

How is she? After the hospital ordeal.

He looks conflicted, like he doesn't want to tell me because he's afraid he's going to hurt me.

"She's devastated and she hates me. She refused to come stay with me after the hospital stay and she opted to go and stay with her parents in Durban for a while. I don't blame her I was a total arse and it's all my fault..." a tear slides from the corner of his eyes and I wipe it off with my hand.

It's not your fault, had you not met me again your baby would still be alive. I'm the one...

He doesn't even let me finish signing, he holds my hands captive and he has this fierce look on his face.

"Don't say that Farrah, meeting you again is what I've been praying for, for so long and I was the one who knew he had a pregnant wife. I'm ashamed to say I forgot about her, I was just too wrapped up in seeing you again everything else didn't matter."

His pain is raw but he's wrong I also saw him with her in that store but all that went out of the window when I was in his arms. We're quiet for a while both of us drowning in our misgivings and guilt.

"Do you regret last night? Knowing what you know now." He's now sitting next to me again on the bench, looking earnestly into my eyes.

I shake my head no. And that's the honest truth, I already knew the possibility that he was married but I went for it regardless. I own my part in this whole mess. I wanted him as much as he wanted me but that doesn't mean it can go on anymore. It would be wrong of both of us, as much as I love him I have no more claim to him. He is hers now.

"That scar on your tummy?" I guess it's my turn in the hot seat.

My hand trails the scar as I take a long ragged breath and try to control the flood of emotions that grip me each time I remember that part of my life. They said the pre-term labor couldn't have been avoided, it was a miracle the pregnancy had even survived all the trauma I underwent.

I still remember the pain on my back and cramps in my lower abdomen before the sticky fluid came out of my vagina. I had no idea what was happening but mama had her suspicions and she urged dad to take me to the hospital. I vomited in the car on the way there and was barely conscious by the time we got there.

They say I went into shock and was ruled to be in distress. Everything after that is blank to me, all I remember is waking up to a searing pain on my lower abdomen where they cut me up and I could barely sit up. Then they handed him to me, he was already growing cold.

He was so perfect, a tiny replica of you, I sign and the tears just gush out of Banzi's eyes.

I wait for him to finish crying, my eyes are empty. I've cried so many tears. Blamed myself so much all these years, maybe if I had known I was pregnant I would have taken better care not to sink into depression.

I wish he could have opened his eyes at least once but they said he was stillborn. There was nothing I could have done or they could have done it was just too early he hadn't fully developed yet...

I falter as I sign as the emotions of holding my dead son in my hands comes back to me in full. You never get over that loss as a mother. Allah knows every year during his birthday I'm a wreck. I always remember his tiny fingers bunched in a little fist. He was so tiny. So, so tiny. I'm crying now as well and we hold each other in our pain. I am glad he is still as open emotionally with me as he has always been.

"So we lost him, we lost our baby?" the choked pain in his voice is like a dagga to my heart. For him the pain is fresh and he also just lost another baby.

I nod and I'm about to tell him the rest when the door towards the garden bursts open. Three little bodies come tumbling into the garden chanting Farrah! Farrah! My heart almost stops, I thought the parents are only coming back tomorrow with the whole brood. They come skidding to a halt when they notice that I am with someone they don't know. Thoba is barely older than the other two but he stands in front of them shielding them with his little body and his arms.

He looks just like Lungelo with that fierce scowl on his face and any other day I would have smiled at how cute he looks while trying to be scary. But today I'm just scared myself, I hadn't prepared Banzi for my other revelation and I hadn't prepared her either. Of course Thobeka being Avuyile reincarnate pokes her head from underneath her brother's arms and stares at Banzi.

"Farrah who is that?" she's even pointing at him and Thoba is trying to return her head behind him but the little miss ain't having it. Uyaphapha bo uThobeka! She breaks free and goes to look at Banzi, hands folded on her little chest.

"Why do you have Samira's eyes?" she asks boldly and the blood just drains from my face. Banzi looks at me in confusion and I avoid his eyes. Thobeka runs back and drags the shy Samira from behind Thoba. "Come Sammy look at his eyes. They are just like yours!"

All I can do is watch as Thobeka drags Samira to her father and watch my little girl cast her eyes to the ground. She's trying to dig into the soil with her toes, something she does every time she's nervous or anxious. Thobeka is getting impatient, "Look Sammy, look at him."

This is not how I imagined introducing Banzi to our daughter, Samira.

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Happy weekend, meet again on Monday.

Don't forget to keep liking and sharing.

Love and light ❖❖❖❖

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 10

"The truth will set you free

But first, it'll piss you off" Lemon; Rihanna, N.E.R.D

New week, new beginnings right? Boy do I hope so, the rest of last week ended in a blur of disappointments. Everyone is disappointed in me, well I don't blame them I really don't. My alarm goes off and I switch it off before it even utters the second syllable, I barely slept.

Whoever made this French proverb; "There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscious", clearly had never just admitted to a man after close to 6 years that he has a daughter. I have to fight hard against slipping back into a deep funk. Who am I kidding? I've been in a funk ever since Banzi just stormed out without uttering a single word. Sigh. No, it didn't exactly happen that way, let me take you back a little.

So there we were, after Phaphile dropped the bomb, with that awkward tension around us. Samira, my poor baby, was nervous and scared. I wanted to pick her up and wrap her in my arms, shield her from any rejection. Banzi tried talking to her, which was the worst move, because my baby does not take well to strangers especially male. I'm afraid my paranoia may have rubbed off on her. Samira, darted

between my legs and buried her face on my lap. It took an entire ten minutes of me soothing her and Thobeka coaxing her before Sami finally looked up, still clutching at my legs.

All that time Banzi was working his jaw in a silent rage and I was scared about the intensity in his eyes. His features only softened when Samira looked at him and I saw emotions chase each other around his face. They just stared at each other and all that while we were all quietly watching them, even Thobeka for once was subdued. I could tell Banzi wanted to burst out, he opened and closed his mouth a couple of times before getting up and storming out. That was on Thursday, I haven't seen nor heard word from him since.

Get up Farrah, get up. I'm like a robot as I make my bed and drag myself to the bathroom, all the positivity I had last week flushed away. As the water cascades down my body I think of the parents reaction when I told them that the young man who almost bumped into dad was actually Samira's father. Mama had gasped and held her chest while her husband's brow had furrowed into those intimidating lines that all the Shabangus feared.

“You are saying, that Samira's father has been around all this time?”

I could only hang my head and nod as I bit my lower lip and tried to clear the tears that had pooled in my eyes.

The long and short of it is, they were both very disappointed in me. They always assumed that Samira was a product of rape. They never questioned her paternity and I had never volunteered it. Why? Honestly I have no excuse, I was going through a dark phase in my life that I'm still trying to pull myself out of.

I finally dress up and head to the kitchen, Avuyile isn't her usual sparkly self either today, I peck her cheek and quietly help her make breakfast. No, she's not disappointed in me at least, it's just that shit went down at yesterday's family lunch. The infamous Noxolo happened again.

Mama asked her to get the dishes and serve everyone since Avuyile and I had made Sunday lunch. Never mind that she's heavily pregnant and walking around is actually a mission. Noxolo had retorted that it's the least Avuyile could do, since they stayed in the family house built by everyone rent free and consumed groceries bought by her and her husband; while the rest of the wives worked she was popping children.

There was deathly silence and never have I ever seen Lungelo that mad before, he would have charged at Noxolo had Avuyile not held his hand.

“Xhinta is that the bull you tell your wife? Mamela we nondindwa, just because my brother took your slutty arse through college you think you can look down on us? This is not a family house nontombi, this is my house that my wife is kind enough to allow my parents to share with; and your snotty children to spend most of their holidays in. Now take your entitled arse and your spoiled brats plus the little checkers you came with and get the fuck out of my house. Book yourselves into a hotel and never set foot in my house again.”

The parents had tried pleading on Noxolo's behalf but Lungelo wasn't budging and in under 30 minutes Xhinta and his family had left the rest of us to have a very awkward lunch.

“I told him as soon as this baby is born, I'm tying my tubes and next year I'm starting my own spa which caters mostly for children,” she says all this in monotone as she dishes the sausages from the pan to a warm serving dish. But there's a fire in her eyes that I've never seen there before. Good for you Vuvu.

We have barely finished making breakfast when the whole family intrudes. Luminovuyo, Lungelo's first born who's just turned 15 starts setting up the dining room table while Lungile who is 13 and Siphon who is 11 carry the dishes from the kitchen without being told. Thobeka wants to help too but Avuyile just snaps at her, there's the lip quivering before the water works and princess Phaphile goes wailing to her daddy. This has become my new normal and I have to admit having the brood around is good for me. I help Samira with her food before mama says grace and our day officially begins.

I'd almost forgotten that I have a therapy session with Nathi today, our last session was on Friday and it ended up being hijacked by Samira.

“He's angry, mostly hurt and confused just give him time. He'll come around.” That had been Nathi's greeting then before she squeezed me into her famous hug. Then she let me know in no uncertain terms that she was also hurt that I hadn't told her all this during our reunion.

I had to tell Banzi first, he needed to hear it from me. I explained and she understood.

“May I see her?” the excitement had shone through her eyes.

I just couldn't resist her; so I went and got Samira from the playing pan, where she and Thobeka were having tea with their dolls. Surprisingly, Samira hadn't shied away from Nathi, in fact she graced her grandmother with her wide gapped smile and gone willingly into her arms. She only shrugged out of them when Nathi went overboard with the kisses all over her little face.

“My tooth came out,” my baby proudly announced and both Nathi and I were battling back tears. My sweet girl, my little miracle.

As I watched her glow under her grandmother's attention I thought of the first time I saw her. She was so tiny and connected to so many tubes. We all thought she wouldn't make it but we didn't dare say it. Her lungs were underdeveloped, so were her kidneys and she couldn't breathe or feed on her own. A piece of me died when they told me that she had a clot in her brain and the doctors had to perform an emergency operation to remove the clot and stop any possible bleeding in her brain.

In my mind I thought that meant she was dead. I had already lost so much and I was teetering on the verge of despair. I called Banzi again that day and that is the time his number was de-activated. I snapped and took as many drugs as I could find and drank them all. I couldn't stand being told of another loss when I had barely survived holding my son's lifeless body in my hands.

My suicide attempt failed and I woke up in hospital to the news that my little girl had made it through the brain surgery. But that wasn't her only surgery, the constant fear of being told she was no more drove me crazy, literally. I ended up in a mental institution while Samira was fighting for her life in hospital.

“Hey babe, are you ok?” Nathi's voice brings me back from my numbing thoughts and I try to smile at her but end up in tears.

She holds me and soothes me until I finish crying then she hands me some tissues. I gratefully take them and wipe my face.

“Crying is good, it means you're allowing yourself to feel. Do you want to talk about what triggered the tears?” her voice is gentle and almost cajoling.

I feel like I was born to suffer, like I'm cursed and now I'm afraid to try to be happy. Because every time I become happy, something bad happens. I end up losing those I love.

It's hard signing these words it's like opening your soul and barring it for someone else to see your deepest, darkest corners. She nods and purses her lips like she's in deep thoughts.

“This is good, we are learning the nature and intensity of the Victim within you.” She must see my confusion because she continues, “We are not meant to be victimized in life, or fall victim to our circumstances no matter how hard they may be. But each challenge is set up to build our characters and help us outrun our fears. You have known so much pain and loss that now you fear happiness. Do you feel like you don't deserve to be happy? You can't be happy while your twin died and you didn't, that's why you blocked your voice. You don't deserve to be happy and enjoy Samira because you couldn't save her twin?”

Each question slices through my heart and the tears are back, how do I even begin to heal when I'm so damaged? She's right sometimes I wish it was me taken by those horrible men and raped then maybe my twin would have been spared and still be alive today. I can't bring myself to celebrate my daughter's birthday because it's a constant reminder of my angelic little boy who never got to open his eyes.

“Listen to me baby girl, I shudder when I imagine what you went through after going through your narration. That could have killed anyone else but not you, you didn't die. That means you are a survivor of abduction, of being molested, of losing a child. And as a survivor you have to forgive yourself and walk away from the deaths you have escaped again and again. Because if you keep holding on to what happened, what could have been; then you are slowly but surely killing yourself, killing your potential and those around you get to live with your breathing corpse everyday. Until you start healing and realize that you are no victim Farrah Omar, you are a survivor. Always have been and always will be.”

For a moment there I see Nura instead of Nathi's face and she's smiling her sweet smile, “You're an Omar and Omar women are made of steel macaanto.”

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The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 11

It's the first day back to school and I'm taking my baby to preschool. She's excited I can just see from the way she wants to bound out of the chair while I'm doing her hair. Bhut' Lungelo usually drops her off first then takes Thobeka and the others to "big" school. But after my talk with Nathi I am determined to step up as a mother.

My hiding away from the world has also affected my daughter and not in a good way. I struggle with the last ponytail because Sami just wont sit still, she's smiling nonstop and fiddling with the two front ponytails her hair is long, thick and curly like mine, which makes it hard to tame.

But Samira doesn't cry or complain when I comb and tie it tightly. Actually my baby doesn't complain about anything and she only recently stopped sucking on her thumb. Done. I bend to put her shoes on but she's determined to wear them on her own because Thobeka put hers on her own. I watch resignedly as she concentrates on her task, biting her lower lip in a cute almost Khanyo gesture.

Finally the shoes are on and I'm dragged to the kitchen, she's not letting go of my hand. She gobbles down her cereal while still clutching at my hand, that little hand tugs at my heart. Silently, I promise her that mommy will do better.

She's the picture of perfection in her pink shorts and unicorn t-shirt. Everyone says she is the image of me but I see traces of Banzi in her every day. When she's being impatient like now, her eyes are nothing like mine. She has his jaw and dimple and I swear my ears are not that flappy. I manage to get her to stand in place for a minute as I snap pictures of her and I even get a wide smile and a few poses thrown in. I text Nathi the pictures and I know she's going to have a field day with them.

Her school is ten minutes away from the house on foot and I decided we're walking there today. Avuyile already packed her lunch and she's given a kiss goodbye by the little miss before I'm dragged out of the house.

"I hope my teacher comes back this term," she says smiling and I smile at her little upturned face.

Do you like her? I ask and she nods enthusiastically.

“She gives the best hugs and treats when you do well.” She continues with her chatter and I love how free she now is around me. For the longest time she called Avuyile mama and me Fafa.

Just after getting out of the gate, a fancy black car slows coming towards us until it halts just next to us. My heart is thudding so loudly and I'm now holding onto Samira's hands, ready to shove her out of harms way. I feel some relief when Banzi comes out of the driver's side and moves towards us. Only then do I release the air I have been holding in. I don't know why I'm grateful that I showered and look representable with even some gloss on my lips. Get a grip Farrah, he's married!

He gets in front of me and his eyes are already fastened on Sami. He exudes so much power in his black shirt with it's last 2 buttons open and black formal pants and brown belt. He crouches, crinkling his beautiful shoes, until they are the same height and Samira is eyeing him suspiciously and she hasn't let go of my hand.

“Hi Samira. I'm your daddy,” his voice is gentle and Sami is already shaking her head no.

“Daddy went to drop off Thobeka and Thoba at school,” she states clearly and he looks at me with this hurt expression.

I shrug my shoulders I can't explain the whole Lungelo being daddy issue right now.

“Well, you're such a special girl. You get to have two daddies.” He says still in that gentle voice. Samira breaks their eye contact and looks up at me for confirmation. I nod while blinking rapidly.

“Ok. I want a bicycle that only has two wheels like the one Thoba has,” she informs him in her most Thobeka voice and I want to laugh at how solemn Banzi is looking at her and agreeing to her extortion. He doesn't know Samira, she will make him buy a zoo but I have a feeling Banzi wouldn't hesitate if he could buy it for her.

“You can walk with us to my school,” just like that Samira has accepted him and he gives her his dazzling smile which leaves me feeling faint.

So much for bonding with my baby now I feel like a third wheel as they chat. Samira has given him her other hand and she demands that we swing her. We comply and she breaks into a fit of giggles.

“Higher daddy, higher!” I have to frown at Lubanzi who wants to comply to her petty demand and he swings her only a bit higher before putting her down.

At the back of my mind I'm wondering what made him come around and I'm angry at him for just storming out and being silent all these days. But that's a conversation we need to have after we drop off Samira at school.

I listen to them chatting, Banzi is doing most of the talking and asking of questions. Sami responds, she's still warming to him and a little shy. All too soon we reach her school and she hugs me while I kiss her all over her face. I'm not sure whether she's going to hug Banzi or not and she seems to battle with that thought herself. She finally settles on hugging him and kissing his cheek. I see him draw in a sharp breath and he holds on to her a moment longer sniffing her hair. Samira gets impatient and wiggles out of his arms before running to catch up with her friends.

We're now in front of his car. The walk back has been awkward and strained, I can't wait to go home and bury myself in my books. I also can't help being self-conscious at the way he keeps checking out my legs. He hasn't said a word to me and I've let him be. I'm not going to be the first one to start talking. What is he even doing here so early in the morning?

“Get in the car.” He commands while opening the door.

I give him my best glare, we aren't in high school anymore and I will not be bullied by LwandleLubanzi Lunika. Not today. I ignore the opened door and start walking towards home. He sighs and I can tell he's annoyed.

“Farrah we are too old for me to chase you but if you don't get into this car right now I will bundle you up and shove you into this car.”

A smile automatically spreads across my face at the memory of Banzi throwing me like a sack of potatoes over his shoulder while half the school was recording videos. When we were young. I've gone a few steps when I feel him towering over me, he's crazy! I turn and glare at him.

You can't bully me, we're not in high school anymore. I sign

I'm silently challenging him to even dare lay even a finger on me. I swear I will kick his balls so hard he probably will never have a child ever again. He's getting frustrated, I thought by now he'd be better at communicating but I guess some things never change.

"Please baby, this is already hard enough. Please get in the car." He sounds distraught and I immediately soften wondering what's happening.

I get in the car and he waits for me to buckle up before closing the door and going to his side. The car smells of Banzi and I take huge gulps of breath and it feels like he's all around me. He drives in silence and I can't stand the silence anymore so I turn on his radio. I see a smile creeping on his face and I know he's thinking of all the times I would control his radio whenever he was driving me to school.

Ntombi by NaaqMusiQ featuring Bucie blasts from the speakers and his smile widens. I listen to the opening verse and I find myself smiling too, Banzi is still an idiot and he thinks he's charming busy humming along. The he sings along to the hook, his voice has deepened but still so beautiful.

"Sondela ngiyakubiza

Sisi awboni ndiyaku-feela

Noma ungayiphika

Yonkinto ndingakunika

Ungichaza nge-figure

Ungihlanyisa njengeslima

Just give me a chance

Let me just take this thing much deeper"

He wiggles his eyebrows at me and I shove him playfully. This feels good and light hearted just what I need. He continues singing and entertaining me making it feel like nothing has changed and we are on our way to school. The beat is catchy almost vintage and I'm tapping my fingers in time to it on my leg.

I wonder where we're going, he's still driving and saying nothing and I'm just listening to the music. In my feelings by Drake comes on and the vibe is chilled but he still seems nervous because he keeps

glancing at me as he drives. He's beginning to creep me out. I'm not even familiar with the places we are passing at this point but I'm not panicked. I have no doubt that I'm safe, Banzi would never hurt me.

Or would he? I begin to wonder as he turns into a sign written Fourways Memorial Park with a dove. The driveway is lined with tall and elegant trees making it look like some estate but I read the sign it's a cemetery. A private one but a cemetery all the same.

Is he planning on killing me and dumping me in a grave that he already had someone dig up. That would explain the all black outfit he has on. But would he kill me in broad daylight? I look at him for answers but his jaw is just set in a straight line. I have this ominous feeling in the pit of my stomach, like something bad is about to happen.

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Nah this target is abusing me now 😊 but thank you for the participation 😊😊😊. Grab your copy of The Harvard Wife from any Bargain Books, Protea Books or Exclusive Bookstore close to you.

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The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 12

“Is there anything she can't handle?

She's been broken.

She's been knocked down.

She's been defeated.

She's felt pain that most couldn't handle.

She looks fear in the face; year after year, day after day, but yet, she never runs.

She never hides.

And she ALWAYS finds a way to get back up. She's unbreakable.

She's a warrior.

She's you." Unknown

He kills the engine and looks at me like he's afraid I'm going to break. He pushes his car seat back and unbuckles both our belts while I just watch. Somehow he lifts me from my chair and makes me straddle him on his chair. But there's nothing sexual about his intentions today, he just looks like he has the weight of the world around his shoulders. He cups my face in his big hand and breathes deeply, his warm breath surrounding me like a cocoon. I feel safe and I laugh at my thoughts that he would kill me. His eyes are gentle and searching, and oddly moist.

"I love you Freckle-face, I have loved you from the day you hit my toes with that big book of yours. I looked into your eyes then and I found my home. I know I haven't been the easiest person to love, I was, am a jerk and I was full of so much anger. But you made it seem so easy, loving me through my shit and loving me until I learnt to love myself a little each day.

Life has dealt us some shitty blows and I wish I had waited for you a little longer but I can't change the past." He takes a gulp of air obviously struggling with his words. Oh Allah, did he drive me all the way to a cemetery just to dump me?

"We still have a lot to talk about but right now I just want you to know that I love you and you will always have me. Your heart is my home and my heart is your home. You'll never be alone as long as I'm here ok? We'll get through this, I need you to lean on me, allow me to carry some of the pain for you. All I do, you are always at the back of my mind. Please let me be there for you."

He's being cryptic right now and my heart beat has accelerated. He seems sincere as he hugs me and confused as I am, I hug him back. My nerves are calmer now and my heart is beating better but the dread is still there in the pit of my stomach.

"Do you remember the time you made me promise never to touch drugs again?" he asks as he lets me go and I nod. It was that time when Lerato was still terrorizing us.

"When you left all I could think of was getting a line just to forget the pain even just for a day but I kept on remembering that promise I made to you. And yes it hurt like hell, I was unravelling at the seams but I never once touched any drugs and I didn't even turn to alcohol." I smile and stroke his cheek, I'm proud of him for not going down that road again even though he's dredging up some pretty painful memories.

“I need you to make a promise to me right now. I need you to promise on our daughter's life that no matter how painful and unbearable things become, you will never try to take your life again. That you will lash out and not bury the pain to a point where it suffocates you. Promise me you won't harm yourself ever again. Promise me Farrah.” His eyes are burning mine and his voice is urgent. I try to assure him with my eyes.

“No I need you to say it.” I fight the urge to roll my eyes.

I promise.

He even makes us pinkie swear and I oblige him wondering when he will stop acting so weird. I am properly freaked out by now. He opens his car door and places me carefully on the ground. My legs are a bit wobbly, he puts a stabilising hand around my waist.

I lean into him even as we walk through the neatly trimmed hedges and well kept lawns. There's a quiet serenity around this place, only the headstones in the separated plots remind you that you are in fact in a cemetery. I wouldn't mind being buried here. It's so isolated and seems like there isn't much activity. Each burial plot is separated by a hedge, giving each grave much needed privacy.

Banzi seems to know exactly where we are going and I just allow him to lead us. I've stopped trying to guess what this is all about. We move into a plot with no headstone but it's as neat as the others and it has fresh flowers around the tiny placard. I move away from Banzi and go up to the placard to read.

Nura Omar

Herein lies a woman of virtue,
a loving mother, who's heart was big
and soul made of steel.

My knees buckle beneath me and Banzi catches me before I reach the ground. I'm weak but at the same time I want to tear my clothes and scream. But what good would that do for me? Will it bring her back? I want to scream and lash out to somebody, anybody but I'm tired. Tired of the pain, tired of loss and tired of having to accept each blow that has been dealt my way. I'm tired of bargaining with Allah and cursing Him because clearly he doesn't care, he never listens to me.

I remember looking at her beautiful face glowing in the little moonlight streaming through a crack in the bunker. I was trying to commit her face to memory, the stubborn set of her mouth and the strength in her eyes. That's the face I see when I dream about her at night, that's the only picture I have left of her. I feel a loss so deep that even tears can't assuage it.

I remember her chatter as she did my hair in braids, how she would pat and smooth down my hair. I remember the fire in her laughter when she ever laughed. For the longest time it had just been me and her against the world and now she's gone as well. Leaving me desolate and empty.

I wish I could have told her I loved her more often, hugged her harder and kissed her everyday. She was all I freaking had dammit! Oh the glow in her eyes when I took her shopping, as she fingered the material like it was the most fragile thing in the world. Nura. My rock. My best friend. My mommy. I knew she was giving up her life for me. What am I saying ever since I was born, she gave up her comfort, her well being and her life to make sure I got the best. She even gave up her son so that I would have legal papers to be in this country.

My throat is parched with unshed tears and they are burning my eyes but I won't let them fall. I want my mother, I want my Nura. Her voice echoes in my mind. Nura's voice is soft and melodic. Her voice is calm and accepting. Even at our worst moments, she never raised her voice in anger.

"I will always be with you Macaanto, looking over you but now you have to be strong for mama ok?"

"Run Macaanto and never look back, I will always be with you baby always"

"You're an Omar and Omar women are made of steel macaanto."

Fragments of speech that I will remember always; even the slap she gave me the day she found the clothes that Nathi had bought me. A part of me had expected her to be dead but a large part of me had always been hopeful that I'd find her and be reunited with her again.

Who's going to love me as unconditionally as she had? Yes, I have Nathi but she has a whole new daughter-in-law now. Mama, would she love me still if she found her darling Nokuzola? It would never be the same. I'm an orphan now. The reality hits me so hard I struggle to breath.

“Breathe baby, I'm here. I'm right here.” I had even forgotten that Banzi is with me.

He's crouching in front of me and he's in tears and I'm just sitting on the burial grounds consumed by my loss. I look at him blankly and I can tell he's scared but I can't feel right now, I'm empty, devoid of any human emotion.

How did you find her? I sign and he blows out some breath then clears his throat.

“Tata went looking for you in Nigeria. They found her in what they assumed was one of the abandoned camps of Boko Haram.”

Vuyo looked for me. I digest this titbit of information and I still feel nothing.

How was she when they found her body? Is my next question and Banzi's eyes plead with me not to make him say it but I need to know.

“Her body was hacked and almost unrecognizable.” He says as more tears fall down his face.

I try to imagine her hacked body and I feel bile rise from my stomach and I retch all over the beautiful lawn. Banzi hold my hair away from my face until I'm done. I watch as he cleans me up with some tissues then he scoops some loose dirt and covers my vomit. I lost even him Allah, he was supposed to be my fate but you gave him to someone else.

“We followed the Islamic rites of Janazah. She was buried in dignity, her body made to face Mecca and without a coffin. We didn't know though her birthday and when she passed on that's why we left it out on the placard.” He says as he wipes his dirty hands on his trousers leaving a trail of reddish dust on them.

I nod my head and try to summon up a smile of gratitude. That's what Nura would have wanted and I'm glad they gave her that at least. I wonder if her parents still think of her. Are my grandparents even still alive? Would they want to know where their daughter is buried. Banzi sits next to me on the grass and he watches me clear the weeds around the placard with my hands. They are not that many but one cuts my hand and I'm grateful for the little physical pain.

Can I be alone with her for a moment? I ask and he's reluctant to leave me but he does.

I wipe the splatters of my blood from the placard slowly and lovingly. The way Nura used to wipe my tears when I came back from being bullied at school. The way she always made my favourite meal whenever I was feeling sick. The way she wiped my forehead each time I broke into a fever.

I have a daughter now and she's gentle and loving like you. She doesn't complain like you. I wish you could have met her. You would have loved her. I've failed her, I haven't been the mother to her that you were to me. How did you do it? How did you push your pain into the corner and love me so effortlessly. I wish I had your strength. I wish you had lived. I wish I insisted and took you with me, maybe you'd still be alive. How do I go on now without you?

I wait for her spirit to somehow come to me and give me the answers, assure me that it's going to be fine that she's always around me. But there's nothing just emptiness and still trees around us. There isn't even a tiny breeze.

I sit there until clouds gather around, darkening the sky and an angry wind starts. I sit until the clouds let up and the droplets of rain fall on my downcast face. The rain somehow gives my tears room to flow and I cry there in the rain. I cry for Nura until Banzi's arms forcefully lift me up. I bury my wet face on his neck and I just cry.

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Drained for now. We'll talk about the target and next insert in the evening.

Love and light ❖❖❖❖

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 13

My teeth are chattering by the time we get in the car. I'm grateful when he turns on the aircon and some warmth sips into my skin. We drive for a while in total silence and I don't even play any music, his presence alone is calming. We get into an estate about 15 minutes from the memorial grounds and I look around, the houses are beautiful and a bit far apart. He parks in front of a house and turns to look at me.

“Hey,” he says wiping my hair from my face and I respond with a faint smile.

Where are we? I ask slightly moving my face from his hand.

“At my house, there's a few things we took from your old flat at Safari and the rest is in storage. And I thought you'd want them and a steaming cup of coffee.”

He brought me to his house, the same house he probably shares with Mandisa. Oh, hell no. I'm not getting into another woman's house. Even if she's not there. I shake my head no and he frowns.

You can get the staff and I'll wait here.

“But you're wet and cold. You could catch pneumonia,” he protests and this time I do roll my eyes. A little cold won't hurt me, I've been through worse.

Banzi that's your wife's house. I'm not going in there. I sign enunciating each movement of my hand so that it sinks into his dense head. He huffs and is about to argue when I shake my head firmly and give him the look.

He leaves and bangs the car door a bit aggressively and I sink into the car seat trying hard to control my shivering. The jerk turned off the heat. How does he think me going into the house he shares with Mandisa is ok? I wait for his majesty and he takes his sweet time until he comes out with his hands full. He opens the trunk of the car then comes to the front with a hoodie. He tosses the hoodie to me and it's his, it's huge and smells like him. And also his sweat pants are folded inside the hood, they tumble onto my lap.

I look at him and he has this smirk on his face. I don't have time for his games, not today. I begin by stripping my soggy panties then I peel off my dress. My skin breaks out into goosebumps and my nipples are taut from the cold, the smirk on Banzi's face has turned into a strained look. I ignore him and just put on the sweat pants and his hoodie. I could wear his hoodie as a dress and get away with it and the sweats are loose around my limbs. I bundle my dirty clothes not sure where to put them.

“Umm.. you can put them in the back seat,” his voice is weird and I just toss them and hope I won't forget them when I get home.

The ride home is blessedly quiet and short. I find everyone at home in panic, mama hugs me the moment she sees me and bursts into tears. I'm confused and I look at dad he's also angry but relief has softened his features.

“Don't scare us like that again. You left to drop off Sami and that was hours ago you also left your phone behind. We assumed the worst and we were about to go to Samira's school.”

Even Lungelo left work and came back home, he's holding a red faced Avuyile. I feel bad now and Banzi clears his throat awkwardly.

“I'm sorry elders. I took her to go and see her mother's final resting place.” He sounds respectful and not his usual pompous self. Mama and Avuyile break into fresh tears.

“Awu mntanam” mama keeps saying again and again, rubbing my back until I also start crying the pain still fresh.

I must have fallen asleep after all that crying, I'm woken by Samira's little hands all over my face. I sit up and two small faces are looking at me like I'm on the witness stand.

“Mommy tell her, tell Thobeka that I have two daddies. And that my daddy is so strong, he lifted me so high I almost touched the clouds.” Samira demands talking very fast and opening her eyes wider for emphasis.

“Liar! No one can touch the clouds unless they are in an eleplane!” Thobeka contradicts and I just want to close my eyes and go back to sleep.

“Mommy why are your eyes so small and red?” Samira is not letting me rest.

“She's been crying can't you see.” Thobeka responds like it's the most obvious thing in the world, causing Samira to enquire as to why I was crying.

I just found out that my mother, your grandmother Sami went to heaven. I sign but we struggle before she understands the sign that represents heaven. When they both finally understand their little faces fall with sadness.

“But isn't heaven a good place Fafa?” Thobeka asks with her intelligent eyes trained on me, trying to read me.

It is, I'm just sad I never got to say goodbye. I explain and they both hug me to take the pain away. I'm grateful for their warm little bodies and I hug them until they start wriggling in my arms.

Do you want to see grandma? I ask Samira and she nods looking solemn and just so angelic.

I pull out the album from the suitcase that Banzi came out with and my babies scramble up my bed and sit on either side of me. Samira has her thumb in her mouth, something I thought we'd outgrown while Thobeka is already reaching for the album to flip to the first page. Bossy little thing.

The first picture shows Nura smiling widely in a colourful silk Shayla and matching pink cloak while I looked more sullen and about Samira's age also in pink. It was during Eid al-Fitr celebrations that year it was at the Bismillah in Fordsburg, Nura scribbled this information at the back of the picture. I can't remember a time when Nura wore colourful clothes not her monotonous dark coloured Hijabs. The feminine colours suited her and lit up her whole face.

There are also pictures of Nura as a young girl and young woman in front of a waterfall that seems so familiar. Until I remember my dreams that used to involve me singing at this waterfall then drowning. Lamadaya Falls is scribbled behind in Nura's elegant hand.

There's one of a military man looking sternly at the camera while a young Nura was smiling and hanging on to him and another girl much younger than Nura sat on his feet. Could that be my grandfather. If so who was the little girl. Behind it was written aabbahay iyo walaashay meaning my father and sister. Wow so I had an aunt.

I'm still holding the pic and fingering the words written behind it while ignoring Thobeka's one million questions. She's relentless though and I'm only saved by Avuyile shouting that dinner is ready. They scramble out of my bed and race to the kitchen. I put the photo back in it's framec and the album back

in the suitcase. I realise I'm still wearing Banzi's hoodie, it's warm and snuggly. I decide I'm sleeping in it today and I take it off to wear something else for dinner.

After dinner and putting the kids off to bed, I'm back in my bedroom and debating whether or not to go through the rest of the things in the suitcase. My phone pings and I pick it up.

Hey Freckles, how are you feeling now?

I hesitate for a moment before responding.

Beneath the pain I think I've found closure. Always suspected but now I know she's resting not rotting somewhere in a hole in Abuja.

I'm here for you. Is the immediate response and I send him a heart emoji.

About last weekend... he's still typing but I override him.

Please no more revelations I'm exhausted.

He stops typing for a minute then he starts typing again.

Ok rest baby, we'll talk tomorrow. I love you Fatima Farrah Omar.

I hesitate before sending my response

Goodnight Grizzly bear.

The response makes me smile;

Oh it's Papa bear now baby, get with the programme. Wink emoticon.

Just as I log out of my WhatsApp I notice a flashing light on my notifications signalling that I have unread e-mail. I toss my phone on the bed and grab my laptop instead. My heart races when I see that it's one of the schools I applied to that has responded.

Ms Shabangu

We were delighted when you responded to our advert to teach under our Neuro Developmental Programme which all Foundation Phase children experience daily. The post is available immediately if you could be so kind as to come for assessment on the...

I read the rest of the e-mail in a daze and I check again to see if it's legitimate. Yes, there it is clearly on top the letterhead is written in bold CrawfordSchools Pre-Primary. Preparatory. College. And the emblem design looks legitimate enough. And it's signed off Ian Roth, Principal. The date of the assessment is tomorrow! Allahabad! My excitement is tempered by nerves and I rush to drag a stunned Avuyile from the lounge to show her the e-mail.

This is a disaster, I have nothing to wear. I'm ill prepared for such an exclusive school interview. I'm panicking and she manages to calm me down. Luckily I have the outfit mama bought for my graduation ceremony, which I never attended, it's formal and classy enough. It will have to do. Avuyile borrows me a pair of her most "sensible" heels the rest are ridiculously long. Even these are a bit long but beggars can't be choosy. My outfit is laid out and my alarm set and I finally collapse in bed, Banzi's scent clinging around me in his hoodie.

It's been an emotional rollercoaster of a day. I can't shake the feeling that Nura is somehow behind me getting called back and that this is my new lease in life. I don't even question how I will make it, because now I have to set a better example for Samira. Be the mother to her that Nura was to me up to her death. I'm going to make you proud Saffiya, I promise her in my heart. Waxaad tahaay Qalbigayga, You are my Heart.

.....

Morning fam♥ meet again when we've reached 3K likes and 300 shares. Yes, you can do it😊

Love and light 💎💎💎💎

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 14

“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.” Tori Amos.

Add a little gloss and done, I admire my reflection in the mirror. I look like some corporate lady about to kick arse in this high waist skirt and the jabot inspired blouse. And now I have to twirl for my avid audience, Thobeka in her uniform and Samira who's so wide eyed I'm afraid her eyes may pop out.

“Wow mommy you look like a princess!” my girl gushes and I can't contain the smile that spreads throughout my face. Thobeka accesses me more critically.

“Makeup looks good on you, you should use it more often.” Wow I don't know whether to feel complimented or insulted.

“I swear they swapped babies for me at the hospital, what 7 year old has such a vile mouth! Come smart-mouth daddy is waiting for you. Sami are you going with daddy or mommy?” Avuyile and Thobeka are always at each other's throat and Lungelo says that's what happens when you give birth to yourself.

Samira opts for me, I'm using an Uber to go to my interview. Lungelo offered to take me but it's out of his way and it wouldn't be fair on him. I'm too nervous for breakfast and I just grab my baby girl to go wait for the Uber ride outside.

We've just reached the gate when Muzi's car pulls in front of us. Oh crap! I totally forgot I have a session with Muzi today.

He comes put of the car looking all kinds of hot in a laidback manner. Something about Muzi screams Alpha male and he just drips of masculinity. Samira is used to him by now and she easily foes into his arms, squealing as he tickles her. I find myself in his arms as well, damn this man knows his scents well and I don't mind that his hug lingers.

“Daddy!” Samira's scream has me scrambling out of Muzi's arms so fast I almost fall and he has to balance me by holding my elbow. I look into Banzi's angry gaze and swallow a lump. Wait, why am I even feeling guilty? I'm not the married one.

Banzi's face softens when he lifts up Samira and she's showering him with baby kisses. Muzi has tensed next to me and is gripping my elbow a little too hard. The air is charged with just too much testosterone and only Samira is oblivious to the tension. I pull away from Muzi and stand awkwardly as we watch Banzi and his daughter bond.

I have never been more grateful when the Uber pulls up next to Banzi's car. The poor guy looks from Banzi's car to Muzi's car in obvious confusion. I take an unwilling Samira from Banzi and he's frowning daggers at me.

"Where are you going?" well hello to you too Papa bear, I want to retort to his question but I just sign that I'm late and we have to go.

"You don't need an Uber ride, I can take you wherever you're going," Muzi offers and before I can even respond, Banzi hisses at him.

"I'm sure I can drive my daughter and her mother around."

You know what, I don't have time for their pissing contest, so while they argue I just slip into the Uber ride and ask the now curious guy to drive. Thankfully he obliges and we leave Banzi screaming my name. The driver looks like he wants to ask but I just give him a stare and he keeps quiet.

"This is my school," Samira pipes up and I smile at her as the driver stops the car and she kisses me before getting off and running towards a group of her friends. She didn't ask why her daddy was mad and I don't think I would have had an adequate answer for her anyways. We've been driving for a while in comfortable silence when the driver keeps checking his rear-view mirror.

"I think one of your men is following us," he's amused by this.

I look back and sure enough Banzi is tailing us, great just great. I should be worried about my interview but now I'm just pissed off at this man who thrives on acting like a cave man. But maybe he's just on his way which happens to be the same way as us. I decide to ignore him and text Muzi an explanation.

I'm sorry about today's session, I'm on my way to a job interview. See you on the next session.

He's online and reads the message immediately, then blue tick. Wow. How fragile is the male ego really? I log out and check if my TTS application that Xhanti installed on my phone is still working. I text and a feminine almost throaty voice pipes up;

"Please put on some music."

The driver eyes me from his mirror and I raise my brow, he gets the message and turns on the music. The floaty sounds of Freshlyground's Black Girls comes on and I sit back and just let the lyrics wash over me. The ride to Crawford Preparatory is long and I'm almost dozing off when I'm woken up by the driver saying we have arrived. My ride is already paid for, I smile at him and get out of his car.

I'm still admiring the impressive grounds and architecture of this place when Banzi's car pulls up next to me. I'm already irritated by him and I know he's not happy with me either. I turn already geared up then he steps out of the car and totally knocks the senses off me. I know I said Muzi has that Alpha male going on right?

But right now my bear looks like a barely leashed beast. I hadn't fully looked at him back at the house, his t-shirt looks strained on his muscles like they want to escape and I just want to swoon. And those jeans Allah! I want to be plastered against him like those jeans.

"Don't you know just how many people have been abducted because of Uber?" his hiss-growl snaps me out of my lust and I look down. My lips are pressed down as I try to keep the tears at bay. I hear him swear softly and then he bundles me into his car.

"I'm sorry that was a really shitty and insensitive thing for me to say but I'd really appreciate it if you didn't use Uber very frequently ok?" his voice is gentle now and I nod while clearing the moisture from my eyes.

At least my make-up isn't spoiled. I check my time and I have like twenty minutes before I'm called in for my interview. I need to get away from Banzi he's an unnecessary distraction.

"What are you doing here anyways?" all traces of anger are gone now from his voice and eyes.

I came for an interview for a post. I got called back yesterday.

He has this small smile on his face that says I'm proud of you and I can't help but smile back at him.

“But why didn't you tell me about this last night?” he asks.

We're not together anymore Banzi. Yes, we have Samira together but that's as far as it goes.

Even as I sign my heart is heavy at these words but they are the truth and we can't continue acting like nothing happened. He looks hurt and he just nods. That's my cue to leave his car. I grab my things and step out of the car without any words exchanged between us. I feel his eyes on my back and I sway my hips a little while he cat whistles appreciatively.

I've been waiting for about ten minutes when I'm led into a plush conference room. It's not that huge but it's airy and there's a panel of interviewers already sitting in front. Behind a row of tables that have been joined and covered by a plain snow white cloth. I'm told to take the chair in front of them and I oblige, nervous and anxious.

“Ms Shabangu, it says here you finished your Matric six years ago. Why are you only pursuing your Honours degree now?” the curt question is coming from the youngest and most handsome member of the panel and is accentuated by his slightly exotic accent.

Wow. They are just going to go right into it! My hands are sticky as I type into my phone but I manage not to mess up my answer.

“I was abducted and part of the human trafficking victims of Boko Haram for a little over 3 months before I managed to escape. The trauma I suffered there made me alternate between hospitals and psychiatric wards for over a year.”

There is definitely shock from the face of all of the panellists and I sense disbelief on some. So I hand them copies of my case file and medical records. Mr sexy accent takes them from me and hands them around but barely looks at his before firing the next missile.

“And you cannot speak totally? But your hearing is perfect?” I nod before typing my answer.

“Yes, I haven't spoken since I was 3 years old.” I love the automated voice because it isn't peppered with half the nerves I'm feeling right now.

“And you got your qualifications via distance learning?” asks an elderly lady with a foxy face and silver strands on her full black hair.

She reminds me of a matured version of Connie Ferguson and her face is kind. I type my response and so the questions continue for the next thirty minutes. All the panellists throw questions at me but mostly sexy accent does the questioning and I type my response which my phone turns to speech.

“Thank you Ms Shabangu that will be all for now. Our office will be in touch with you later on.” I'm finally dismissed and I almost sag from relief. I sign my thank you and leave the conference room as quickly as dignity permits.

I'm not sure how that went but I'm trying to remain positive. The petite receptionist, called Ramona, smiles warmly at me as I pass her desk the second time today. She waves me off as she points out the exit. I smile gratefully at her, I would have totally gotten lost. I take out my phone to order an Uber but I stop when I spot Banzi's car still packed in the same spot I left it on almost an hour ago.

He drives up to me and opens the passenger side, I gladly get in and sink into his leather seat. He drives away a bit before asking me.

“So how was it?”

I sign that it was hard, they asked questions I didn't expect. Personal questions.

He rubs my thigh and the gesture calms me down a bit. I ask him if he doesn't work and he informs me that he asked for leave since last week. I nod my understanding I guess the past two weeks have been hectic for him too. He asks that we pass through his office so that he drops off some important documents and I agree. He is offering me a free ride after all.

“About last week,” he sighs deeply like what he's about to say is going to knock me down. “After I found out about Samira I went home and I was told that Mandisa's family had requested a meeting. I had to go to Cape Town that night and the meeting was the very next day. They want a cleansing ceremony for

their daughter and we will hold it this weekend.” I nod not liking where this conversation was suddenly heading.

“When they left I told my father and grandfather about you, Samira and our little prince and they said we also need to perform a cleansing ceremony for you too and for our son's spirit. Since they were twins Samira needs the same cleansing and also a ritual welcoming her home and introducing her to our ancestors. I had to prepare for all these ceremonies and they are going to happen this weekend.”

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Ziyawa Weekend, if you haven't already got a copy of The Harvard Wife please do yourself a favour and get it. It's now instores nationwide.

Meet after our next 3K likes and 300 shares. Love and light ♥

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 15

I feel my blood boiling and a whooshing sound in my ears. I'm actually hyperventilating from anger and he's cool as a cucumber, driving like he just didn't spew crap.

Stop the car, I sign urgently

“We're in the highway! I just can't park any...” I open the door before he even finishes talking and the car comes screeching to a halt and he's fuming. “Are you out of your mind? You could have fallen and gotten hurt Farrah!”

You're the one that's out of your mind. You don't get to come into my life and just dictate things! My hand movements are aggressive.

“It's not about you, it's about my children!” he is clearly exasperated.

Oh and those children just fell out of the sky? I have a scar on my stomach that says otherwise.

“I don't get why you are fighting this, it needs to be done.” His arrogance knows no bounds I'm actually out of breath

Have you even thought how this will affect me? Or how it will affect Samira? And why should it be held the same weekend as your wife's ceremony?

“Had I known of Samira sooner, this ceremony would have been done ages ago,” he grits his teeth and the bite in his voice is obvious.

So is this your way of punishing me for not being in her life sooner? I sign without the anger I had just a moment ago.

“Maybe, but I just want to make up for lost time Farrah. I missed so much already. Her fighting for her life, her first time opening her eyes, first smile, first words, first step and her first day at school. I missed all that and now I just want to be in her life, protect her and do everything in my power for her to never doubt that I'm her father and that I love her.” he's grasping at the wheel too tightly, veins popping on his forehead.

I sigh remembering Banzi's issues with his own father and how he never felt fully accepted by his father and his father's family. I understand where he's coming from but that still doesn't make it right.

She's not going anywhere, Samira already adores you and she's only seen you for 2 days. She can't stop telling everyone about her big and strong daddy who made her touch the clouds.

I see a smile light up his eyes and I continue signing.

I'm not saying you shouldn't hold the ceremony for her. I'm just saying it doesn't have to be this weekend. Just focus on Mandisa and then we'll discuss Samira's ceremony.

I'm not sure I've gotten to him or not because he clenches and unclenches his teeth. He puts his face on the steering wheel and I fight the urge to slowly massage the tension from his neck and shoulders. I usually did that whenever he was frustrated and it helped calm him down.

"Fine. I'll ask them to postpone the ceremony. But it has to be done this month, so choose a weekend that suits you best and let me know." he's making it sound like I just coerced him into having his tooth removed but I smile chirpily still and he smiles back.

He starts the car and continues on his way to his office. I put on some music then recline my seat and close my eyes. The music and motion of the car is making me relax and I think I doze off to sleep. I'm woken by Banzi's breathe on my face, I open my eyes lazily and find him leaning so close to me while caressing my face.

His thumb brushes my lips before his mouth claims ownership of them. His kiss is slow and gentle, overwhelming my senses. I lay my palms on his fiercely thudding heart and kiss him back, pouring all my longing and emotions that I can't express into the kiss.

"Hie," he dimples at me after pulling apart and I find myself blushing. I bury my warm face on his neck and his chuckle rumbles through his chest. "I don't understand how you can still be so shy when I've seen you naked." That earns him a punch on the chest and he laughs before saying I punch like a girl.

After fooling around he finally takes me into his company while holding my hand. The building is huge and impressive, made purely out of glass. I wonder how many floors it has. The receptionist is smiling broadly when she sees Banzi but her face turns sour when she sees me and she looks at our joined hands pointedly. Ok that was awkward but so are the looks we are getting in the elevator and on Banzi's floor.

He seems oblivious to them as he greets some of his colleagues and when I try to pull my hand away, he tightens his hold. I'm grateful when we finally reach his office. It's huge and airy, the outer wall is also made of glass which frosts over when he touches a button. His office is overlooking Mall of Africa, though it seems so small from up here. Mr L Lunika Chartered Accountant, says the glass sign on his desk.

I look around and there's pictures of Nathi, Khanyo and Vuyo on his desk and a framed family portrait with Bongwiwe and Banzi on his wall. I crane my neck looking for a picture of Mandisa but I don't see it. I give up and watch Banzi as he frowns over some documents.

His desk is huge and made of solid mahogany. It's shiny surfaces are tempting, an image of me bent over that desk as he presses me down while his face is buried in my arse comes unbidden in my mind. I cross and uncross my legs but the dirty images keep coming, of me kneeling under his desk right now and working on his cucumber with some Bongiwe moves. I press my thighs together as I imagine my butt against his huge windows as he pumps into me while I scratch his back.

“Stop doing that,” Banzi's growl snaps me out of my imagination and I look at him guiltily. “I know your I-want-to-fuck face and it's making it hard for me to concentrate on these documents.” He stands and shows me his very impressive hard-on and it just makes me feel even hotter and more bothered.

There's a knock on his door and he quickly sits down while I fan my face with my hands. His assistant comes in carrying a wrapped bicycle and I can't help the grin that stretches over my face.

“Here's the parcel you ordered sir and the helmet as well as the papers you need to sign.” She barely acknowledges my presence and I'm busy admiring the bicycle. I love the bicycle until I remember Thobeka.

“Why are you frowning?” Banzi asks and I'm relieved to see that the assistant has left.

At home they always buy the same things for Samira and Thobeka. I explain and he simply nods and calls Stephanie, his assistant, back into the room. Ok, I am not imagining the cold front coming from this woman.

“Stephanie please call back the shop and order another bicycle, a size bigger and make this one pink instead. And please order breakfast for us, full farmhouse breakfast,” he asks with his eyes if that's ok and I nod, “for both of us, coffee for me and hot chocolate for her.”

I swear she glances at me disdainfully before smiling again at Banzi and leaving. I decide to ignore her and go through my mail while Banzi is busy with his papers. My assignment came back and I nailed it, midterm work is in the bag and now all I have to do is pass my exams.

Breakfast comes at the same time as the other wrapped bicycle. I'm famished, I just dig into the eggs and I feel like the food is making love to my soul. Banzi watches in amusement as I wolf down my plate, he doesn't know that I haven't eaten this much in forever. Being around him has opened my appetite.

When we're done with breakfast, he says we can leave. I carry Samira's bicycle while he carries Thobeka's and both helmets.

"Sir?" Stephanie calls out just as we pass her desk. Banzi stops and looks at her, "How is Mandisa doing?"

I feel like a shitload of iced water has been poured all over me. Then all the nasty stares click, Banzi and Mandisa both work here. Surely everyone knows them as a couple and this idiot had to come in here while holding my hand. Banzi looks angry and responds with a cold "She's fine."

"Please tell her the whole office is thinking of her, she's in our prayers." Stephanie says just before Banzi is dragging me to the lifts.

I have never been so humiliated in my life, maybe I'm exaggerating I have been through worse. But still! It's high up there in my humiliation scoreboard. There's tension between us until we reach his car and he puts the bicycles in the boot. I'm not angry at him, I'm fuming and for some strange reason he's angry too.

Did you have to bring me to your wife's workplace?

In moments like this I wish I could speak so that I could some emphasis on the word wife and also call him a few choice words.

"It's my workplace too and I needed to sign those papers," he says running a frustrated hand through his hair. "Why is it always such a big deal with you? Everything ends with us fighting now." Whooooosa, Allah give me patience not to strangle this man.

Because she's your wife! And you have turned me into nothing more than your side piece, a home wrecker.

He looks hurt by my words and his voice carries that hurt. "But you are my heart, my whole world."

I'm this close to tearing my hair from the roots. I don't know how I can make him see that as much as he loves me and I love him, our love is ruining other people's lives. It has turned into something dirty and forbidden.

I can't keep doing this, whatever this is with you Banzi. It's hurting me so much. Please take me home. Go to your wife.

I'm drained, I have no more fight in me. This is like our first official break-up and it feels like I'm tearing my soul into two. I get in the car and put on my seatbelt. He also gets in and drives without uttering a single word.

I try to block out this morning's happenings as I watch Thobeka and Samira jump in glee as they see their presents. They make a short work of the wrapping paper and scream so loud until Avuyile promises to return the bicycles if they don't stop screaming.

I capture their reaction on camera and send Banzi the video. Along with Samira's "thank you thank you daddy!" and a million kisses which leave my screen dirty. He immediately video calls back and I hand the phone to Samira without picking up.

I hear her squeals and his happy voice as they set up a date for him to teach her how to ride the big bicycle and they sound so cute together. There's no doubting the love between these two even before the strings of I love yous they exchange. It makes me happy and sad.

"Mommy, daddy said I should give you the phone," Samira says innocently before prancing out of my bedroom. Banzi suddenly looks serious and intense and I school my expression to be as blank as possible.

"I know you've given up on us but I swear I'm never letting you go. I respect your decision but I won't stop fighting for us. I'm going to fix this, I promise." I feel the tears threatening so I just end the call and throw my phone on the bed.

I'm called to the dining room for supper and I go even though my appetite has waned again. After grace we eat and I go and tuck the divas to bed. I'm summoned to dad's study and I wonder what's up. Dad can be intimidating when he's being serious and right now the look he's giving me is intense.

“Makoti told me that Samira's father intends to perform a cleansing ceremony for both of you and welcome Samira to their family.” Trust Avuyile to run her mouth, I hope she didn't also tell them of Mandisa. I nod and he seems angry at this.

“Bring your phone, it's time me and that disrespectful boy of yours have a chat.” I want to protest but he gives me the eye and all I can do is meekly get up to go and get my phone. Banzi is about to come in full contact with the Shabangu wrath.

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Weekend post as promised. I'm not sure when the next post will be, we haven't had electricity since yesterday.

The rain is perfect weather to cuddle up to a good book + 🍷

Love and light ❤️

The End of Her Silent Screams

Insert 16

“To the women who haven't been themselves lately; your spark will return and you will shine like you were meant to. It's difficult when you catch yourself not being you. When you feel your whole world falling apart before your eyes.” Unknown

I don't know what Dad told Banzi over the phone. I was asked to dial his number then when he picked up the phone after the first ring with an anxious, “Farrah, baby are you ok?” I was given the eye until I exited the study. Whatever he told him must have been huge enough to get Banzi to come the very next morning with a straight-lipped Vuyo and a nervous Nathi who was clearly the peacemaker.

I wasn't even allowed in that meeting and the only one in my line of vision was Vuyo who kept flexing and folding his hand while Dad's voice cut through the lounge but I could barely make out his deep Xhosa. But I could make out his ire, he was royally pissed.

Whatever talks were held on those two days have led us to today, the Lunikas have sent a delegation to pay intlawulo and lobola for Samira. I've been a nervous wreck since morning when we were woken up early to prepare for the guests.

It's Saturday, the day of Mandisa's ceremony and I'm glad Banzi listened to reason and didn't force me to gate-crash it. I wonder why they didn't come to pay intlawulo next week but I heard mama telling Avuyile that she has never seen people more eager for their child than the Lunikas.

The only face I recognized in the delegation was Vuyo and I must say he's aging like fine wine. I was called in to confirm that I do know these people, which I was told is tradition. Then I was called again and asked if I agreed with their request to hold a cleansing ceremony for their departed grandchild and welcoming ceremony for Samira and to change her surname. Dad said he didn't care about the lobola, if I didn't want to change Samira's surname then we wouldn't.

I could feel Vuyo's frustration from where I sat, head bowed and eyes averted. All of the Shabangu sons except for the one in London were also present apparently to support their only sister. You can imagine how charged the atmosphere is. Too much Xhosa ego versus Swati anger in one room.

I have no problem with changing Samira's surname and even holding whatever ceremony is necessary for my girl and I let my family know that. They are satisfied and I'm allowed to go back to the kitchen. The talks are concluded and I'm surprised when we are serving food that everyone seems to be getting along now and they are even sharing jokes.

"She's my only girl, next time when you come to pay lobola for her I won't be as lenient," I hear Shabangu say before I abandon the food I came with and flee back to the kitchen.

I'm tempted to text Banzi and tell him that everything seems to have gone well but I squash that impulse. We haven't really talked since that day when he told me he's not giving up on us. He calls, twice everyday or even more times to video chat with his daughter.

Those calls have become the highlight of my baby's days. Last night, he was a bit late in calling and she sulked all through supper. I was prepared for the waterworks when she was supposed to go to bed but fortunately he called then. My heart caught at how her little face lit up and she cradled my iPad until she drifted off to sleep. I was surprised when I picked up the device to see that Banzi hadn't hung up. He was just staring at Samira sleeping.

He looked older and drawn but I didn't dare allow my heart to show itself. I just smiled at him and hung up. I miss him. He's the first person I wanted to text and let him know that I got the job at Crawford but I couldn't. I have to let him go. My head tells me I'm doing the right thing but my heart feels like it's being ripped into two.

I have talks in my head where at times I even convince myself that he was mine first so it's ok to love him but my head knows better. I wish Nura were still here with her boundless wisdom and knack for knowing just what I need to hear. I can't overly burden Avuyile, she looks ready to pop and very irritable. I can't even confide in Nathi anymore like I used to before, I feel so alone at times.

I want to be strong and fierce again. Be that girl who believed she could conquer the world. I really miss that girl. Yes, life wasn't fair to her but she was spunky and full of life and dreams. Now I just feel like I'm flapping in the wind, like when I take 2 steps forward I am pushed back 10 steps. I've been broken so much at times I don't recognize myself. By now I should be over everything right?

Some days I wake up feeling like dancing in the rain. And some days I want to curl up into a ball and just sob the whole day. Adulting is hard enough on it's own without paranoia and depression holding you back. But each day I get up and I think no body understands what I mean when I say my greatest achievement every day is just getting out of bed.

"Babe, you're being called in the lounge," Avuyile heaves as she puts the dirty dishes on the island countertop. "I swear after this one, I'm having my tubes tied. No more babies!"

"But baby that's what you said when we had Thoba," Lungelo breaks in and earns himself a death stare and a dishing spoon thrown at him causing Xhanti to laugh at him. I smile and leave the crazies in the kitchen as they do the dishes and force Avuyile to rest.

Oh the Lunikas are long gone and there's only mama and dad in the lounge. I haven't gotten a chance to properly thank Vuyo for helping find Nura and bringing her body back this side. And I haven't thanked Nathi for making sure she was buried according to our Islamic rites. That was very big of both of them.

"Mntanam', we know we came into your life when you were already grown and you had already gone through so much in life. And from talking to the Lunikas we have realized they were in your life way before us and they consider you a daughter as well. But as your potential in-laws you have to realize that they will look out for the interests of their son above yours. That's why we are here to make sure you are not bullied into anything and no one takes advantage of you. You are not an orphan Farrah, you are a Shabangu now. And you will always have a home here."

I smile at the earnestness in dad's voice, this man really took me in and loved me like a daughter from day one. He said there's a reason why they found me in that jungle that day and he's never shown me anything but love and acceptance. Everyone else eventually came around and took their cue from him but he's been my rock.

“And the money they paid is all going into a trust fund for Samira. We know that we won't always be here for you two and this is our way of making sure you are set up.” Mama adds smiling as she hugs me to her side. I sniff a little. It's these small acts of care and love that make life bearable each day.

Honestly I wouldn't have minded even if they had taken the money for themselves, they have done so much for both me and Samira. They deserve that money but I know arguing with them is futile. We discuss the day of the ceremony and they settle on the last weekend of the month which is 2 weekends away. And I agree, dad says he will notify one of the Lunika delegates and I'm fine with that. So I just chill with the parents and tell them I got a job.

“God is wonderful my child, I've been praying for this moment,” typical mama response and I just smile wanly.

“So you are saying they have offered you boarding?” Dad is more concerned about the logistics and I give him a brief.

Not only will I be offered accommodation but there's also an education benefit which means Samira can actually get to learn there for free. I think that clinched the deal for me, now I can just focus on saving money for her tertiary education. To think I once wanted to start a programme at high school to teach other learners sign language for free and I was shut down. Now I'm going to be doing it for a very healthy salary plus I get to help with speech therapy.

“But Samira can stay here another term then just start off next year.” I knew this part was going to be extremely hard on Shabangu he dotes on his two princesses, Thobeka and Samira. I'm actually even scared to broach the matter to Thobeka. They have a cute sisterhood going on. But I need to do this with Samira, she's my baby and I don't see myself leaving her behind.

“Tatabo this is a great opportunity for our little Sami and it's not like they are changing provinces. You can still visit and they'll come see us weekends.” Mama tries to soothe him and though he hates the idea

he finally gives his blessing under the promise that we eat every Sunday meal at home lol. My old man can be such a grouch but they offer to help me buy furniture the next day and help me move in.

As I thought the news is received with tears from both Samira and Thobeka.

“Please Fafa, let her stay and I promise we will be good. I will help her wash and prepare for school. Please!” Thobeka is very close to wailing and it makes me so sad.

“Baby they will still come every weekend and daddy will take you to see Sami every time you miss her ok,” Avuyile pleads with her and Thobeka just sobs in her arms.

I watch in fascination as Samira takes out my phone and dials Banzi. When his face comes on the screen she bursts into fresh sobs and to say I'm shocked is an understatement. The theatrics of this child! Banzi looks panicked and tries to subdue his child and I choose to stay out of this one.

In between hiccups she tells him that I want to take her away from her teacher that she loves and her friends as well as Thobeka. Allah give me strength! My own 5 year old is snitching on me to a man she's barely known over a week.

Banzi listens to her going on patiently and nods his head while I keep rolling my eyes. I've never known Samira to be dramatic. This is something I'd expect from Thobeka not Samira. What is Banzi feeding my child?

“But bubba you have to go with mommy to protect her from the other mean children. Do you want mommy to go alone and be sad? Do you want her to miss you and cry for you every night?” I hear Banzi's voice say and Samira's sobs have died down to sniffles. She shakes her head no.

“Who's daddy's warrior princess?” he asks and my baby breaks into giggle, Allah! Banzi had promised her that they would watch Brave together and that Samira will be his little warrior princess.

“I am, daddy!” she's squealing like she wasn't just crying her lungs out a minute ago.

“Then pack your clothes and be good for mommy, o.k.” I could kiss him right now, the waterworks are gone and she's smiling.

“I love you papa bear,” she exclaims before sogging my screen with a wet kiss.

“I love you more my gummy bear. I'll call you before you sleep princess.”

She's satisfied with her snitch mission and hands me back my phone. I smile at Banzi and sign thank you. He returns my smile but his is strained and he looks dog tired. I want to ask him how the ceremony went. How he is holding up but instead I just hang up.

You look beautiful. A text from him comes on and I ignore it.

Why didn't you tell me about the new job? Another text.

I didn't think it's any of your concern, I respond and he's immediately typing.

Anything that involves Samira and you is my concern.

I decide not to respond to that. I'm trying to detach myself from him as much as I can and he's making it so bloody hard.

Congratulations on the new job Freckle-face. I'm proud of you.

That text makes me feel warm inside and I smile but don't respond. This co-parenting gig is going to be a joyride, yay Fatima.

.....

Electrical fault finally fixed. Hope you are all good fam♥.

Next insert after 3K likes and 300 shares.

Love and light.

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 17

I watch as Samira shows off her new room to Thobeka. And I marvel at how my baby has bloomed in a matter of weeks. I haven't seen her suck her thumb or tug at her curls while looking down. She looks... different; more confident, eyes twinkling and she has that sparkle.

"She's coming out of the shadows isn't she?" I almost jump out of my skin when Avuyile says this while brushing my shoulder. She laughs at me for being skittish, her warm bouncing laughter so infectious that the girls also join in. I'm so going to miss her laughs and her hugs. I smile and nod at her observation.

"She no longer hides behind Thobeka's skirts and I fear we may have a diva on our hands," I grin at that remembering her theatrics yesterday. "Do you know when she started to change?"

I ponder the question and the only reason I can come up with is that having a father figure who suddenly dotes all this attention on her is helping her come out of her shell. Sami was such a quiet child at one point we even took her to speech therapy and were told she's perfectly normal, just shy.

"She's been like this ever since her father came into the picture, but not because of him, because of you." I widen my eyes in disbelief and she continues softly yet her voice brokers no interruption.

"You no longer shut yourself in your room and avoid the children. You smile more often and you play with them, bath and tuck them in and take her to school. You've opened up your heart to being her mother and she's feeding off your energy.

Ever since Banzi came back you have this unmistakable glow that just pulls everyone in and it's making Samira blossom. When you were wallowing in depression she also felt that and withdrew into herself. She might have called me mama but she's always known you are her mother.

I know I fight with Thobeka but she's a little part of my soul, when I'm happy she's happy, when I'm irritable she's subdued and when I'm sad she's very clingy. Never underestimate the bond you share with Sami, it's irreplaceable."

I'm stunned, I never saw it that way or thought of how my state of mind was actually affecting my daughter. Avuyile takes my hand and draws me to my bedroom which is just across and already set up

as well. I settled for earth tones with a hint of yellow to brighten up the place. Mama made most of the choices from my light curtains to the thick cream rug and I loved every single item and detail. It has that serene aura I know I will need after a long day at work.

“I know he's your first love and even a blind man can see that the two of you are still crazy about each other. But my worry is now he comes with some baggage which might potentially harm you in the future. It's your first time living on your own and I know you missed out on the crazy adolescent years. The freedom of varsity and making so many drunken mistakes.

You don't have friends and your whole world revolves around the ones you love. I need you now to spread your wings, have hot steamy sex that you're going to regret in the morning with a stranger, not your married first love!” I am cracking up inside at the way she's so serious while encouraging me to make bad choices.

“Make friends, go out clubbing on weekends, go to movies, a book club or the theatre. Anything that makes your heart sing. Dance, make a fool of yourself and just have fun man. Let loose. Me and Lungelo are available to babysit from Fridays. I want you to live a little, God knows no one deserves it more than you. You're so strong babe and selfless, I'm going to miss you so much sis.”

Just like that she bursts into tears and I hold her as she cries. I'm going to miss her even more. Avuyile bullied me back into life when I was sinking in depression and she's been a huge part of mine and Samira's life.

“Hai maVuvu we agreed no tears, I don't want an ugly baby,” I didn't even hear bhut' Lungelo come in and he mouths I'll take it from here, before taking his wife into his arms.

Too soon it's time for the family to leave and we wave them until they disappear at the curve on the winding lane. This place is so quiet you'd barely think there are children around. I carry little gummy bear back into our new home. She's worn out from all the excitement and she's drifted off to sleep.

I'm glad we had pizza not so long ago, I forego bathing her and struggle to get her clothes off. I don't even bother putting her pyjamas on, I just tuck her in bed and kiss her forehead. My mini me.

It feels weird being alone but at least our space isn't too big. The front door leads you into the modern modest sized kitchen. The kitchen and lounge are open plan, giving an illusion of space and thankfully the natural lighting is great. Then there's a corridor leading to the bedrooms and bathroom as well as a separate toilet.

It's beautiful and simple and after the magic touch from the Shabangu wives, it feels homely and welcoming. I wasn't sure of the burnt orange throw cushions but they blend well with the brown leather couches and the fluffy rug throughout the lounge.

It's just after 7 still early for me to sleep so I settle into the couch and put on Our Perfect Wedding. There's a sweet couple celebrating 65 years of marriage and they look so cute together. I'm marvelling at their helicopter entrance when my phone alerts me of an incoming video call. I debate whether I should answer it or just text him back. He looks surprised to see my face instead of Samira.

"Hey," even unsure his deep baritone is still able to melt me like I'm a toasted cheese grill.

She's sleeping, exhausted by move. I sign and he smiles gently at me.

Shouldn't you be sleeping too? Oh; I guess today we are both signing.

I'm not a child, I sign back and he chuckles flashing his beautiful teeth. Allah lead me not into temptation!

Are you nervous about tomorrow, he asks and I nod my head without hesitation. Don't be, you're going to be great.

Thank you, I sign and we both become silent just watching each other.

The silence isn't oppressive or awkward, it's like we are communicating with our eyes; things we wouldn't dare voice out loud. The longing between us is stark naked but neither of us voice it, just like the other things we can see. Like that I think he looks drop dead gorgeous in his V-neck Polo t-shirt. And ask about the lines around his mouth and eyes.

We're just quiet but saying so much. I can't pull away from his gaze and I don't want to. Until someone opens the door his end and I sign goodnight before ending the call. Suddenly an early night sounds alluring. I switch off the lights, take a bath and settle into my new bed with How to kill a mockingbird.

Pheeeew first day done and dusted. Thankfully I didn't fall or make an absolute fool of myself. The children were attentive enough and they caught on quickly. It helped that they each had their laptops in front of them and that helped with slides and voice automated clips. Plus their classes are smaller, more intimate unlike where I went to school. Having taught Thobeka and Samira how to sign had been good practice for me. I needed patience for my younger class and tolerance for the older class.

I haven't familiarised myself with all their names yet and it will probably take some time. What was a bummer, was the staff meeting when I was introduced to the other teachers. I wasn't bummed because they were mean or anything. They were actually nice, I may have met a potential friend Zodwa, she was wearing the most bold red lipstick I've ever seen and it popped against her rich melanin skin. It was like at first sight, I may have found a partner in crime.

I was bummed because Mr sexy accent wasn't there and I had hoped to just catch a glimpse of that black god. There's something about him, I wouldn't mind to "have hot steamy sex that you're going to regret in the morning with a stranger," and the stranger being him. Don't look at me like that, I'm single! I'm joking, I'm not really ready to mingle yet but if I ever wanted something casual I wouldn't mind having the tall, dark and lean god in a suit as a starter.

Speaking of men, Muzi texted me hurt by the fact that I didn't let him know I got a job and we were moving out. I know I kissed him and all but hayi he's acting too clingy and territorial it's a turnoff. I mean I have to deal with enough of that from Banzi who's surprisingly been very laidback about me working. Muzi ignored that text I last sent him, remember? And he's been AWOL since only to come back and say he's hurt. We're not even dating! I liked him, yes, and I'll forever be grateful for his part in my healing but I think he wants too much and too soon.

To think just two weeks ago my love life was non-existent, it hasn't changed much but it's definitely looking up. Have I given up on me and Banzi? No, in a perfect world we'd be a beautiful family. But I have to face the possibility that that may never happen. I have to make peace with that harsh truth and focus on me and being young as well as impetuous.

All this is just in my head right now I'm focusing on work and my little person.

Speaking of, she comes running into my arms and I luckily catch her even though we both stumble a bit. She's growing on me and she looks happy.

"I love the new school mommy! I have my own computer. Wait till I tell Thobeka."

I let her talk as we walk to our cottage. It's not that far from the classes. Apparently her teacher is nice but not as nice as her old teacher but we love her. And she loved the little note I stuck in her lunch box. I wrote You're a diamond. That little note made her day. We get home and change into more comfortable clothes. I don't have that much work and neither does Sami so I suggest we go and visit her grandma.

It's not that far and mama lent me her first C-class to be using until I buy my own car. It's still in good condition and just what Samira and I need. She asks if her daddy called yet and I tell her he hasn't called and she's not as bothered as I thought she would be. She asks if we can go and see Thobeka as well.

We can't, we'll go and see them during the weekend. She sulks only for a minute then she tells me about Jessie. Jessie was nice to her and they shared their lunches together. I nod at intervals as I drive and she's content just chattering. I see a lot of Khanyo in her now, the bubbly character is surfacing.

As I drive into Fourways memorial, which is blessedly not that far from the school, I hope we don't get lost. I forgot to bring some flowers, mostly because I'm not that sure of the shops in this area. But I know I will learn and soon. Sami is quieter now and holding on to my hand as we pass through the grave plots separated by hedges. After a few wrong turns I finally find Nura's resting place and we go in.

I can feel her spirit all around us, it's comforting. I push Samira closer and her eyes are wide open as she tries to read from the placard, she fails but I hug her proudly anyways and kiss her mop of curls. I start fussing over Nura's grave but it's really clean, not a grass out of place. She would have loved it here and I hope she's resting in peace. I fight the tear that almost spills out of my eye but it falls anyway. Samira uses her small hands to wipe my face and I smile at her.

This is grandma, you can talk to her. I encourage Sami and she hesitates just a while before talking.

"Hi grandma, I saw your pictures and I'm just as pretty as you. I wish I met you but that doesn't change that I love you. Thank you for mommy and for bringing papa bear as well. I love you granny."

That little speech is perfect and I discreetly wipe my tears, Sami is just precious. I crouch and talk to Nura as I wipe her placard. I tell her of my new job, my new family and how I've met Banzi again. It feels good just talking to her, it's like she can hear me. I promise to visit her as frequently as I can and to bring Samira. This is 3 generations of Omar women, 3 generations of resilience. I hope life is kinder to my Sami, but even if it isn't I have no doubt that she also carries our strength deep within her.


I realize that I haven't had a depressing thought today and that to me is success. Yes life is still far from perfect but now I do not doubt that I will walk through it with grace. I'm Nura's daughter and if there's one thing my mother showed me in this life is that no matter how much the situation seeks to break you, you bend but you do not break. After an hour we say our goodbyes to our matriarch and leave hand in hand with Samira.

What do you feel like eating today? I ask her even though I already know the answer to that question.

“Mac and cheese please,” she blesses me with the sight of her gums and I kiss the top of her head. I feel her coming back, Fatima Farrah Omar is slowly breaking free from the clutches of her circumstances. And she came to slay bitches.

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Playing hard to get or moving on? Find out on the next insert after 3K likes and 300 shares.

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 18

“An unhealed person can find offense in pretty much anything someone does.

A healed person understands that the actions of others has absolutely nothing to do with them.

Each day you get to decide which one you will be.” Unknown.

Time really flies when you are busy and you barely notice where the days go by. Me and Gummy have been settling well into our new lives and I'm proud of the routine we've developed. Wake up, get ready for school, have breakfast and take our lunches and walk as we plan our days. Then after school we have our reading sessions, do our school work or watch a little tv and prepare supper or order take out then sleep and repeat the next day.

I was right about Zodwa we get on like a house on fire, she's just itching to corrupt me but we haven't had the chance for her to have her way with me yet. Last weekend, I spent it at home assuring everyone

that we were settling in perfectly and this weekend is the dreaded cleansing ceremony. I'm nervous about it and I'm barely touching my lasagne in the teacher's room.

“Hawu friend, if you are not going to eat that quit playing with it and bring it here,” I shrug and push my lunchbox to her and she gleefully digs in.

Her moan after the first bite is very inappropriate and I see a few of the male staff eyeing her like they want a piece of her and the older ladies eyeing her like she's a pariah. I grin because I know she's doing this on purpose. She wipes some crumbs from her pouty lips which are painted a daring neon pink this time and exclaims out loud.

“That's it I'm moving in with you friend, you can seriously cook.” If only Zodwa knew how much I hate cooking so I always settle for quick and easy meals. “So it's month end weekend, we are going to paint the town red!”

I text her that I have to go out of town to have a ceremony for my daughter and her face falls. I promise to go next time and she seems excited by the prospect. I'm nervous because I'm meeting all of the Lunikas today, excited to see my Khanyo and Bongwiwe. I'm nervous to be around Banzi, we haven't seen much of him in the last two weeks. Something about putting in overtime to compensate for the time he took off work. But he always makes a point of calling Samira before she goes to sleep and I'm grateful for those calls.

While I'm nervous my daughter is bounding off the roof with excitement. She's not worried about whether they'll accept her or not unlike me. She just can't wait to be with her Papa the whole weekend and her grandmother. Nathi asked for her last Saturday and they went shopping, even had a lunch date and watched a movie. Samira was in heaven.

“Mommy finish packing Ta'mkhulu will leave us!” I roll my eyes and snap our case shut, she's so impatient and bossy at times.

We're going with the parents, Avuyile can't travel and so Lungelo is staying with her and the kids. I refused when they suggested Noxolo should accompany me, I'd rather go alone. I wish Avuyile was coming with us, she would be saying inappropriate things that will help me less nervous. The parents are already packed and waiting when we pull up at home, I just transfer our case into their car and we make our way to the airport. Lungelo is driving us to the airport and he will pick us up.

We alight at Queenstown airport and we find Banzi waiting for us in a big car. Samira runs to him, throwing herself at him and he catches her, swinging her around. I'm so caught up in them I almost miss Khanyo until he's standing in front of me. He's tall for his age and a younger version of Banzi. I see the hurt and hesitation in his eyes. I just open my arms and he waits a bit before crushing me in a tight hug. His tears wet my t-shirt and I feel my own tears seeping out of the corners of my eyes.

I thought I'd never see you again, he sighs when we've both managed to pull ourselves together. I smile and punch him lightly.

You can't get rid of me that easily, I'm your first girl remember. He grins mischievously and turns his attention to Sami who's tugging at his t-shirt. I may have some competition even with Khanyo.

The parents being around save me from the awkwardness of hugging Banzi. He looks like a rib snack in those cargo pants and tight t-shirt. His legs Allah, I'm unashamedly drooling as he greets the parents and carries our bags to the car. I'm kind of stung that he's barely paying attention to me. I know I'm contradicting myself, I'm the one who has been thwarting any attempt he has been making to get us to talk about us.

There can't be an us when there's still Mandisa but I want him even worse I love him even more for the father he is to Samira. They should cast me to be a soapie character.

Khanyo is carrying Samira by now and we're almost at the car. They take the back seat with the parents and I sit in front with Banzi.

For a split second before he starts the engine he looks at me, more of he drinks me in with his thirsty gaze and it hits me that he will always own a piece of my soul just as I own his. I fail to appreciate the picturesque view as we drive towards eNgcobo, I'm lost in my feels and struggling with being in such close proximity with Banzi.

Bongiwe is the first to open my door and she's twirling me around in a giddy embrace that leaves me a bit dizzy then she kisses me smack on the lips. Bongiwe will never change except if you count how ripped she is. Banzi growls behind us and Bongiwe sticks her tongue out at him.

"You two will never grow, I can't believe you're still fighting over Farrah even now!" Nathi exclaims as she crowds me in her hug.

“That's because this idiot knows she's got a thing for me aunty,” Bongiwe states earning a punch from Banzi.

Just like Nura the Christmas she spent with the Lunikas, mama and dad look overwhelmed by them. I turn when I feel eyes on me to find small beady eyes narrowed at me. From the mixed race look, I gather it's Whitney and if looks could kill I'd be dead. It doesn't help that Bongiwe hasn't let me out of her arms.

“Babe this is my Farrah,” Bongiwe says to her fiancé and Whitney gives me the fakest smile. Ok the shy girl I saw on Nathi's phone is actually an Ice Queen.

While Nathi shows the parents to their sleeping quarters, Bongiwe helps me take our bags to our room for the weekend. The Lunika compound is impressive, there's a large brick house and I'm relieved that I am shown to one of the roundel huts surrounding the main house.

“I'm glad you came back to us in one piece, be patient with him you still own his heart,” she looks at me seriously and all I can do is hug her. “Now let's go back before he does something stupid like break into this room.”

She's back to being her fun self and I go with her to the open fire where the younger generation seems to be hanging around.

It seems like no one can separate Samira from Khanyo, she's hanging around his neck like a baby monkey and he's showering her with attention. The rest of the people around the fire seem indifferent to our presence and I actually prefer it.

I spot the nasty cousin who had a thing for Banzi and she looks washed up, which is explained by the bottle of Heineken that is firmly attached to her side. Whitney decides to lay stake on her woman and I'm left sitting alone. Banzi comes and sits next to me with a plate of braaied liver and meat. I'm hungry and I don't waste time, I devour the meat.

“I don't know if you mind but I'd love if I could also name Gummy. Give her a Xhosa name.” he says looking into my eyes and everyone else has faded into the background.

That's fine, I sign and he gives me one of his rare smiles which I know is only mine. What name did you have in mind?

“Aphile,” I love it or maybe it's the way he says it with so much emotion.

Banzi is called away by Vuyo and I'm left with Bongiwe and her icy woman. Bongiwe hands me a mug and I'm not surprised to taste alcohol. She winks at me and I smile, maybe this weekend isn't going to be that bad after all. I sip slowly as I listen in to the general banter around the fire and watch Khanyo being wrapped around Samira's finger.

Bongiwe is filling me in on her varsity days and the stories are outrageous. My stomach feels a bit upset. I ask Bongiwe to show me the way back to my hut but Whitney also demands her attention and she just points me to the closest hut.

I go in and the layout is similar to mine but this one has a lived in feel and it's masculine. I rush into the toilet and settle down to do my business. I flush and wash my face when I hear the outer door being flung open and being slammed shortly after and an unmistakably familiar voice.

“Mandisa, what the hell are you doing here?” my hand freezes at the door knob. There's no way I'm coming out now.

“Is that the welcome you give to your wife now Lwandle?” her voice sounds as annoyed as his.

“Cut the crap. Why are you here?”

“I thought this is my home now as well? Your grandmother summoned me here. If you have a problem take it up with her.”

“Mandisa now is not the time.”

“When is ever the time Lwandle? Ever since the love of your life came you don't have time for me. Not when I was suffering from a miscarriage of our first child. I left and you didn't even bother following or checking up on me. Even during my ceremony you were busy on your phone with her!

Now you say you are working late but I just know you are with her. And now she came with her child and you are all a happy family, who has time for poor old Mandisa who can't even carry a child full term." By the time she finishes I'm in tears I feel like the worst person on earth.

"Mandisa I don't know how many times I've apologized. I blame myself ok, I killed our child and I never meant to hurt you. I can't help how I feel about her, you've always known this but I promise you I have been at work and you refuse to hear me out so that we find a solution..." he sounds drained and he's pleading with her.

"Solution? No you don't want a solution, you want to discard me like a used condom while you get to live with your new family. What about me? What am I supposed to do with all this love that you made me feel for you? I lost my child Lwandle and now I'm losing you too. What am I supposed to do now? What do I live for?" She's wailing and her sobs are now muffled I guess he's holding her.

I look for a way to escape. The window is high up and so small even Samira wouldn't fit through it. And there's no way Mandisa can see me in Banzi's bathroom right now. That would be like pouring petrol on a blazing fire. Allah if you get me out of here without being seen, I promise not to skip Ramadan next year. I will cover myself up every day.

"Please make me forget, make the pain go away," her voice has taken a husky seductive tone. I freeze. I'm about to live through my own private nightmare and she confirms this with her next words.

"Make love to me baby."

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Great news for those in Durban The Harvard Wife is now available from Adams Bookstore. Goodnight family.

Meet after our next 3K likes and 300 shares

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 19

There's muffled silence for a while and I'm holding my breath, praying that I won't be subjected to live porn. I wish I had come out the moment I heard them getting into the room but no I had to stay in this toilet. I can imagine her ripping off his clothes and my heart breaks when I hear her moan. I try to cover my ears with my hands but that doesn't help. I imagine his hot lips trailing fevered kisses all the way down her neck and his face buried in her generous cleavage. Is he cupping her breasts with his big hands and nipping at her nipples?

"I want you so much," her voice is breathless and whiny and I choke on a sob. I wonder what he's doing to make her voice so short.

Stop, stop torturing yourself, I sternly say to myself and try to push away the images that my overactive mind is already conjuring up. The thoughts are suffocating me and making it hard to even breathe. I feel a panic attack approaching and I hold on to the sink and try to regulate my breathing and focus my mind on Samira's face. My beautiful angel, slowly I get out of the almost attack and I can hear voices.

"Stop Mandisa, this isn't you. You're confident, funny and independent, this isn't you. I'm sorry I've turned you into this but right now I just want to give my daughter the perfect welcoming ceremony." His voice is stretched taut and he sounds like he has trouble breathing.

There's some cursing and the crushing of things being thrown around before the door bangs loudly. I slink to the floor, my feet failing to hold me anymore. I cradle my knees to my chest and I feel numb. All I want to do is go home and fold myself into a foetal position. When did loving someone become this hard? I feel her pain and her love but I want him too and I'm not sure I'm willing to just give him up. Hearing them almost go on made it clear to me, the thought of letting him go and be with her like that is unbearable.

I need to get out of this bathroom before they come back. I wearily lift my body up and straighten my wrinkled dress and head wrap. My eyes in the mirror appear puffy and dagga red, I just have to get out of here and try to locate my own hut. I open the door cautiously and the room appears vacant. As I close the bathroom door, my heart jumps when I see Banzi hurdled on the floor, his head bowed between his knees. He looks up and his eyes are just as bloodshot as mine.

There's lipstick all over his cheeks, mouth and neck and his torso is bare. He has a fresh scratch on his left cheek and a couple on his chest. He looks at me in surprise then in growing horror as he realizes I've been in the bathroom this whole time. He tries to say something but he chokes on his tears. I want to wrap my hands around him so bad but instead I bite my bottom lip until I taste blood.

“Farrah...” he chokes out and I put my finger on my mouth signalling him not to say a thing. I'm still too raw from what I just overheard and he looks like he's been through the washers. There's blood on his lower lip and I wonder if she bit him. Did that turn him on? I can't stand my thoughts so I just rush out of his hut like the devil is on my heels.

I barely slept last night, that's probably why I felt very cranky when we were woken up before dawn. Samira was equally cranky because she stayed up late being flaunted around by Khanyo and Nathi. I just closed myself in my hut after that entire ordeal and claimed a headache. I try to clear all thoughts of Banzi as we are made to strip and clay as well as herbs are smeared all over our bodies. I expected an old and hectic ritualistic but she's young and chatty, explaining the importance of the ritual as she smears.

“When a child is born dead or dies just after birth, they don't just vanish. No; they become part of your guiding spirits as young as they are, their spirits are tender. If proper rituals and recognition is not done to these tender spirits, they end up causing a black cloud over a person they occupy.

They also cause a lot of experiences which end up in tears and heartache. A person who has an unhappy baby guide amongst their ancestors often has a problem of being taken lightly in the world or in any relationship they are involved in.

You may complain that others are side- stepping you or you are being left behind while other people progress in life. All this, is usually caused by an upset baby guide that is left unnoticed in a person's life.

You lost him because the male guides in your family are not happy, they are not happy that your father didn't recognize you and you twin. Her soul is also lost and seeking, if you want I can also set her soul free as well.”

I'm shocked because I didn't tell her about my father or Samira. None of the Lunikas know of these intimate details. She eyes me with so much understanding and she stops smearing the herbs and holds my hands.

“Your mother, her soul is here with us today and she's fighting for you. She needs you to find your brother, in fact her soul is very restless as she speaks of him. Appease your male guides and you will find your voice.” I have no idea what she means and I'm left puzzled by her cryptic message.

She says its time and I walk with her and a few other ladies mama and Nathi included towards the river while Samira is clinging onto me.

The water is freezing and I'm proud of Sami she doesn't cry even though her teeth are chattering and she's shaking in my arms.

“Lunika Zizi ka Mlayeni! Cubungulashe, Ngxibinoboya, Mtatela, Njokweni, Ntondwa, Ndunakazi, Ndosi, Menziwa, Zangashe, Pokwana...” her voice has deepened as she recites the clan names then she breaks into chanting, her voice sing song and I can no longer make out what she's saying.

I free my mind of all thoughts and focus on the face of my little prince with his eyes that never got to be opened. And for the first time I don't feel the piercing pain I always feel when I think of him. I feel the calm and his spirit all around me.

We are taken out of the water and wrapped in blankets and there's something being burnt, incense I can smell it clearly and the healer turns to Banzi and Vuyo.

“He needs a name so that he can be set free,” her voice has gone back to normal.

“Mahlubandile Lunika,” Banzi's voice is clear and proud, Vuyo pats him proudly on the shoulder while the women ululate. His spirit becomes denser on my spirit and then I'm left feeling light. I stumble a bit and the healer holds me and I swear she mutters under her breath, “Careful you'll hurt the child.”

Banzi rushes forward and takes Samira from my arms, I guess he heard the lady's warning too. I feel a bit dizzy and I lean into him and he's holding both Samira and me as she says the last prayer then we are told to go and prepare for Imbeleko, Bandile's spirit has been set free and appeased.

Banzi doesn't let me go and I'm grateful because I'm still feeling dizzy and lightheaded. At least the Lunika household isn't too far from the river. We find the evil grandmother by the gate with Whitney and Mandisa, they are offloading groceries and they stop talking when they see us.

Tension especially when Mandisa looks at Banzi's arm around my shoulder. I try to move away but he tightens his grip and I have no choice but continue to lean on him. The grandmother clicks her tongue and turns to leave with her makotis on her heels. I'm just too drained to care.

After my bath I feel much better plus Nathi brought us breakfast and the dizzy spell is gone. I'm wearing a long loose chiffon dress, I bought it for Nura and she never got to wear it. I need her presence with me today. Samira wanted to match with me so I also laid out an olive green dress for her that reaches her knees and I tie up her hair in an army green hairband. Miss Lunika is feeling pretty, she keeps twirling around.

"Let's take a selfie mommy," she says excitedly as she hands me my phone.

I finish up fixing my turban which is gold and completely hides my curls before I oblige Samira and her gummy smile. Seeing her this happy makes it all worth it. I would do it again just for Aphile and Bandile. There's a knock and I know it's time for Imbeleko. Samira is skipping excitedly like she knows that today is all about her. As soon as we emerge she disappears from my side and I spot her with Khanyo having what seems like a very animated conversation.

They slaughtered a cow and a goat, the meat is plenty, the beer flowing and the people seem happy. I don't know what's expected of me so I just hang around mama and the older ladies, I haven't seen Bongiwe today yet. Banzi's step-grandmother hasn't aged a bit and she's still as warm and loving as I remember her. She seems to be getting along famously with mama and I listen to their stories.

I've seen Mandisa going up and down serving people food and beer. She looks beautiful in the traditional Xhosa attire I think it's called umbhaco. She's a full package with a full figure, generous curves and a generous bust and a tiny waist. Her resting bitch face is beautiful but it lights up even more when she's laughing or smiling and her dimples show. Her smooth brown skin is flawless, not even one tiny dot or imperfection and I find myself watching her as she walks around gracefully. Now she's serving the evil grandmother and some other older relatives.

"Hayi man my grandson has great taste, turn around Mandisa so that these ladies can see what a well formed Xhosa queen looks like!" she exclaims loudly in animated Xhosa while Mandisa laughs and twirls around.

"Don't mind them mntanam, remember we are doing this for Samira. Chin up and fix your smile," mama says quietly next to me as she lightly squeezes my hand. I smile at her, grateful for her presence.

“Babe, Tat' Vuyo is calling you,” Bongiwe looks cute in the male version of the Xhosa attire and I let her lead me to the main house where I find Vuyo, Banzi, Dad and Lunika Senior. Bongiwe abandons me again and I'm left sitting alone with these men. Vuyo smiles and that relaxes me a bit.

“We want to thank you for allowing us to hold these ceremonies for Mahlubandile and Aphile. It means a lot to us and our ancestors have also been appeased. I know it must be uncomfortable for you given the situation but thank you for putting aside your own comfort and doing this.” All I can do is smile at Vuyo and thank him for finding Nura and burying her.

“She was family and you will always be family. If you need anything at all from us please don't hesitate.”

“And we hope you will let Aphile come and visit us, I am old now so is her great-grandmother, she needs to come and take care of me,” the grandfather pipes up and everyone laughs because his wife is anything but old.

I'm dismissed and Banzi follows me out. I don't pay him any attention until he holds my hand and stops me from moving. I look at him with a blank expression. He can't keep the stare and he clears his throat uncomfortably.

“Ummm about what you overheard last night...” I put my hand up and he stops midsentence.

I shouldn't have been in your bathroom in the first place, you don't need to explain your marital issues to me.

I know I'd love for him to assure me that it's going to be over soon and that he wants to be with me. But I know he's already under so much pressure from Mandisa and I can't add onto that. He seems frustrated by my response and yet I thought I was giving him an easy way out.

“What about us? Farrah, you sound like you've given up on us without even putting up any fight.” He looks ready to cry and I squeeze his hand.

Now isn't the time or place to have this conversation. This weekend is about Gummy, remember. We'll talk about where we stand back in Jo'burg. For now let's focus on finishing the celebrations.

I've grown to appreciate that there are some battles I can't fight for him. If I allow him to always cry to me about his marriage, I become his crutch. As painful as it was being stuck in that bathroom, I needed to hear it. Banzi cares about Mandisa and he's riddled with guilt and he needs to get over all these emotions on his own.

He let's go of my hand and I move away and bump into Nathi. I haven't seen much of her since morning and I am relieved to see her.

"Are you ok baby?"

I smile and nod and we go back to watch Samira dancing with Khanyo. The look in her face is priceless, I take out my phone and record her blocking everything else out.

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Do unto Admin what you want Admin to do unto you. Like and share that's all I ask from you.

One of my best smells is that of the soil when rain starts falling and a new book😊. Happy new week.

Love and light 💎💎💎

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 20

"To the heart in you, don't be afraid to feel.

To the sun in you, don't be afraid to shine.

To the love in you, don't be afraid to heal.

To the ocean in you, don't be afraid to rage.

To the silence in you, don't be afraid to break."

- Najwa Zebian

No, you are not getting Samira a puppy! I text so fast, the keyboard suffering from my ire.

And I don't see what the big deal is, she wants a puppy and I want her happy.

The big deal is 1) Who's going to look after that puppy; feed it and take out its poop? 2) Samira doesn't just get everything because she wants it 3) our apartment doesn't have space for a dog 4) I already told her she's not getting the damn puppy.

He's typing, then he stops and he's typing again.

I would offer to look after it in my house, which is not only big and has a fully furnished bedroom just for Aphile but it also has the biggest yard where she can run around with the puppy. But oh wait, you won't let her come to my house either! Followed by a couple of angry emojis and one that shows he really wants to tell me shit but he's holding it in.

I told you why I'm uncomfortable with her coming to your place, we keep going in circles arggggh!

"Are you sure you're alright?" Avuyile's tired voice makes me jump in guilt and I log out even as Banzi is furiously typing his response.

Today is a great day for the Shabangus, the princess is finally here. I sign I'm fine and ignore the numerous notification alerts coming from my phone. I look at the little angel with her fist in her mouth. She's so tiny and so pink I'm afraid to even hold her. Athandwa that's her name, Vuvu was dead set on naming what she's terms her lastborn.

She was serious about no more babies, she tied her tubes soon after giving birth. Lungelo is just a beaming daddy and Thobeka isn't too impressed with the new addition who's stealing her father's affections. She already tried to bring her down, literally she wanted to yank the baby from Lungelo's arms.

My phone starts ringing and Samira's face lights up instantly.

“Is that daddy? Can I show him the baby mommy?” I shake my head No and scowl as I reject Banzi's call and put my phone on flight mode. I feel bad when my baby's face falls. She will video call him before she goes to bed, right now I cannot deal with Banzi's demands.

This is the second fight we are having over Samira in as many weeks. The first one you may have already gathered is that I'm not comfortable with Sami sleeping over Banzi's place while Mandisa is around and now it's about getting Samira a puppy. I'm tired and frustrated but I put it aside as we coo and ooh around Athandwa. I really want to eat up her little chubby cheeks.

At least Avuyile got a Blue room at Genesis Maternity clinic and so the whole Shabangu brood can fit in her room and not disturb any other patient. Plus visiting hours are all day. The new mommy is glowing even though she's tired and she can't stop beaming. Lungelo is just hogging the baby and the grandmother isn't impressed. I miss this, being around family. Getting to see them some weekends isn't too nice.

“What's wrong my baby?” I sigh at the concern in mama's voice I guess my face is easily readable.

Me and Banzi are fighting over Samira, I sign mostly because I know she won't let me drive out without getting what's worrying me.

“Is it still over what happened after her ceremony?” I nod as I bite my lower lip. Just thinking about it still makes my blood. “The two of you need to sit down and put your differences aside for the sake of my grandbaby, ok?”

I sigh again but nod in understanding. We really couldn't go on like this, our animosity would mostly affect Samira and I'm determined that whatever happens between me and her father doesn't taint their relationship. Even if it's proving to be easier said than done. Maybe we need a mediator. I check my time and it's almost 6 and I decide on stopping over somewhere before heading over home.

Samira is still sulking over that call and I let her be even though she keeps throwing me looks from the back seat. The mean looks are actually cute and I find myself smiling. I hadn't realized how like Khanyo she is, his mannerisms when he was still around her age. They have the same cute scowl. I put on Let it go, one of her favourite theme songs from Frozen and she flashes her gums at me. I'm forgiven just like that, if only adults were the same.

The seer's words keep ringing in my mind. How am I supposed to look for my father when I even had to change my identity to hide from his cruel associates and him. It's not like I can Google up his address because he I still on the U.N.'s most wanted list, I'm the child of an international fugitive. Also I still blame him for all our pain and suffering. I blame him for Samira's death and for Nura's death. I hate the man's guts.

Then there's my brother, locating the Naidoos may be hard what if they relocated overseas. And even if they are still around it's not like they will hand him over to me with a pat on my back. I asked her to perform a cleansing ceremony for my twin's soul and to free her. She did early Sunday morning, only mama and Nathi were present for that one, Samira was asleep with Banzi and Khanyo.

"We're going to my Grammy's place!" Samira shrieks excitedly as I off-ramp towards Nathi's home.

Apparently Nathi doesn't want to be called gogo or plain old granny, so she's Grammy to Samira. Considering she's only been here twice, I'm impressed at how quickly she's memorized the place. By the time I park, Khanyo is already by her door and their squeals of joy are noisy but endearing at the same time. I inwardly cringe when I see Banzi's car also parked, I wanted to speak to Nathi alone and what if I find him with Mandisa.

I count to ten and breathe deeply before getting out of the car and going in. I went to Genesis straight after work so I'm still in my work clothes, my heels make noise as I get in through the kitchen.

"Come to the lounge," Nathi screams and I follow her voice and I find her with her three men and Samira.

She's lying on her stomach with her head perched on Vuyo's thighs and he's absentmindedly playing with her hair. The love these two have seems to have grown over the years and I'm jealous of their comfortable relationship. My greetings are met with smiles except for Banzi who has a dark scowl on his face and he clicks his tongue at me. I roll my eyes at his dramatic techniques. I sit as far from him as possible and Vuyo chuckles earning a glare from Nathi.

They ask about work and congratulate me on Athandwa, apparently Samira had already let them in on where we were before coming here. I purposely avoid Banzi even though his angry gaze is prickling my skin. Nathi sighs and sits up, looking from Banzi to me and back to you again.

“Both of you follow me to my office,” she says and doesn't wait to see if we're following her or not.

“Where are mommy and papa going?” I hear Samira ask Vuyo and his laughing voice as he responds.

“They're going to get it in Grammy's office.”

I see Banzi's face relax into the same wry smile that's now plastered on my face. This really does feel like we've been summoned into the head's office. Nathi as petite as she is, manages to stare us down and I shift uncomfortably in her leather chair and Banzi also looks like he's feeling the heat.

“Now I decided I'm going to stay away from your messy situation and let you figure it out on your own. But when it comes to that little girl in there, I don't have a choice but to intervene. Banzi why are you angry at Farrah?” her voice is crisp and she's gone into therapist mode.

“I'm angry because she doesn't want to allow me to have Aphile for weekend sleepovers at my house or buy her a puppy.” He says and I know better than to roll my eyes when Nathi is looking this fierce.

“And why is it so important to you to have Aphile sleeping over at your house?” she prods and Banzi sighs rubbing his eyes.

“I'm trying to make up for lost time and I don't get to see her that much because of work and video calls are great but I want to be able to bath her and put her to bed, read her her favourite story and give her too much sugar.” I almost smile at the image of Banzi spoiling Samira, I'm sure he's unaware of the work he's signing up for and the endless dress ups while watching Toddlers and Tiaras.

“Farrah, why are you angry at Banzi?” it's my turn in the hot seat.

I'm angry because he knows I'm uncomfortable having Mandisa around Samira but he's ignoring my feelings. I respond.

“Why are you uncomfortable having Mandisa around Samira?”

Just thinking of the incident brings tears of anger to my burning eyes. It was while Samira was chasing Khanyo around and she mistakenly bumped into Mandisa, making her spill the food she was carrying all over Mandisa's snowy white umbhaco. She wanted to strike Samira, I swear this on Nura's grave, she had this twisted ugly look in her face and I held her hand tightly before it descended on my daughter.

I may have then twisted her hand a little, ok a lot and she yelped in pain crying and Banzi rushed into the scene because we had accumulated an audience. She claimed I just started twisting her hand because she wanted to check if any of the food had spilled on Samira and Banzi believed her over me.

I feel she will take out her frustration and hatred for me on my daughter. I sign and Banzi barks an unbelieving laugh.

“Mandisa wouldn't do that, yes she has her issues but she's a good person and she wouldn't do anything to hurt Aphile. Plus I'll be there.” This is what makes me want to pluck out his eyes.

The same way you were there when she almost slapped the teeth out of my child's mouth? I sign forgetting that we are communicating through a mediator.

“She said she only wanted to hold her and check if nothing hot had spilled on Aphile and you went wild!”

And you believed her over me! She may be able to manipulate you but I saw the hatred in her eyes.

“So now I don't get to see my daughter because you have a problem with Mandisa. I told you she's moving out once she finds an apartment.”

I don't care I don't want her near my child!

“She's my child too! And you got to be her mother all these years and I wasn't afforded the same opportunity.” By now we are standing almost toe to toe, he's angry and hurt well so am I.

You think I got to mother her? I was suicidal until after her second birthday and I couldn't even look at her without feeling guilt consume me. I buried myself in my school work to avoid being around her for the longest time. Every birthday of hers reminded me of her brother and I never even once celebrated any of her birthdays. The first day I walked her to school was the day I walked her with you. So am I a bad mother? Fuck yes but I will not let you stand there and tell me I went crazy because someone paused a threat to my child. I get that she's hurting because she lost her child but I won't have her take that out on my child.

By the end of my rant I'm in tears, emotionally drained and I find myself in his arms. It's funny how even when he's the one hurting me, I find comfort in his arms. Maybe I am seeing too much into this but if there's even a chance that I'm right I will never allow Mandisa anywhere near Samira.

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I'm very grateful for your participation 😊. Keep the likes and shares coming. Namaste 🙏💎💎💎💎💎💎💎💎
Target still on.

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 21

Nathi is looking at us when we've finally calmed down from our fight. I'd be embarrassed but she's seen me in worse situations and she's never one to make you feel weird after an episode. We sit down and most of the tension has been exhausted and I feel lighter. After the hug we sat down while holding hands and I don't take my hand away from his, I doubt Nathi can see our entwined hands.

“Now that you've gotten that out of the way... I want you to know that your feelings are valid and so is your need to be with your child,” she says looking at Banzi then she turns her kind gaze to me, “just as her feelings of discomfort are valid and you can't ignore them or brush them off.

In order for you both to successfully co-parent, you have to communicate both your feelings and validate the other's feelings while sticking to boundaries that you both set up. This is something you need to talk about when you are alone, establish boundaries when it comes to how you parent, remember you're a team when it comes to that little girl not adversaries.”

She pauses and lets that sink in and we both nod sheepishly before she continues.

“Now as a temporary solution, until you establish firm boundaries and whether Mandisa will be a temporary or permanent fixture,” this she says narrowing her eyes at Banzi and he shifts in his chair. His hand suddenly damp, “I suggest when Banzi requests a sleepover, it can take place in my house and I promise to keep an eye on her. When she's here, Mandisa isn't allowed until such a time Farrah is comfortable having her around Aphile. How does that sound?”

This time she's looking at me and I trust Nathi with my life, heck I spent most of my Matric under her care as much as Nura's. I don't hesitate smiling.

“Perfect!” she says in sudden glee and I see Banzi scowl, the solution works out to Grammy's advantage.

But Banzi has to do everything for Sami, that includes tucking her in, bathing her and whatever activities he wants to do. I sign and Nathi has the grace to blush.

“Of course, it will be his weekend and when I want her to sleepover I will request my own.”

I can already see Samira only spending one weekend a month with me while she spends two weekends here and the other one with Thobeka. But I don't mind sharing her with the people who love her as much as I do.

We go back to the lounge and find Samira sleeping on Vuyo's chest. That is until I notice her eyelids twitching and I also hide my smile.

She's exhausted, can she sleep here tonight. Khanyo signs with the blank face of a seasoned liar.

I don't know she has school tomorrow, I respond and his face falls.

“I'm sure she can miss one day at preschool, it wouldn't hurt.” Vuyo pipes in and Samira almost forgets she's 'sleeping' by smiling then she quickly goes back to script.

Fine, she can stay I'll get her on Sunday then since this weekend is Banzi's weekend. What about her clothes and toiletries? I play along.

“Don't worry about it, she already has a fully furnished bedroom and a closet full of clothes this side too.” Nathi waves off my concern and I shrug my acceptance. Samira is as sneaky as the rest of her family.

“Let me tuck her in then.” Banzi offers but he's shooed away and told his weekend only begins tomorrow. He should drive behind me and make sure I get home safe. Basically we are being chased out of here and when we get to the door I hear Samira's giggles and Vuyo shushing her.

“You do know we just got played right?” Banzi asks with his lopsided smile and I nod also smiling freely for the first time today.

They probably planned all this while we were in the office. We pretend to close the door and we hear Samira's shrieks as well as Khanyo's and we then leave. I get in my car and drive out with Banzi tailing me until I get home. I thank him and invite him in for coffee, I hope I don't regret this but we really need to talk.

He follows me into our apartment and it suddenly seems small with him inside it. I make coffee while he's sprawled on my couch, he's removed his jacket and placed it on the armrest. I hand him his cup and I sit next to him, my legs tucked beneath me. We drink in comfortable silence until our mugs are empty and he takes the cups to the kitchen and rinses them. When he comes back, he sits facing me and I know he's ready to talk.

“I'm sorry for not believing you. I just feel like an arse, I can't explain how watching her break down every night is weighing on me. She was this fun loving person and I broke her. I'm trying to be gentle with my rejection and yet I'm so impatient to have her out and do right by you. I'm just trying to own up to my mistakes.

I feel like my father right now, the moment that coloured sunk her claws on him, he forgot about my mother and me. He couldn't see that we were drowning in pain. I don't want to be that person. I know it's not fair on you and I don't know how you can still stand to be around me but all I ask is a little time.

She let the lease on her apartment go three months back and moved in with me. The least I can do is help her find a new apartment. She refuses to go to therapy...” I place my hand over his mouth, I get it and hearing more about her is making me feel guilty too. Had I not resurfaced in his life, they'd still be happy and expecting their child.

I know. One of the things I love and hate about you is how sensitive you are. Remember how you cried in that park when I told you about those guys almost raping me. You were my grizzly bear because while you are big and tough on the outside you're all gooey and mushy on the inside.

I don't want you to ever change that part of you, the part that's sensitive to others' pain. Remember when Lerato was blackmailing you? You kept blaming yourself and you didn't want to let me in until I had to fake dump you?

I see him shudder at the memory, Lerato was a rough spot in our relationship and it caused him to relapse into drugs.

You always put so much blame on yourself and you let the guilt consume you. And I know you are so set on not being like Vuyo but he's human and he made a mistake. Trust me he paid for it dearly when you had to go to rehab. I know what it's like to live in guilt, it consumes you and drains your happiness. But at some point you have to forgive yourself and let go. You can't undo what happened or bring your son back. I know; it took me 5 years to realize this. You didn't plan any of this.

I wipe the tears from his face and he crowds me in a hug and he lets it all out while I brush his back. His tears were always my undoing, he carries so much pain inside and he never hides it from me. He can hide it from everyone else but not me.

"I'm always crying in front of you," he attempts a laugh as he gets himself together but it doesn't really reach his eyes. "I promise I will sort out my shit, you don't deserve any of this."

He's asking for a lot from me, how long am I supposed to wait?

I'm not sure how much longer I can stand the thought of you with her. I know I'm being selfish but how long should I wait? At some point I'll have to let go of this dream I have of us being a family.

"Don't say that, please. Give me a month to find her a place to live in and somehow appease her family and then we can start over. Just you, Samira and I." he's frantic and holding my hand.

A month I can do and it gives me a timeline rather than being strung along until kingdom come. I nod and his shoulders sag a bit in relief.

A month and after that month if you haven't sorted out things with Mandisa you will have to set me free. To find love somewhere else.

I see him scrunch his jaw but he nods and I offer him my hand. He looks at it sceptically before shaking on it. I tell him about wanting to find my brother and having to meet with my father. He promises to help me find my brother by using Vuyo's connections and he doesn't like the idea of me meeting my father but he says he'll support me. I ask about his rugby career, he had so much talent back then, I'm surprised his name isn't making headlines now.

"I went in too hard at rugby turning it into my coping mechanism until one day I snapped my leg in two places on my debut match with the Springboks and just like that it was over. They say it's a miracle I'm still walking without a limp or prosthetic leg." I squeeze his hand and ask him to tell me about his greatest moments which led him to playing in the Springboks in the first place.

His face lights up and becomes animated as he talks about his other love and I'm enraptured by his enthusiasm. I look at my clock and it's close to midnight and we've been talking non-stop. It feels great but we both have work in the morning. I walk him to the door and he swoops in and kisses me unexpectedly. At first I don't respond but my senses are heightened by his close proximity. I kiss him back with just as much hunger. When we finally break apart I'm so aroused I have to press my legs together tightly.

"I love you Freckle-face," he says his thumb caressing my freckles and I'm just a panting mess.

I watch him leave and I just know I won't be getting much sleep tonight. I'm sticky from his kiss and it haunts me as I take a shower and remember the showers I had with him, I find myself touching myself to images of Banzi's sleek body pressed against mine, his grunts and deep moans. I bend my fingers the way he bends his finger inside me and I come undone. I'm a shaking mess but I still crave him so badly. I lather my body once more and rinse off then I resign myself to a night of tossing and turning.

Zodwa has been asking me why I'm cranky today and I just want to snap her in half. I didn't get much sleep last night even after my self-induced orgasm. I kept tossing and turning until around 4am and when I finally fell into a deep sleep my alarm went off and I felt like crying. It didn't help that I was all alone and Samira seemed too happy without me when she and Khanyo video called me. The little tweet should have at least pretended to be missing me but no she seemed ecstatic and fresh.

"We're going out tonight." Zodwa announces as we have lunch and I want to protest but she holds up her hand. "No Fatima, you've been blowing me off, today I'm not taking no for an answer. Your daughter is with her family and you need the night out to just detox."

I can't really argue with her on that part maybe I need to let my hair down and be 25. I bite my lip as I mentally go through my clothes. None of them scream fit for a night out and I definitely need a new outfit. I tell Zodwa and she's more than happy to accompany me, she even gives up her wax appointment to me and says not to worry, it's already paid for.

Most of Zodwa's picks are too out there; tight, short and slutty. There's no way I'm wearing a neon pink leather mini dress even if Kylie Jenner wore it on her 21st. I settle for a simple black cocktail dress with a low back and a daring yet subtle slit. It has a cute bow just above my butt and I decide to pair it with a daring scarlet shoes and bag combo.

Red and black takes me back to our matric dance and I stifle these thoughts while I get my curls professionally washed. The hairdresser just can't get over how dense and rich my curls are and he keeps asking if it's a Brazilian weave yet he's washing my scalp.

I must say after the mini pamper session I feel like a brand new woman, bushy eyebrows shaped beautifully. I refuse the offer of fake eye lashes, mine a naturally long and curly and I also refuse Zodwa's offer to do my make up. I don't want to end up with blood dripping lips or a crazy pink.

We drive back to Crawford and she promises to come pick me up by 7pm. I shower and drape my gown over my body before making a video call to see my little person. I miss her and this time she screams when she sees my face.

"Mommy you look beautiful, your hair! Grammy also took me to do my hair look," I smile as she shows off her tribal braids, she looks adorable and happy. I kiss her through the screen and she kisses me back. She hands the phone back to Banzi who stares at my face and hair with an ugly frown. My face is made up even though I haven't dressed yet.

"Are you going somewhere?" he asks and I smile and nod before immediately cutting him off.

I won't allow him to ruin my night out with his uncalled for possessiveness. I begin dressing up and now I'm actually looking forward to a night out, living a little. I'm impressed with my image on the mirror and

I take a few mirror selfies and send them to Avuyile; who gives my outfit thumbs up and a whole bunch of fire emojis. I'm ready to blaze the club dance floor.

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Thank you for the love, keep doing your part and I promise to keep up my end of the deal.

Those in Shepstone, The Harvard Wife is now available.

Love and light 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 23

I wake up feeling like crap, my head feels like it's under attack from a thousand toy soldiers. My mouth is dry and tastes like bile. It takes effort to even open one eye but I force my eyes open. The light is blinding and it takes a minute for me to finally stare around the brightness. I'm in an unfamiliar room, it's mostly white and pristine, I hate such rooms they remind me of hospital. A slight breeze goes through the room and I feel chills all over my bare skin. Wait, rewind just a bit. I'm naked! I wrack my brain trying to figure out what really happened last night.

I remember listening to Zodwa give the girls a low down on Mr sexy accent. His name is Jordan or is it Morgan am not so sure, the memories are hazy. But she said something about him being one of the majority shareholders of Crawford, grew up abroad, single and he's always travelling.

By then I was still drinking my water until they made me drink Guarana and then everything goes blank. I'm still wracking my brain when the inner door opens and the intense man himself comes out . He looks like he just had a shower and a towel is riding low on his torso.

No, no, no! What did you do Farrah? I check my body under the sheets and it looks normal and I want to check my nuna but he's staring.

A deep laugh emits from where he's standing and I must say he has a beautiful laugh. I look at him in almost resentment but in mirth, his features are just breath-taking. He has straight white teeth and his jaw is more relaxed and his eyes twinkle while crinkling sexily by the corner.

"Trust me, had I done anything at all to you; you would have felt it the moment you woke up." A delicious shiver goes down my spine at the way he says it. Get a grip Farrah!

As suddenly as his mirth came he became serious once and sternly looked at me. That intense look once more.

"You should never be in the state I saw you in at that club. You collapsed trying to get to the ladies room and your friends didn't even look for you. Had I been a pervert I could have easily taken advantage of you and the situation you were in." This time I feel a different kind of chill.

But I had been very careful not to get drunk, I spent the whole night drinking virgin cocktails and water except that one cider. I don't even remember trying to get to the ladies, I just remember feeling weird or strange. The thoughts of what could have happened to me bring back my agoraphobia in full force and I'm shaking as I clutch the sheets to my chest.

"Hey breathe ok, calm down. You are ok, nothing happened. I was watching you the whole time." His words ought to creep me out but they make me calm down and he's wiping my tears and cradling me against his chest until my shivers subdue.

"Feeling better?" he asks, his deep voice rumbling from his chest and I nod against him.

Only then does he let me go and our close proximity makes me uncomfortable. He notices that and he moves away, clearing his throat.

"You can go and bath, let me get your things from the laundry room." His voice is gruff and it kind of reminds me of Banzi's voice.

Banzi! I look at the watch on the bed stand and it's almost 12. Allah, he is going to kill me! I was supposed to call Samira this morning and I didn't. I scramble out of the bed that smells as expensive as the owner and I run to the bathroom. There's only male products but he was kind enough to leave out a

new towel and toothbrush. After the hot water pelting on my body, I feel much better and more alive. I wear his robe which totally dwarfs me.

I find my dress neatly folded on the now made up bed, together with my clutch bag and shoes. It's a good thing I was walking around with it. My hair is a riot of curls and I try to tame it with my hands without much success. I'm embarrassed that he even washed my underwear but at least I'm wearing fresh clothes. In the harshness of day, the dress feels too short it's slit a tad too crass. I search for my phone, fortunately it's there but the battery is flat. Great.

Now fully dressed I walk out, not sure where to go. It was a big apartment, I'd hazard a penthouse and it looked pristine yet impersonal and un-lived in. I follow the aroma and it leads me to a large high-tech kitchen and I find Mr sexy accent busy over the stove and my stomach grumbles. He dishes the omelette on a plate and tuna salad then sets it front on me.

"Juice or coffee?" I point at the juice and he pours it into a tall glass. I can't tell if the food is very good or not I'm starving and I eat every morsel. I'm drinking my last drop of juice when he asks if I want more and I shake my head. I'm avoiding looking at him in the face.

"You're pretty shy for someone who was twerking the night away last night," I look up at him in alarm and his face is unreadable.

Surely he hadn't been in the club that time, he only came after I came back from the bathroom with Tsepo. He hands me a large iPad and there's a video. It's me twerking to In my feelings, my dress riding dangerously high on my thighs. It seems to have gone viral. Over 300 shares and 2K views. My are shaking as I hand him back his device.

I wait for him to give me a lecture about how such behaviour is unacceptable for staff from such an esteemed facility as Crawford. The lecture doesn't come and I let out a breath of relief. I wave my phone to show him that it needs charging and he says he doesn't own an Android charger, the snob.

I'm now restless but he takes his sweet time eating and sipping on his coffee. When he's done he washes his plate and place both his plate and mine plus the cup and glass in their places. He tidies an already tidy kitchen. Then he disappears to another room. If only I know where I am I would be walking back home. But the considering I'm in heels that isn't such a bright idea.

I follow him into the room and it's an office, he's on his laptop apparently concentrating because he doesn't look up until I'm right in front of him. He looks at me with that stern gaze and I'm squirming under his scrutiny. I spot a notepad and a pen and I grab them. I quickly scribble on the pad.

Thank you for saving me and taking care of me. Also thank you for breakfast but I need to go home and I can't order an Uber ride because my phone is flat. If you'd be so kind as to take me home, please.

He reads then grunts. "Sit, I have a few e-mails to go through then I'll drive you home now."

I want to grind my teeth in frustration but I really have no choice. I'm now worried about Samira. I look around the office to distract myself and there's pictures, blown up into portraits covering the walls. There's one of a beautiful lady, her eyes are the same as his but hers are laughing into the camera. Her pictures seem to be the most then there's pictures of him during graduation next to a man with the same fierce features as him and is also staring into the camera sternly.

There's one of a little girl hanging around his neck like a baby monkey, the way Sami hangs on Banzi's neck. He looks younger in the picture and he's laughing the same way he was laughing this morning. Then there's a picture of a beautiful lady with the girl and they are both smiling at the camera.

"Let's go," he says briskly and I guiltily take my eyes off the pictures. .

He's very handsome but cold and closed off, last night I may have imagined that smouldering stare because today he has only looked at me indifferently.

Thirty minutes later, we are driving to my cottage and I spot Banzi's car in my driveway and I breathe in deeply. I know he's going to act crazy but I have to stand my ground. I get out of the car and Banzi is already out of his. I thank my saviour and he isn't even looking at me, him and Banzi are having a staring competition. Samira gets out of Banzi's car screaming mommy and we almost fall when she launches herself at me. She's clinging on me like she thought she was never seeing me again.

"You didn't call!" It's an accusation and I hold her tighter.

As bubbly as she had become I guess some of her insecurities still bubbled just under the surface. Mr sexy accent is driving away and I wave at him while still holding Sami, her head is buried in my neck. I'm

avoiding Banzi's eyes as I do the walk of shame to my door. I struggle to open until he snatches the keys from my hands and opens the door. We get in and I leave him in the lounge and I go with my new extension to my bedroom. She only gets off me when I tell her I need to change.

Weren't you having fun with Grammy and Papa? I have to ask since she still seems sullen.

"I was but I wanted my mommy." That simple really, she shrugs like it's not that big of a deal.

I change into shorts and a checked shirt and we go back to the grumpy bear in the lounge. For whatever reason he can't seem to be able to sit down so he's pacing around my tiny lounge and his face only softens when he looks at Samira. She's back to her gummy smile.

"Since you've seen mommy can we go on our date now?" he asks while crouching to face her. She nods excitedly. "Great go and change into shorts and sneakers."

Samira runs off to her room leaving me with her livid father and I steel myself for his next words.

"Is that how you dress now Farrah? You club all night, there's a viral video of you twerking and your butt is exposed and you come back home in strange men's cars and you don't even bother checking up on your daughter. I was so worried something happened to you!" he's too close and I feel intimidated but I don't let it show.

My phone died, I sign and my eyes don't waiver from his.

"Is that all you're going to say?" he's incredulous.

How I dress has nothing to do with you or what I do on my time off when Samira is with you. You're her father and I knew she was safe with you and Nathi. I sign while encouraging myself not to waiver.

"What about you? Were you safe? Did you sleep with him? Heck you smell like a man! You're still mine Farrah and you will always be mine."

His tone makes me raise my chin stubbornly.

I'm grown now Banzi, I can take care of myself and I don't think you can ask me if I slept with him. I never ask if you sleep with Mandisa.

"Is this what this is about? I haven't touched Mandisa since you came back I swear. I thought you said you will give me a month to fix my mess." I sigh at the hurt in his voice. His anger I can stand but when he's hurt I also hurt. Weak I know, but it is what it is.

I don't know the rules, I just can't sit and let my life pass me while you're with her.

"I promise you we are not even sharing a bedroom. I sleep in the spare bedroom. All I want is you." He sounds so sincere or do I want what he's saying to be true so badly.

I didn't sleep with him, he helped me when I was stranded.

He seems so relieved but in the spirit of full disclosure I continue signing.

But I did make out with a girl.

The look on his face is so priceless and before he can say anything Samira comes bounding into the room. She's suddenly so full of energy and I'm relieved she chooses to jump on Banzi instead of me.

"Papa can we go with mommy?" she implores with her cutest smile and they both turn and look at me. All I really want to do is sink in my bed and rest but I can't resist Samira. Reluctantly I nod and I find myself in the car with Samira at the back and I'm sitting with Banzi who keeps side eyeing me.

"I don't like the way that man was looking at you like he wants to have you for lunch."

He says out of the blue and I just shrug my shoulders causing him to tighten his grip on the steering wheel. He doesn't say anything again up until we are driving into Monte Casino. I get off with Samira wanting to hold both our hands. A photographer takes random pictures of us walking and they are pretty. Banzi pays for them and refuses to even give me one.

“How was it being with a woman? Did she muff you,” he randomly asks while standing too close for comfort. I nod and he asks how it felt. I tilt my head and narrow my eyes at him and his eyes are full of lust.

I loved it, she was the best I've ever had.

I sign with a straight face and I see his face clouding over. But of course my idiot takes this as a challenge and he bends his head until his breath is fanning my face.

“We'll see about that.” He promises with a voice charged with arousal and I begin to feel wetness building between my legs. I want him now, and I can feel him poking my back.

“Mommy, Papa don't just stand there. Come!” Samira shouts as she turns and notices how far from her we are.

“Don't you dare move,” Banzi hisses and I'm tempted to move away and expose him but then there's too many ladies looking at him with unhidden thirst.

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Thank you for understanding. Happy weekend, let's meet Monday.

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 24

“She gathered up all of her tears and closed her hand around them, making a fist of faith; creating diamonds.

You should see the way she shines now.” Zachry K. Douglas

Her big eyes are open so wide like she can see into my soul. I look back as solemnly as she is suckling on her tiny fist and I'm ready to steal her. The pinkness has been replaced by a glowing caramel complexion. Her eyes are whiter than her mother's.

“Stop ogling my daughter and go make your own!” Avuyile just had to ruin our perfect moment and we both glare at her and she laughs putting up her hands.

I don't know how she does it but after 2 weeks her stomach has already gone down almost back to it's former glory. She looks beautiful and strong, brimming with life. That also means her big mouth is working overtime.

“So how did the family outing go? Sami showed me the pictures, so beautiful! Then gosh that video! I found myself moved to tears. The doctor said it will take some time for my hormones to settle back to normal.” She only stops when she's out of breath.

I smile when I think of last Saturday, we had a lot of fun and against my better judgment I allowed Banzi to teach Sami how to deal cards. We watched a movie and then watched Matilda the musical. It was amazing. The video blabbermouth is talking about was Banzi singing to Sami. How that came about. Well I may have urged Sami to ask her dad to sing for her in the Karaoke machine. She did and he sang to her while she sat on a stool blushing prettily.

I was also in tears I hate to admit from the first bar.

“I found a love for me

Darling just dive right in

And follow my lead”

He sang her our song and it was so perfect. His voice still gives me the tingles and if Sami had blushed any harder she would have turned into a beetroot.

I'm glad the first man she'll fall in love with is her father and so she won't go around seeking love from any male, even those that will seek to take advantage of her. She already has a Papa who is very present in her life and I've seen the transformation in her. The power of the father, too bad my father turned his back on Nura and us.

We had fun that day and by the time they dropped me off at my place, Samira was already fast asleep with Banzi's jacket draped over her. I kissed her forehead before stepping out of the car.

“Don't I get a kiss goodnight?” Banzi asked with that sneaky smile on his face. I stood on tiptoe and brought his face close to mine and then edged closer to his mouth. When I was sure his eyes were closed I place a chaste kiss on his forehead then ran from him before he got a chance to react.

“Hey that's not fair! I also get a kiss on the forehead?” he whined and I couldn't help grinning at him sulking.

I'll give you a proper kiss once you're fully mine, I texted him once I was in the safety of my locked house and he didn't waste time in responding.

I can't wait to be fully yours.

“I know that smile, spill. Who's making you glow like this?” Avuyile's voice brings me back to the present. Athandwa is still eyeing me critically like she can read my thoughts.

I decide to tell Avuyile about my night out instead to divert her from muddling in my almost non-existent love life. She can't stop laughing when I narrate the bathroom scene and she says she only pulled that off when she was high on weed in college. But she's angered by the fact that I ended in a stranger's bed naked.

“Please tell me you ditched those washed out bitches, what was their excuse?” she looks ready to strangle someone.

When I switched on my phone it was on Sunday, I found a lot of missed calls from Zodwa and texts. She even came by to check on me that day. I appreciated her effort but it was too little too late and our budding friendship took a nosedive. I asked why she felt the need to post that video and she said she had been drunk and has since taken it down but I'm sure it had already circulated. She said Tsepo asked for my number and I told her not to give it to her.

On the bright side it did get me close to Mr sexy accent and it turns out his name is Mphathisizwe Jordan Sibeko Jnr. He came to check up on me the next day and he was less intense in the brightness of day.

Gummy had still been with her dad, so I didn't refuse his offer for ice cream. He asked about Banzi and I told him that it's complicated but he's my baby-daddy. I didn't mention that I yearn for him every day or that it hurts to accept that he's sharing a roof with another woman.

Since he got all personal, I asked him about his accent. Turns out his father had to go into exile when they were still young and he grew up in London. Then he had to defend his Zulu honour but he just sounded weird not like those Zulu nsizwa who made Nkosazana sound so damn sexy. The lady and beautiful girl I saw in the pictures were his late wife and daughter.

They were a casualty of a drunken, hit and run from a truck on their way back from the daughter's ballet recital. From the way he talked of them, you could tell he's pretty cut about it. That's when he decided to move back to South Africa and take a more active role in the school board plus run his father's businesses.

His family is still in London though, so he travels there a lot. Yeah we sure unloaded a lot over ice cream. He said I was able to make him talk more than the shrink his family hired for him that he later fired. Both of us are still too raw from our last relationships and I'm still hanging in limbo with Banzi, so we decided to be friends. And I guess that didn't sit too well with Zodwa and the other female teachers because whenever he passes by the school, he looks for me and sometimes sits in on one of my classes. Underneath the aloofness is a really awesome person.

“So much excitement, on your first month noghal. And you didn't have to get Athandwa such an expensive chair with your first salary but I love it so much!” she says hugging me. Lungelo calls her and she leaves me cradling Athandwa who's still looking at me with those celestial doll eyes. She looks like a little wise owl.

I got my first pay check this week! After getting mama and dad gifts, I also bought Athandwa a cute princess feeding chair. I took Sami out on a girl's day out yesterday, bought groceries, fuel and saved half my salary. I feel so grown up and I aced all my assignments. I'm on a roll and I'm choosing to focus on the positives in my life. Whenever I feel my demons creeping up on me, I play that video of Banzi singing to Samira or I run, read a book and playing with Samira keeps things in perspective.

Of course some days the depression creeps in unexpectedly like on Wednesday and I SOS texted Banzi to come and get Samira. Luckily my class had gone on a field trip so I stayed home alone, curled up in bed. Until Nathi came in the afternoon, forced me to eat some soup and just held me as I cried myself to sleep. At times there is no trigger, the darkness just cloaks you. I'm grateful for my support system.

Athandwa is almost fully sleeping in my arms and just after putting her down, Thoba and Thobeka come crushing into the bedroom with Samira hot on their heels. I put my finger on my mouth and shoo them out of the bedroom. I find them in the lounge with the siblings clearly agitated and Samira looking like she's about to burst into tears.

"Stay away from my friends! They are too old for you," Thoba hisses pushing Thobeka. The little minx promptly pushes him back.

"Your friends are more fun than you and they want to play with me. You're just jealous!" I'm just standing here watching the diva with arms folded across her chest.

"Not true! Only Raju tolerates you and the rest are threatening not to come to my house anymore. Because you're so annoying. You follow us everywhere!" Thoba is rarely angry, Thobeka just knows how to press his buttons.

"You can't make me stop playing with Raju, I'm going to tell daddy!" she screams her lower lip already quivering dangerously.

"Tell him and we'll see if he agrees to you playing with kids who are way older than you and they are all boys."

"But you're a boy and I always play with you and all my other brothers all the time!" her voice keeps rising an octave.

"Both of you stop it, right this instance!" Avuyile says with a crisp tone and I watch in amusement as Thobeka swallows her response. She knows her momma don't play and she will probably slap her if she back-chats. "Thobeka what did I say about Thoba's friends?"

Thobeka mumbles something indistinct and Avuyile snaps, "I didn't hear that?"

"You said I should leave them to play alone." The admission is grudgingly given.

“Wena Thoba what did I say about looking out for your sister?” Thoba is sullen and doesn't respond until Avuyile boxes his ears.

“Ouch! You said I should choose her over my friends and always protect her.” When he's pissed like this, he looks more and more like bhut' Lungelo.

After forcing them to hug it out, Avuyile goes back to making lunch and I help her. She's making a simple spaghetti and meatballs dish and I offer to make the salads. She tells me she got admitted at a culinary school and she will be starting next year. I'm excited for her, she's beaming from ear to ear and you can just tell that this is something she's very passionate about. She says she wants to supplement her hospitality qualification with a cooking one and see what business she can make out of those two passions.

“Do you ever think you'd give Mphathi a chance? If ever the tables turn.” She randomly quips and I shrug my shoulders thoughtfully.

I mean there is a spark there but we are both damaged. He's not over his wife and I'm not over Banzi. He's a great guy though underneath it all and it doesn't hurt that he's sexy as well.

She looks around the kitchen like she's making sure no one will hear her then she lowers her head and I follow suit.

“What about his dick print did you see any? Is he packing any gigabytes?” she is stage whispering her eyes wide and I shove her from me. I'm not going to answer that. She's whining for more details when Thoba and his friends come trooping into the kitchen to get some water.

My attention is caught by one of his friends. He has a mop of slightly curly hair and Allah his eyes and eyelashes are curly just like Nura's. I don't even realize I'm holding his face with shaking hands until Avuyile gently pries me away from him. The little boy looks spooked but his age and profile fit that of my long lost brother. Could this be him or am I just grasping at straws?

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A happy and productive week ahead to you all. Reminder: Target is 3K likes and 300 shares.

A big shout out to all those who get their copies of The Harvard Wife and shoot pics. Thank you for sending them to me and tagging me on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. You always make my days.

Love and light ❖❖❖❖❖

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 25

“Breathe. Count to ten.” I do as the voice instructs me and the panic attack slowly fades away. “What just happened in there?” she asks looking at me worriedly and I shiver as I cradle my legs.

That boy...who is he? My signing is clumsy at best right now.

“That's Raju. Him and his family moved here not so long ago. I haven't seen much of the parents, in fact I have never seen them. We met him at the park with his nanny and they hit it off with Thoba. I also think Thobeka has her first crush on him.” Could it be?

What's his surname? I ask more urgently. Avuyile frowns, I can see the wheels churning in her mind.

“I have no idea. Why the sudden interest? Don't tell me you had another child when you were younger and gave him up for adoption!” I roll my eyes at the dramatic look on her face and shake my head firmly.

I think he's my brother. My mother had to give him up but her spirit wants me to find him.

She's shocked into silence and we both remain quiet for a while. It's not like if I went to the Naidoos and asked them for my brother they would say yes. But first I had to confirm that it actually was him. And that will be hard, I already freaked the little boy out. I'm hopeful though because he fits the profile, his looks and he's about 12 or 11 years old.

“Mommy, we're really hungry now!” Thoba whines outside my bedroom door. Avuyile shouts that we are coming then she looks at me like she just had an aha moment.

“Let me dish up for him too then we can lift his glass or fork for DNA testing! I saw that on K.C Undercover.” In her excitement she looks like Thobeka more than she'd like to admit.

I reluctantly nod my head, what choice do I have really. This is a very sensitive matter and I can't necessarily go up to Raju and say hey I think your father is the one who continuously rapped my mother because your mother is infertile and they wanted a child. Avuyile is already muttering something about gloves and a paper to put the glass. She goes to dish up while I go and attend to a now awake Athandwa.

After changing her nasty diaper, I swear the child was exploding in there. I find the kids eating while Avuyile is watching them like a hawk. I sit and also attempt to eat while holding Athandwa which proves to be a feat. After they finish eating Avuyile shoos them off and stops Thoba from collecting the dishes and washing them. The older kids are all at a soccer match with bhut' Lungelo. Avuyile wasn't playing about gloves, I won't even ask where she got them. She takes the glass Raju was using and his fork, placing it carefully in a plastic bag. She does the same to mine, never mind that I was still eating. She puts mine in a different colour plastic.

“Done. Now all we need is someone who can test both samples and tell us if they are any match. Remember yours is in the blue plastic bag while his is in the white plastic.” I know just the person to ask.

All this sneaking around reminds me of Lerato dealing drugs and me following around and taking pictures. I wonder briefly if she's still in prison or she got released. I text Banzi and ask if he can meet up, I need to talk to him about something.

I'll be there in thirty.

I smell of baby poo and baby powder. I hand Athandwa back to Avuyile and I go take a shower. I haven't seen Banzi that much since the Monte casino outing. I only saw him when he came to pick up Samira during my episode and when he dropped her off 2 days later. I take extra care choosing my clothes and I even add some lip kit. Don't you dare judge me, I'm already judging myself. I decide to let my curls run wild. By the time I'm putting on some perfume, my phone vibrates.

I'm outside.

I don't know why but his texts make me nervous. Maybe because he isn't flirting like he usually does and he sounds like he means business. I find him parked a house away and he's leaning on the bonnet of his

car. While I'm approaching he looks formidable and there's no denying that his body is in the best shape, muscles rippling through his t-shirt. The closer I get I notice the drawn lines around his face.

He looks tired and unkempt. He even has a morning shadow on his chin. Crusty and bloodshot eyes signify that he hasn't slept in days. And now I'm worried about him.

When I reach him, he doesn't say anything he just drags me into his embrace and he buries his face in my curls. He deeply inhales, causing his chest to expand underneath me. His hug is crushing my tiny frame but I just let him be and I also squeeze his waist letting him know I'm here for him.

His aura is hanging heavily over mine and I just wish I could do something to ease him up. I don't know how long we've been standing like this but I don't let go. When he finally lets go his eyes are a bit clearer and his face less drawn. He opens the door for me and closes it after I'm inside and he gets in as well.

"Hi beautiful." His voice is gruffer than normal and I smile at him. "What do you have there?"

I explain what happened and how I think the boy might be my brother and that I need to confirm it first with our DNA and take it from there. He looks at me while I'm signing and I'm not even sure he's paying attention but he nods when I'm done and takes the plastics from me and carefully puts them away.

"Ok, I'll get my friend who owns a DNA testing lab to look these up for you. Are you excited or anxious about him maybe being your brother?" I sigh because I haven't really processed my feelings.

I feel both and so much more, I had a panic attack and now he probably thinks I'm weird or creepy.

"He'll love you," he says simply and I needed that validation. I am scared that he will never accept me as his sister.

"We'll figure out the rest after the results but please don't overthink this, I don't want you to relapse." Yeah I told him about my Agoraphobia and right now I just want a hug so badly. He shifts his chair backwards and I crawl onto his lap. He cuddles me and the sound of his heartbeat is soothing.

He kisses the top of my head and gently plays with my curls. I wish I could curl up in his lap like this forever. He starts talking while my head is leaning against his chest.

“We've been going back and forth with Mandisa's family. They don't want to meet and are making so many demands it's exhausting. It doesn't help that Tata and Ta'mkhulu are not very patient people. But I promise I will make sure the meeting happens and I will do all in my power to sort everything out. I found an apartment for Mandisa but she refuses to move out until after the families sit down and talk.

I want to understand her, I do. But a big part of me resents that I can't be with Aphile and you because of her and that makes me feel so guilty because she's lost so much because of me. I'm tottering on egg shells around her, the doctor suspects she's suffering from clinical depression but she refuses to see a grief counsellor or take any medication. She's obsessed with fixing this, fixing us and I don't know how to get through to her. She won't even speak to Nathi and she refuses to see her friends. And I feel like a monster because I want, no, I need her to let me go.

I feel the longer we drag this out, the more she's going to be hurt. I care for her, you know, but I couldn't bring myself to love her even before you came back. I thought with time feelings would develop. I should have fought harder to just pay intlawulo instead of ilobolo. I shouldn't have just forgotten about her like that in that shop, maybe my son would still be here. I killed him and the fucked up thing is if we could go back to that day I'd probably do the very exact same thing.

My heart started beating again when I saw you in that aisle, holding that little tutu. I have no doubt in my mind that I'll always choose you over everything, over everyone. And then Aphile makes me so happy and I just fell in love with her the moment I saw her. And that love grows deeper with every video call and every card she makes me. I want to give her the world but I also feel like I don't deserve to be this happy when I've caused so much pain and lost so much. But I can't stop this love in my heart and I can't stop the smile that creeps up in my face every time the phone rings and I see your name and I know it's either one of my girls.”

I let him ramble on until he's done and then silence envelopes us. He never really talks about Mandisa or what's going on between them and I preferred it that way because now I feel as torn as he is. I want to tell him that he's not a monster. That none of us asked for this. But when I look up at his neck there's a glaring scar that I've never seen there before. I quickly sit up as I trail my hand on the scar.

What happened to you? I sign looking into his eyes. His eyes keep shifting, he's avoiding mine until I hold his face in place.

“She had an angry meltdown and start throwing things at me and attacking but it's nothing. It doesn't hurt, it just looks worse than it is.”

I feel anger boiling in me, I don't care that she's hurting or in pain it doesn't make it right. And knowing him, he probably stood there and took it because he thinks he deserves it. I don't even realize my hands have fisted until he starts kissing my fists and gently prying my hands apart.

"It's ok, Farrah look at me. I'm fine, she was hurting and she lashed out. She apologized and it won't happen again." I look into his eyes and they tell me that there's more that he's not telling me. But I don't push.

I kiss him gently and for a moment he's surprised then he sighs and kisses me back pouring out all his frustration into the kiss. Just as I'm pouring in all of my love and all of my regret. His phone ringing breaks us apart and we are both panting. He answers the phone and puts it on speaker.

"Hello?" I blush at how out of air he sounds.

"I won't ask what you're doing. Get ready, the Ndinisa family agreed to see us on Saturday." Vuyo's voice is brisk over the phone.

"This Saturday as in tomorrow?" Banzi asks looking frustrated again.

"That's what I said, they claim it's a long weekend and most of them are only available tomorrow. Get your arse to Durban. Oh and greet ma kaAphile for me." Just like that he drops the phone and I bury my face in Banzi's neck. I can tell he's laughing at me. Argh Vuyo always manages to make me feel awkward.

"I have to go," he says cupping my face before giving me a short lingering kiss. "I love you and tell Gummy I'll call her as soon as I land." I'm nodding like an idiot and still in a daze even as I get out of the car. He only drives off when I get into the gate and I don't know how I'm feeling.

Has time ever dragged for you before? Like you literally stare at the hands of a moving clock and willed them to move faster. That's me this weekend and the bloody clock isn't cooperating. It helps that I'm home, Samira is occupied with Thobeka and the grandparents so she isn't really paying much attention to me. I distract myself with Athandwa but even she betrays me and sleeps most of the time. And so I try to finish reading Letters to my daughter and that somehow calms me down a bit.

Last night passed and he did call Aphile as promised but their chat wasn't that long. It was strained and I could tell he was trying to keep a happy face for her but he seemed withdrawn. And today there's been no word and it's running close to 6pm.

“Will you stop glaring at that clock and come help me with dinner?” Avuyile says as she drags me from the lounge.

I feel nervous and jittery. I keep wondering what is being said and if it's going to be a success. Should I even term it a success? This is the breaking of a marriage, no matter how short-lived, a marriage nonetheless and I'm the root cause. I am at the centre of this break up and I feel uncomfortable. Then I ask myself if I'd rather have him stay with her and try to pick up the pieces and my heart rejects the thought before I even finish it.

I'm chopping the onions and as I think of the scar on Banzi's neck I chop even more fiercely. I wonder what she used to hurt him like that. It could have been a screwdriver but most probably it was a knife or something sharp. That anger again boils through me and I find myself clasp the knife too hard and Avuyile exclaims as she takes the knife from me. My blood is on the knife and it's flowing from my hand.

“My goodness! What are you doing? Bring that hand here before you lose even more blood.”

I give her my hand but I'm barely feeling the pain. Anger is more predominant and Mandisa is lucky she's in Durban. He may be her husband but he's mine and I have no qualms fighting for what's mine.

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Namaste. Let's meet again after the target has been exceeded. Choose happiness ☺

Love and light ✨️

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 26

“She is beautiful,

but you really cannot comprehend it until you understand that she is the result of the pieces that she refused to let life take from her.” J.M Storm

Samira is grumpy and acting up which is too bad because I'm also on edge. Right now we are staring each other down and she looks like she's ready for war. I hate this side of Sami, it doesn't come up often but when she's angry, she's my little spitfire.

“But I don't want braids I want to tie my hair into a ponytail!” she stops herself from stomping her leg because she knows if she ever pulls that stunt with me, she's going to get it.

And I told you this week is a busy one for me, I won't have time to do your hair every morning. We'll do the ponytail next week. Now sit down I still have marking to do.

Her lower lip trembles, oh Allah here come the waterworks. “I want my daddy!”

That I wasn't expecting and it pierces my heart. That's the root of our problem, both of us miss him. It's funny how in a few weeks we have come to rely on him so much. I take my baby in my arms as she cries and I try to soothe her. She cries until she has hiccups and then she slowly falls asleep.

Now I have to carry her to her bed. It's difficult because she's grown heavy but somehow I manage. I braid her hair in her sleep and I know she's going to give me hell tomorrow.

Banzi last communicated with us on Friday and today it's a Monday evening and there's still no word from him. I feel so anxious and scared. What if we've lost him and both Samira and I are too attached to him. At least I know she will always be guaranteed a spot in his life. And I'll simply be his baby mama. Ok, enough of the sappy feelings; I have papers to grade. I take them out and start going through them.

I enjoy teaching, something I never thought I possessed the patience for but it's gratifying work. More and more kids come up to me and open up about their home lives. I've come to learn rich or poor we all have problems and life can be shitty to all of us. I try to motivate them to look for happiness within themselves and because they are young I think they are getting it. My classes have become a bit livelier and I love those kids.

I got Thoba to do a little digging on Raju, not that he got much because the boy doesn't say much. There aren't any visible signs of abuse though, he seems like a normal kid who's well taken care of. Just that he's shy or an introvert, I'm yet to discover. I'm trying not to get too attached to him too soon plus I think I really creeped him out. Whenever I get in the room, he leaves or just stops talking and eyes me warily. I'm just grateful that there's a chance he could be my brother.

After grading the papers, I pack our lunchboxes and lay out what we're both going to wear. I'm exhausted and sleep deprived. I check my phone for any missed calls or texts. There's none from Banzi but just a goodnight text from Mphathi. It's funny how he insists on his Zulu name, I told him Jordan would suit him better and he said he didn't want to be left out when land was being reallocated because of a stupid white name. I've discovered he's funny in his own aloof way.

I get into bed and I toss and turn, trying to find the best spot to fall asleep in and I find none. I'm slowly drifting to sleep when there's a bang on my door. I assume I'm dreaming but the banging doesn't stop so I drag myself out of bed and settle the gown on me. I'm tying it as I get out of my room and switch on the lounge light and the outside light.

Only then does the banging stop. I spy Sami out of the corner of my eye, coming out of her room while rubbing her eye. I try to signal her to go back to her room but she doesn't see my signal. I check the time and it's just before midnight and I can't exactly ask who is knocking on my door. But I'm also scared to just open.

"It's me, please open." As if sensing my uncertainty the voice instructs me.

I don't hesitate I open the door and Banzi is standing by my doorway and he's looking drained and cold. He comes in and I close and lock behind him. I want to ask him what he's doing here so late but Samira is waking up and she smiles when she sees him. He doesn't hesitate picking her up and she curls her hands around his neck.

"I'm sorry I woke you up Gummy, sleep princess. Daddy will be here in the morning." Well ain't daddy a little presumptuous.

He kisses her forehead and she's out like a light. I wait for him to tuck her in and I'm so relieved that he at least looks fine. He tiptoes out of her room and finds me waiting for him arms folded. I also get the forehead kiss.

"I couldn't not see you another day. I will explain everything in the morning, let's get you to bed." I scowl at him and he baby kisses me.

What if there's a man in my bed and you're just coming here at midnight. I ask after unfolding my arms.

"Then I'd kill him," I look for some humour in his straight face or the words I'm joking, but I find none. I give up and go to my room and he's hot on my heels. He strips until he's only left with boxers but I'm just too exhausted to even admire his masculinity. I slide into bed and he also gets in behind me, spooning me.

"Sleep," he commands gruffly, kissing the top of my head and the next minute I'm out like a light.

I wake up to an empty bed. If not for the rumpled sheets, with his scent lingering. Or the shower running in the bathroom, I would have assumed last night I was dreaming. But he's really here. He comes out of the bathroom in my pink, fluffy gown and instead of looking girly, he looks really hot. He's sizzling in pink and his face for once isn't drawn and he looks well rested.

"Morning Freckles. You're a sight for sore eyes." I glare at him and he laughs. I haven't heard him laugh in ages and it's the most beautiful sight. I end up grinning as I stretch myself.

You just went quiet on us, I sign when he stops laughing and a shadow passes his eyes.

"I couldn't get a chance to call. It was horrible. They made us wait and wait. Then the meeting dragged on for 2 days. They made us pay a fine and you know how Vuyo gets. He didn't want us to pay the fine because we didn't ask for ilobolo back. But we ended up paying just so that the meeting would go on. But finally yesterday morning, they set us free, it's over. Mandisa is going to move out before the end of this week."

My eyes are wide open and I don't know whether to cry or smile.

What does all this mean?

“It means we won't carry on with the traditional marriage rites and Mandisa is free to go on with her life and so am I. We can finally work on being a family.” I've been praying to hear these words and I'm so happy right now.

He picks me up and I fasten my legs around his waist. He looks into my eyes with so much warmth and so much love, I'm melting in his arms.

“Thank you, for still being here and not giving up on our love. Thank you for being my peace throughout this storm and for telling me to forgive myself. I don't know how I would have survived had you decided to leave. Thank you for giving me the most beautiful daughter in the world.

I know how much you struggled with this whole situation, I could see your pain every time I had to leave. I'm grateful that you never doubted my love or your place in my heart. Thank you for loving me.”

His eyes remain fastened on mine as he speaks and I want to tell him there were times I had my doubts and how guilty I felt whenever we kissed. Instead I hug him and he strokes my back. This feels like I've come back home and I'm so happy. I don't want to let him go.

“It's time for you to bath,” he says from the top of my head and I move my shoulders indicating that I don't want to and he chuckles. “Fine. I'll bathe you.” I grin at him wickedly and he looks happy and carefree. He carries me to the bathroom and asks if I want a shower or a bath and I choose the shower.

The way he's lathering my skin, its like it is precious glass that might break at any minute. I just let him work his magic, which he's working too good because my nipples are like marbles right now and my clit is throbbing. He takes his sweet time with my lady parts until I'm shaking with need.

He smirks up at me because he knows just how much he's affecting me. I can't stand much more so I drag him up and stand on tiptoe as I kiss him. I'm slippery and wet against his buff physique and he's balancing us.

“This is going to be hard and fast,” he hisses as he slides slowly inside me from the back. I grit my teeth as my body accustoms itself to his fullness.

“Fuck Farrah, I'm not going to last baby. You're so tight. So freaking hot.” His voice is a whimper and I grind against him and he curses as he holds me still.

He wasn't kidding about the hard and fast. He's thrusting into me mercilessly and my body is taut with it's release. He's pumping unrelentingly into my body and his groans fill the bathroom. He squeezes my boobs with one hand and thrusts while his other hand strokes my engorged clit. My senses are overcharged and I come apart and he is right behind me grunting like a wounded animal.

We catch our breathes as the lukewarm water washes over us. My head is on his chest and I feel fulfilled in every possible way. I'm finally getting my bear back and all is good in the world.

“Mommy! Why didn't you wake me up!” Oh crap, Samira!

I pass my gown to Banzi and he isn't even fully dressed when his daughter comes bursting into the bathroom without knocking. She looks from him to me and I just want to hang my head in shame. She could have walked in on us doing the nasty. I didn't lock and I forgot she never knocks.

“Papa! You're really here? I wasn't dreaming! Why are you in the shower with Fafa? And why are you wearing her robe?”

Banzi is squirming uncomfortably at the barricade of questions and I'm just glad I'm not the one on the firing line. I wrap a big towel around me and try to slip out of the bathroom unnoticed but the idiot holds my hand in his iron grip.

“Erm yes Gummy I came last night and mummy hurt her hand so I had to help her bath and she borrowed me her robe.” Her intelligent eyes process his response and she seems satisfied with his response until she asks another question.

“Does this mean we'll start staying together like a proper family?”

The hope and longing in her eyes breaks my heart and I wiggle out of Banzi's hand before she sees me cry. I don't catch Banzi's response but I hear Samira's excited squeals. That was a close call and now I just pray to Allah that she doesn't tell her whole class that she found her daddy helping her mommy in the bathroom.

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Midweek showers of blessings, be the positivity in your life. Meet after our target has been exceeded.

Bridge Books now also has The Harvard Wife in stock. Love and light ❀❀❀❀❀

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The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 27

“Look at you all glowed up!” she screeches causing an elderly white man to frown at her. But Avuyile couldn't care less that Melrose Arch is a quiet spot, she will be ratchet wherever she chooses to be ratchet.

She's not the only one noticing my recent glow. Bongs calls it the dick glow, Nathi says I'm happy and my skin is showing that while mama and Mphathi were questioning my recent glow. I'm happy. There's no other way to describe this feeling within me. I'm happy that for the past few days I get to watch my two people bond.

When Banzi said he wants to be involved in everything that Aphile does, he meant everything. He bathes her in the evenings, I had to stop the morning baths after the first one because they take forever talking and always make a mess. There's no time to clean up in the morning. In the evenings I let them go to town and they both love it.

I show Avuyile the cutest video of Banzi with his nose scrunched up in concentration as he tries to apply nail polish to Gummy's toenails and her instructing him how to do it. Of course most of the polish ends up all over her toes. But they were both very happy with their handiwork.

“Ncoooh aren't they the cutest. The girls always capture their father's hearts. For the first time when Thobeka was born, I questioned my place in Lungelo's heart. Yes he loves our boys but Thobeka, he fully dots on her. And the coming of Athandwa hasn't been easy on my little girl.

You know she came to me yesterday and she was looking miserable and worried. She said “Mommy I'm so stressed.” I ask her why she was stressed and she said “Daddy doesn't love me anymore, all he wants to do is hold Athandwa.” Now she knows how I felt, we haven't fought all week.”

I smile already picturing Thobeka putting a hand on her forehead because of 'stress', I see traces of her in Sami more and more these days. Diva tendencies.

Where is Athandwa? I ask Vuvu and she shrugs her shoulders.

“Who or what is an Athandwa? Her grandmother offered to babysit while I pamper myself today. Do you want us to have coffee first or go have our massages just across the street then circle back to Starbucks?”

I opt for the massages first, my muscles could use some special treatment. Banzi isn't only making up for lost time with his daughter, today when I woke up my whole body was launching a creaking protest, my poor vagina was burning. But that didn't stop me from getting loved up in the shower again. This time I made sure I locked, being almost caught once was enough. I think I pulled some muscles I had no idea I possessed while getting loved up.

My shoulders are being kneaded so beautifully and I feel like moaning out loud. This lady really knows how to untangle all the stress knots and I wish I could carry her home with me. Avuyile keeps sighing and moaning. Maybe I'm not the only one who needed this. I always wonder how she manages to give all her children her love and attention, attend to her husband and her in-laws. The two I have are already giving me tension muscles.

“So I had this weird dream. You were holding this really cute baby and the baby was really chubby. You kept throwing it in the air and the baby was laughing so hard. And I thought nah she can't be pregnant because we talked about contraception and even went to get you an injection at the beginning of the year. You did remember to go for another one after 6 months right?”

Suddenly the burger I was digging so nicely into tastes like chalkboard. The blood drains from my face and Avuyile notices and stops talking.

“Shit, Fatima!” A few patrons look our way and she calms down a bit looking at me. “Please tell me that hulk has been using protection with you?” My only response is biting my lower lip and she curses.

“What about diseases? Did you even check before jumping on each other? You don't know who he's been poking that stick of his into these past 6 years. Another baby! You just started working. Do you want to end up like me?” she stops her tirade when she sees tears falling from my eyes.

How am I always so stupid when it comes to Banzi? I never think of protection and neither does he. We're not teenagers anymore but we are still careless. The thought of another baby and maybe losing the baby again makes me so scared. I'm not ready. Avuyile has gentled down and she squeezes my hands comfortingly.

“Ok, let's not get ahead of ourselves. Let's call and set up an appointment with the good doctor. Then we'll take it from there.” I nod as I sniff and dab my eyes with the napkin.

She calls and there's an opening tomorrow and luckily it's the weekend so I won't have work and Sami can always stay with either of her many admirers.

“I'll come with you, I also need to check if those tubes were tied up nicely and even have an injection on top just to be safe. I don't trust Lungelo's sperm it's too sneaky.” I smile faintly my mind now swimming with the possibility of pregnancy and diseases.

We're now eating dessert when Banzi texts me that he's 5 minutes away and I send him our location. He promised to take me to Safari today and we're going to look for Amaka and her husband. I tell Avuyile that he's almost here and she says I shouldn't worry about the bill. Perks of being the last born. I kiss her cheek and she rubs my belly. I glare at her and she laughs her merry laugh.

“What my little nunu must know her aunty loves her.” I roll my eyes, it's too soon Avuyile. Too soon.

Banzi kisses me the moment I get into the car and I'm not as enthusiastic as I usually am and he quickly picks up on it.

“What's wrong mommy,” for some reason that irritates me even though he has taken to calling me that with Samira.

I'm just nervous about whether we'll find them there or not, I sign and he looks at me like he's not convinced but he starts the car.

“So my friend is only going back to the lab on Monday. I've already given him the samples and he ran the tests. But he'll check the results on Monday.” I nod and wish I was back in that lady's table and being massaged. I can already feel my muscles knotting again.

We drive the rest of the way with music playing gently in the background and he keeps squeezing my thighs. And that irritatingly turns me on. I need to pay penance my sins are now too much. I get nostalgic as we pass our former high school and I remember the days I would walk from here to home alone, especially the day Lerato and her goons made me clean the school toilets and I had to walk alone in the mounting darkness. I spot the park that Banzi took me too and where we had our first kiss after he cried his eyes out. Between the 2 of us, he's more of the crier than me.

He stops the car and makes me get out then he offers me a piggyback ride as we go to the park bench. It hasn't changed much just older and weathered. We are silent for a while looking at a young couple giggling and sharing Mc'Flurry as they pass by the park. They remind me of us at that age, so optimistic and so in love. And here we are today, older and jaded.

“I know it's hard going back to the place were you were abducted but I'm here with you now and I won't let anyone touch you. And whether we find Amaka or not it's ok be cause you have me and you always will. You're my family and you complete me; I'm never letting go of you. Not in this world.”

When he's talking so passionately and so sincerely, my heart just sighs with contentment. I hadn't even realized that going back to Safari might trigger my memories of the abduction and now I'm just grateful that he's here holding my hand through it all.

We had our first kiss in this very bench, I sign and he smiles cheekily before kissing me. He's such a cliché but I love his cheesy arse.

“Are you ready to go now?” he asks and I nod. Most of the tension has left my body.

We continue driving until we join the hustle and bustle of Nugget street. Hilbrow will never change, it only appears like there are more and more cardboards and blag thrash bags on the street, the street dwellers have increased a lot and it's a sad sight. Impatient hoots from taxi drivers sound here and there, bullying other road users. In no time, Banzi is trying to find some parking space in front of Safari and this other scrawny young man in a neon green vest starts directing him until we park.

“Ngzokubhekela yona bhoza yam!” he says flashing a toothless smile at Banzi. I wonder what age he is, he looks young or could it be that he's just skinny.

I look for Sbula among the guards by the gate and he's not there not even the other creepy guard. These guards have hostile faces. They ask for R20 from each of us. I'd forgotten about the visiting fee and when I was staying here it was R10. Guess it's gone up. There's already a buzz around the bar on the first floor that Friday buzz I used to hate so much. It meant we didn't get much sleep because of the noise and unfortunately the elevators still haven't been fixed. We walk all the way to the 9th floor. By the time we reach the floor I'm out of breath and a bundle of nerves.

I steadfastly refuse to look at our old door and focus on Amaka's door and send a short prayer that she's still here. Banzi knocks and we hear a lady shouting from inside, “Ndiani!?” We look at each other not sure exactly what she's saying or how to respond.

A surly looking woman wrenches the door open and she holds the handle with one hand while the other is balancing a baby with dried porridge around his mouth on her hip. She's in a morning gown with a net on her head and I wonder whether she's preparing to go to bed or she's been like this the whole day.

“Tingakubetsera nei?” she says and I'm not sure what language she's using and Banzi looks as lost as I am. He clears his throat uncomfortably.

“We are looking for Amaka, she used to stay here 6 years ago.” The woman shrugs carelessly her wide nose flaring even wider.

“I don't know her. Ask the caretaker.” With that she bangs the door and we hear the baby starting to wail and the mother berating him.

"Maybe we should ask next door." Banzi mumbles as he knocks on what used to be our old home. I feel lightheaded but I steel myself. It's just a room and I won't find those burly men waiting to ambush us behind the door.

A drunk man opens the door and the stench of alcohol almost makes me gag. "Yah." He slurs at Banzi before burping loudly.

"We're looking for a woman called Amaka and her husband. They used to stay next door." Banzi asks quietly.

"Dunnoe her and don care..." the door is sloppily banged in our faces this time. Well that's the flat life, it's not really a close knit residential unit. People just need places to rest after work that are central and they mind their own business. The caretaker isn't of much help either and I leave Safari with a heavy heart.

"I was thinking, why don't we just let Aphile sleepover at the parents. So that we can get some uninterrupted adult time," Banzi wiggles his eyebrows at me as he helps me strip at home.

She can sleep over but we're not having sex, I sign then fold my dress. He looks at me like I just told him Santa Claus isn't real.

"Why? Is it that time of the month?" he's really frantic.

No but we've been really careless having unprotected sex when we didn't even go testing.

"Shit," he says under his breath then he widens his eyes, "Are we pregnant?" He sounds hopeful.

I shake my head no. I am on the injection. Inside I'm really hoping that it hasn't lapsed.

"So why are you denying me sex?" his tone has turned to sulky.

Because I don't know what diseases you have. No glove no love.

He abruptly leaves the bedroom and I hear the front door banging closed and his car starting. Ok. I was not expecting that reaction and it kind of hurts. I shrug my bra off and wiggle out of my panties. I'm almost done with my shower when the bathroom door opens and the idiot is grinning with a whole box of condoms. Allah give me strength.

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Take a moment to appreciate all the happy moments of 2018 so far. Throwback on all your blessings from January

Next meeting after target exceeded . Love and light ❤️🌱

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 28

“The poison leaves bit by bit, not all at once. Be patient. You are healing.” Unknown

“You don't know how many nights I've longed for this. Waking up next to you and watching you sleep.” His voice is husky with emotion and heat floods my face. It's after 6 in the morning but I feel like I barely slept. We made love. We talked. And made love again. And talked until one or both of us drifted off to sleep. I'd warrant it was way past midnight.

He's trailing his finger across my face like he's trying to commit it to memory. We're facing each other and I reach over and cup his face. He's beautiful in a rugged manner and I just want to stare at him all day.

“What was it like in the camp?” I'm not sure I want to talk about it but he's looking at me with all the love in the world and that calms me.

They had many camps, all which were buried in the deep jungle, the bunkers were hidden in plain sight. And whenever we'd change camps we'd walk through the woods barefoot and the thorns from the shrubs would tear at our skin while the thorns and stones on the ground hurt the soles of our feet.

Mostly I stayed in the bunkers with girls. Only they weren't really girls anymore. Most of them had dead eyes.

Some had children from our captives who also raped them or turned them into their wives for ostrich meat. There wasn't any sounds made, even the babies didn't cry out loud. I made one friend, her name was Yagana. She was pretty with ebony skin and bright eyes, her pearl teeth glimmered in the semi-darkness inside the bunk. They shot her down in front of me, we were escaping and they followed us. I got rescued and she got gunned down.

He takes my hands in his, stopping me from narrating further. I haven't even told him of how they stripped Nura and sliced her back with a whip in front of everyone or that I saw a girl giving birth in the bunkers every other week. That I saw some of them die from dehydration and hunger, unsafe childbirth and some just gave up and their bodies curved in.

I realize that he can never hear these parts because to him such pain, such agony is only something he sees in badly scripted movies. He hasn't stared death in the face like I have and shirked from it's hideous countenance. He wants to know but not too much.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there for..." now it's my turn to cover his mouth with my hand.

Don't be sorry I'm coming to accept that it's part of my story. A story I may tell one day when I'm stronger. Maybe I'll write a book.

We hug but it's more to comfort him rather than me. I've shown him but a glimpse of my captive days but I lived through it all, I'm still here and I'm still standing. I brush his back and wait for him to compose himself.

Let's go take a bath, we'll be late.

He's agreed to go to the doctor with me and also take the tests, so that we both know if we have a clear bill of health.

"Can we use the bath instead of the shower?" his eyes are red and I just nod.

He watches me filling up the tub and his hands keep trailing the scars on my back. I climb into the tub first and he climbs in behind me and I'm basically sitting on top of him. He's clingy and I let him be as he scrubs me in silence.

"If there is a baby in here, I will get to experience every moment of this pregnancy with you. I know you don't want a baby just yet but I want you to know you are not alone this time and nothing will happen to both of you." His hand is splayed over my tummy and he keeps drawing circles around my navel.

Last night we talked of the possibility of the baby already being there and I told him I don't want a baby yet I still want to work and get my qualification. And he promised me that even if the baby is already there he will make sure it doesn't stop me from achieving my dreams.

We're in the car playing some feel good Justin Timberlake music when his phone rings. He hesitates a moment before answering it.

"Hey. I just landed and I want to come pick up my stuff." Mandisa's voice fills the whole car and she sounds reserved.

"You still have the keys right? I'm not at the house right now, you can leave the keys with the guards by the gate when you are done," I want to pinch him, he sounds so cold. A minute ago he was belting 'I got that sunshine in my pocket.'

"Ohh ok. I'll let you know when I leave the keys." She's hurt and disappointed and he just says cool and hangs up on her. I glare at him and he side eyes me.

"What?"

You didn't have to be so rude and obviously she wants to see you.

"I'll see her some other time, we have to go to the doctor." His voice sounds bored with this whole conversation.

I ignore him and stare outside. We go on in silence for about five minutes and then he sighs rubbing his eye with his hand.

“Tell me what to do to make this ok,” his eyes are pleading with mine.

She was almost the mother of your child and you would have married her had I not come into the picture. I don't think she deserves to be discarded just like that. Go talk to her, make sure she's ok and give her at least some closure.

He sighs again and keeps driving.

“Fine I'll drop you off at the doctor's office then I will go talk to her. Happy?” not really but I really think they need to talk it out, so I smile and nod.

The rest of the drive is quiet, only the music is breaking the silence and he keeps caressing my thighs absentmindedly while I can feel my insides tightening and my clit clenching at his touch. Finally the torturous journey is over and he parks at the visitor's parking.

“Call me when you are done and I'll come and pick you up. Clear? Good, I love you.” His bullying is inborn and I've learnt to choose my battles.

Sometimes it's easier on everyone involved to just let him have his way. He kisses me, a soft lingering kiss and then he perks my forehead as well as my nose. Now I'm the one feeling clingy but I force myself out of the car.

He watches me until I go inside the doctor's office then he drives off. I find Avuyile already inside the waiting area and she looks stunning in a white frock with lemon flowers tastefully decorating the white material.

“Hey where's Samira's dad?” no how are you Farrah, nothing. I had texted her giving her the heads up that he's crushing our doctor's visit.

He had to go to his house, his ex called she's here to pick her stuff.

“And you let him go to her alone?” her tone makes me question my sanity but it's too late to do anything about it so I just shrug.

“Mrs Shabangu, the doctor is ready for you.” The doctor's assistant saves me from continuing with this line of questioning. It's not like I don't know what Mandisa is capable of but I trust Banzi to do the right thing.

I love Dr Femke, she's kind but looks efficient and always ready to get down to business. She's a tiny woman and it's hard to tell her age because she looks 25 but I'm quite certain she well into her 40s. Her office has butterflies pasted across the room, some are drawn and some are hanging around and they look real even though they are not.

“Fatima you were supposed to come and see me two months ago. What happened?” she asks peering at me over her red-framed glasses.

“She forgot and she has been sexually active since last month,” Avuyile answers for me and I want to slide down this comfy chair and hide from Dr Femke's kind eyes.

“I see. Did you use any contraception?” I shake my head no and I also want to hang it in shame. “That's ok. Sometimes the injection takes longer to leave your system so maybe nothing happened. But we have to be sure before we give you another shot. And we'll also carry out the blood tastes you requested. Mrs S, you tied your tubes but you want a shot as reinforcement?”

“Yes doctor, better safe than sorry.” The good doctor laughs quietly by now she's used to Avuyile's openness and oversharing.

I'm given a cup to go pee in and afterwards I am subjected to my worst nightmare that is my skin being pricked and blood being drawn from my body. Avuyile also goes through the same and even requests a scan to check if her tubes are really tied, she's so dramatic it's funny. Dr Femke humours her even though she was the one who did the procedure of tying her tubes. The tubes are indeed tied and healed nicely. She still gets the shot.

My results come back and my palms are sweaty. “Well congratulations Fatima, all your blood tests came out clean for any infection and I would advice that you come back again after 3 months to retest. And

you won't be needing the shot, there's already a baby growing in there. A scan will give us a more accurate time of how far along you are.”

I don't know how to feel as my top is folded up and a paper towel folded over my panties. The gel is cold but thankfully she rubs the machine over it and it's no longer as cold. Avuyile is clutching at my hand as we see the image of the foetus on the screen, it's barely the size of a walnut.

“Beautiful, our little unexpected visitor seems to be growing beautifully and around 6 weeks and 2 days.” I close my eyes and mentally curse. That day at home before I introduced Sami to Banzi. Lungelo isn't the only one who's seed should be feared. I know Banzi will be overjoyed and I don't know how I feel right now.

“Come on wipe that gloomy look from your face. I know I gave you a hard time but a baby is a blessing ok and nothing will go wrong. We are having ourselves a healthy baby. Just like I dreamed.” Avuyile hugs me gel and all. I feel a bit more hopeful. All will go well.

My sms alert goes off and I check the text, it's from Bongiwe and the blood drains from my face. My phone crushes to the floor and Avuyile is looking at me with her big eyes.

“What happened?” she asks panicking and I don't even have the strength to sign. I just stare at her as she picks up my phone and reads the text and hear her exclaim.

Mandisa happened.

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Happy Weekend family. We'll meet again on Monday. You know what to do.

Love and light 

#Insert 29

Avuyile is driving me because my hands won't stop shaking. All kinds of scenarios have been flooding my mind ever since Bongiwe's text. In my mind, I keep seeing so much blood and I wish I could go back and

let him come to the doctor with me. I try to breathe assuring myself that Bongiwe is something of a drama queen and her message was too cryptic.

SOS Banzi and Mandisa. Come to the house, he needs you.

The first thing that comes to mind is that she might have gone all crazy on him and maybe hit him, my blood boils at that thought. If she did, she better not be there when I get there. The even more extreme is that maybe she stabbed him or killed him. Either way all I'm seeing is blood. Banzi better not leave me to raise our children alone. I don't think I can survive that kind of a blow.

We get in his gate and there's two police cars and an ambulance. My body freezes, my worst nightmare come to life. Breath Fatima at least there's no body bag outside. A few neighbours are watching from their doors but there's no crowd like there would have been at Safari. I'm weak at my joints and Avuyile helps me out of the car.

"Stop assuming the worst and go in there. He needs you and you have to be strong baby ok?" she says softly like she's coaching Thobeka.

I gulp down some much needed air and nod my head. I feel less airheaded and my legs are less shaky. The officers by the door give us a hard time, talking about a crime scene until Avuyile boldly states that we live here and that we need to get in before I collapse. The female officer looks at my ashen face and allows us to go in. To think I've never been inside of this house before and now I don't even look around to admire it's opulence.

"Finally! You're here. He's this way." Bongiwe's voice is hoarse like she's been crying and her eyes are bloodshot. She whisks me from Avuyile and leads me upstairs.

Before we get upstairs there's a stretcher being pushed out by paramedics. My body goes cold when I see all the drips around the person. I manage to peep and it looks like Mandisa only she has a whole bandage covering her whole head and half her face. Then she's gone they have wheeled her past and I feel weak. Allah guide us through this.

We pass two officers talking by the staircase and one keeps shaking his head and sighing. He's old almost Lunika Snr's age. Bongiwe takes me to the last bedroom on the corridor and it's wide open. The

first thing I see is blood. So much blood and some of it has soaked up in what used to be a creamy white rug but now it has turned crimson.

My eyes find Banzi immediately and he's slumped on the floor next to the bed, head bowed down with a bloody t-shirt and some blood has caked around his hands. There's an officer trying to get him to talk but this one isn't in uniform.

I rush to his side and he looks up at my touch. His eyes look vacant and they send a chill down my spine. I check his chest for any wounds thankfully there isn't any. I notice the dirty bandage on his other upper arm. It's soaked in blood and it seems like blood is still coming out.

"Mr Lunika please talk. We need your statement." I can tell the one without a uniform is getting impatient and I squeeze Banzi's hand. He looks down at our entwined hands. He seems to come alive and his grip is so painful but I let him be. "Please Miss can you step outside." Officer Grumpy says.

"Please let her stay," Banzi has found his voice even if it's hoarse and he has to clear his throat a couple of times.

"On our way to hospital today..." he begins but is interrupted by the impatient officer.

"With Miss Mfubu?" I assume that's Mandisa.

"No with her," Banzi responds nodding at me, "I got a call from Mandisa saying she just got to the airport and she had come to get her clothes. She had the key so I told her I'm not around but she can go ahead. I dropped Farrah at the hospital then I went past home and my cousin asked to tag along. We drove here." He stops talking and a mixture of emotions dart through his face, I squeeze his hand and he breathes deep.

"I found Mandisa in this room holding a gun..." again he's interrupted by Grumpy pants and I wonder why he even asked him to make a statement if he's going to be butting in every few minutes.

"This gun?" he asks holding up a plastic bag with a gun in it. Banzi nods.

“Yes. She was holding the gun, pointing it at her head and she was crying, her hands unsteady. I asked her to put the gun down and she started screaming at me and she threw a hairbrush at me and it caught me under the eye.” I notice the cut under his eye and my heart goes out to him.

“I kept pleading with her and she warned me not to move any further. I tried to move so I can grab the gun from her that's when she shot me here.” He says pointing at his arm and I feel that what he's about to say next is hard on him. His muscles coil and he's out of breath.

“She kept screaming and when Bongiwe came bursting into the room, probably because she heard the first gunshot, I took my eyes off Mandisa for a minute. Then we heard the gun going off, she shot herself in the head. It all happened in slow motion. She was falling down and I tried to break her fall and I held her while Bongi called for help. I tried stopping the blood until she lost consciousness. Then the paramedics came.” He's shivering and I wish I could hold him.

“Has she ever done anything similar before? Or shown any violent behaviour.” Grumpy hits a nerve and I see Banzi flexing his jaw.

“The past month we were going through a messy separation and she would lash out. Throw things at me or scratch and hits me. I never retaliated and she'd apologize afterwards. They suspected she had clinical depression.” I can see he's even ashamed to admit this to anyone and one of the male officers is smirking. I want to slap him so bad but Banzi holds down my hand.

They ask a few more questions then the one in uniform hands Banzi a letter. “We found this and we will need to take it into evidence. But you can read it while I take pictures in here.”

Banzi tries to open it but his hands are shaking so hard that I take the letter away from him and open it. He transfers me to his lap with one arm and reads from the top of my head and curiosity also has me reading.

Lwandle

I know you are the last person to deserve this and I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I have to burden you with this but I couldn't listen to the voices anymore. You know the first time I saw you, I wanted to jump you so bad. You had this invisible sign that said keep out and that made you even more attractive. Then I talked

to you and you were so cool, so intelligent, witty and funny. For the first time I met a guy who actually listened to me.

Then you'd talk about her and your whole face would light up and I could feel your love for her in every syllable. I hated the passion in your voice when you talked of your memories and showed me her pictures because by then I was already falling for you. So I thought if I gave you the best sex you ever had, you'd grow to love me the way you loved her. Boy, was the sex bomb, you were the best I ever had. You made sure my needs were met before yours and you treated me like I mattered even after the sex. I wanted more of you.

I craved your touch and your company the more I had you, the more I needed this to be real and mutual. For the first time I found a guy who treated me like I mattered and never once lifted his hand at me. You found my talk of work attractive and all that was standing between me and your heart was a ghost. I told my sister about you, you were all I talked about. She told me to give you time to move on and be there for you, that one day you'd love me too.

Then the baby happened. I never planned for him but I took this as a sign that you will end up loving me because I was here and she wasn't. I was giving you your first baby. I remember how shocked you were and for a minute I was scared you were going to reject the baby. But then you were so happy for the first time there was something else that lit up your face besides her.

You went with me to every appointment and paid attention to my every craving, you were my prince charming.

I'm sorry that I wasn't honest to my family about the nature of our relationship. You know how much of a failure I've always been viewed as. The only thing that I was ever good for to them were the cheques I sent religiously to them every month. Finally I had this one good thing to brag to them about, a great man and I made it out that we had the fantasy relationship. I know you only wanted to do right by your child but I was also caught up in the fantasy.

It all come crashing down when you saw her again and I ceased to exist at that moment. I know you blame yourself for the loss of the baby but I lied again. The doctors said the miscarriage was bound to happen because the baby was an ectopic pregnancy to begin with. You see even my own child didn't want to be with me.

I was just too damaged to let you go, you may not know this but you have been the one bright spot in my life. I've been raped before Lwandle, I've been beaten until I couldn't even crawl to the bathroom and yet you treated me like I'm worthy of love.

I loved you no, I love you but I've come to accept that you were never mine to love. I knew when you didn't take down her pictures even when I moved in with you. I was here physically next to you but she had your heart. When I saw that video of you singing to your little girl, I hated her and her mother for getting to live my fantasy. But I guess fairytales aren't for the broken like me. It was never about you, I just wanted the love you had for her.

I'm sorry for what I've put you through in the last month. I needed you to hit me back so that at least I would know that you are not perfect. That you are just like all of them, then maybe I would have been able to let go. Thank you for giving me the best 7 months of my life and for making me feel like I was worthy of love.

When she reclaimed you, the voices started and this time they were louder. Telling me that all I'll ever be good for is my vagina, that I deserve it because I was the hood tramp. I couldn't silence the voices anymore.

There's no one else I want to say goodbye to. Please tell my sister that it's not her fault. She couldn't protect me from him, the same way I failed to protect her. I left everything to her, please make sure she gets it.

Don't blame yourself and love her freely with no guilt. I saw the way she looks at you and she loves you the same. I hope you remember the good in me because you are the only one whoever really saw it.

Love

Majola wakho.”

We're both a mess when we finish reading and I can see he's keeping his tears in because the police are looking at us like the next gossip sources. I don't hold back my tears I just cry and he holds me close to him. None of us deserve any of this and I realize this will break us even further. The officer asks for the letter back and he puts it in the plastic. I notice that Banzi is still bleeding. His blood is now all over my sundress.

The detective asks him not to leave the city while their investigations are still pending. Suddenly the stench of blood gets too much for me and I rush to the toilet and retch over the toilet. I hold on to the seat and sway a bit. Banzi holds me but he flinches, I guess he hurt his arm.

I'm fine. You need to go to the hospital. I sign cleaning his tears afterwards with my hands.

"Please come with me," he sounds like Samira now whenever there's a storm and the lightning frightens her and she begs me to sleep while holding her.

I have no choice really but to follow him, I wish the police had let him get attended to first before questioning him. He's weak now, I can tell and Bongiwe helps me get him downstairs. Avuyile is still here and I'm grateful that she stuck around. We manage to get him into the car and I sit behind with him while Bongiwe sits with Avuyile in front. By the time we get to the gate, he's lost consciousness and his body is burning up with fever. I send a short prayer for Mandisa to somehow survive because I fear Banzi won't heal if she dies.

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Let's let go of the negativity of the last week and begin our week with positive vibes. You know what to do.

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 30

"You can't save the world, but you can save yourself and the light that you bring. Because that is what the world needs. More light." J.M Storm

I look at him sleeping peacefully in the hospital bed and I feel this overwhelming love. Love for the man that he has become. He's always had his own demons but he shoves them aside to help others deal with their own demons. An admirable trait but I know it costs him a lot. The door opens hastily and I put my

finger on my mouth. It's Bongiwe and Avuyile. I have to tell Avuyile to go home now, she has a small baby that she's nursing.

"You have to go home, Nathi called Aphile is getting restless without you two." Bongi beats me to it and I want to refuse so bad. I don't want to be away from him.

I lean over and kiss his forehead. It's cool now, no longer clammy and his breathing is even. I just want to curl up next to him. We leave Bongs with him and I go out with Avuyile. As we get to the reception, I ask them where Mandisa Mfubu is admitted and I'm told she's still in surgery ever since she came in three hours ago. That's a good sign, right? I'm drained all I want now is a warm bath with soothing salts.

"You can't save everyone you know," Avuyile says before getting in the car. I follow suit and shrug my shoulders as I strap myself in. I put Nathi's address on the navigator and we are off.

"Remember you're pregnant and it's still at that early, crucial stage. You need to think of yourself more and take care of your health. Don't start blaming yourself for her demons." I more or less gave them a rundown of the letter while Banzi was in theatre, the bullet being removed from his arm. His doctor said he's lucky because he has such bulky muscles, the bullet was inches away from embedding itself into his bone.

"What I don't understand though is why did she have to choose to come all the way from Durban to kill herself in his house. And where's her sister? Maybe you should get a hold of her and if she hears her voice..." at this point I drift off from Avuyile's chatter and I start thinking of the whole day. It started off so well.

We were happy and playing feel good music. But I'm glad I insisted that Banzi go to his house, imagine had she shot herself alone in that house. It may have been too late when she was finally found. I hold my stomach and think of the new life growing in me. The Universe has a funny way of working out things and I refuse to regret this life growing inside me. I wonder if it's a girl or boy? At least by the time I give birth I should have completed my Honours.

"We're here." Avuyile's voice snaps me out of my thoughts. I smile at her and lean over to hug her. She holds me tightly and kisses my cheek then gives my lips a peck. I get out and she drives off.

Before I even open the door, it's flung open and Sami comes charging at me. I pick her up and kiss her all over her face and today she lets me without a fuss. She hates my full face kisses. She's already bathed and in her pyjamas and she smells so good, I can't stop sniffing her and that makes her giggle.

"I thought you and Papa went and left me behind," she says against my neck and I rub her back as I get in. I find the Lunikas in the lounge and I throw myself in a couch next to Nathi. No greetings are shared.

"How is he?" Vuyo asks while rubbing Nathi's arm, she looks older and drawn, I guess I look even worse. Khanyo looks lost and Vuyo has his poker face on.

He's going to be fine, they got him more blood and the bullet was removed successfully, I sign and I see the relief in everyone's faces.

"Where's Papa? He promised he'll tuck me in tonight." I close my eyes not knowing how to respond to her question. I suddenly feel so emotional and I can feel the waterworks coming.

"He got called to work baby, granddad will tuck you in ok?" Vuyo saves me and picks her up from my lap. He hoists her up and makes aeroplane noises as he "flies" her to her room. Her laughter and squeals make me feel better.

"Come, let me show you to your room. You must be exhausted," Nathi offers after I've had my supper and I feel drained but I still want to go and see him. "He's fine and still sleeping. You don't want him to wake up to your crusty face now, do you? His father and I are going to see him now, so get some rest."

I follow her without complaint and she leads me into the first bedroom upstairs. His scent hits me the moment we get into the bedroom. Instinctively, I know this is his bedroom. He could have been shot in the head today. I could have come and found him in a body bag. This realization has me shaking with all the pent up emotions.

For the first time today I allow myself to break down, be weak and cry. Nathi just holds me and she doesn't say anything. The shivering finally stop and so do the tears. She leads me like a child and opens the covers for me. I only remove my bra and just get in then Nathi tucks me in. I'm out the moment my head hits the pillow.

The receptionist today is full of attitude and refused to let us know anything on Mandisa. Nathi and Vuyo did manage to get hold of her family and let them know. The father was throwing threats over the phone and the mother just wailed. I also sent an e-mail at work telling them I'm dealing with a family crisis and I wouldn't be able to come in tomorrow. Samira insisted on coming with me so the whole family is here. Khanyo is uncharacteristically quiet and I make a mental note to talk to him after the visit and hear what he has to say.

We find our patient sitting up on the bed while a nurse is fussing over him, pumping up his pillows in her very short uniform, I want to gag. Aphile is out of my grasp in a moment and struggling to get up the hospital bed until Vuyo hoists her up. She throws herself at Banzi, hurting his arm. He flinches in pain but when I make a move to remove Sami, he waves me off.

Aphile looks like she has no intention of leaving her father's side even when Nathi hugs and kisses him. Khanyo gives him a bro hug and he's become more animated. While Vuyo punches him on the other shoulder. I'm just standing here watching and I don't trust my feet to move.

"Come here," Banzi's voice is hoarse like he spent the night out binge drinking. I shake my head no as I bite my lower lip hard to stop the tears. He uses his one strong arm to tug me towards him and cup my face.

"I'm ok and I'm not going anywhere without you," that just makes me cry, its going to be a long over 30 weeks. He kisses me tears and all until Vuyo breaks us up.

"Stop it you two. I can't believe you're now so grown yet I still have to separate you like you're back in high school. You're traumatizing my grandchild." Nathi laughs and I bury my burning face on Banzi's neck.

"I don't mind. Papa kisses mommy bear all the time. Even in the kitchen and he helps her in the bathroom, just like he helps me bath before my bedtime." Aphile pipes up and everyone bursts into laughter while all I want to do is hide myself under the hospital bed.

"At this rate you two are going to give me more grandbabies," I don't think now is a good time to let them know that they already have another grandchild on the way.

The banter goes around and there's so much laughter and teasing, we don't hear the doctor come in until he clears his throat. "Good morning, I see our patient has made a sharp turnaround. I'd like to run a few tests before I can discharge him."

Before we move outside, Vuyo asks about Mandisa and he's told that she had to go back to the theatre because her brain was too swollen and they spotted a clot in her brain as they were doing a cat scan. I can see this news is hard on Banzi and we walk out to give the doctor some privacy.

Are you ok? You've been too quiet. I ask Khanyo when we're left alone. Sami and her grandparents went to buy breakfast.

He could have died. I didn't tell him that I love him and he's my best friend, he signs quickly and I just want to hug him tightly but he's outgrown the hugs and kisses age.

He didn't die and now you get a chance to tell him that you love him and he's your best friend.

We talk until the doctor comes out of Banzi's room. I tell Khanyo to get in first and have a talk with his brother while I hang around outside for a while.

"Hey what are you doing here Fatima?" a voice I haven't heard in a while asks and I look up to Muzi's frowning face.

Samira's dad is here, came to visit him. I explain and his face falls.

"Oh. That's nice. Things are serious between you two again huh," he's aiming for a flippant tone but he's failing badly. I can't exactly tell him that it's so serious that we're having another baby so I just shrug my shoulders and divert the conversation.

What are you doing here?

"I work here part time as a speech therapist especially for children even though I also help out with some of the older patients as well." You can tell he loves his job.

“Anyways I've got to go, it was nice seeing you Fatima and I wish your baby daddy a speedy recovery,” I smile at him and nod then he pats my shoulder awkwardly and leaves.

Khanyo comes out and says Banzi is calling me. I go in and he looks beautiful without his shirt on. I'm drooling at his buffed chest and the happy trail on his packs. I go in for a kiss and it's like our last kiss on earth, the intensity and the emotions that we are both putting into it.

“What did the doctor say yesterday?” he asks with his forehead resting on mine. I'm about to tell him when someone bangs on the door loudly.

“I hope you two are decent in there!” at the sound of Vuyo's voice I move away quickly from Banzi and sit on the visitors chair while Banzi is chuckling. The rest of the family comes in with food from Mugg and Bean and I can feel my taste buds going on overdrive.

As I dig in I catch Nathi looking at me and she winks, I look down and stuff another chocolate muffin in my mouth. This is the good stuff, I eye Banzi's blueberry muffin until he gives it to me.

The doctor comes in with his results and discharge forms and we're ready to go.

He says Mandisa is still in surgery but it's going good. I'm just grateful that she's still alive. Vuyo helps Banzi dress up with the help from Khanyo while I pack his toiletries and Nathi folds his clothes. Samira is just stuck next to her daddy and talking his ear off.

We're almost at Nathi's house when we spot a car parked outside their gate. I guess there's no one to open the gate. “God help me not strangle that woman,” Nathi mutters and Vuyo gives her a warning look.


“I heard that muntuza,” his voice also carries a warning.

“I meant for you to hear me.” She retorts and looks out the window. The car drives in after us and parks behind us. Banzi's grandfather, wife, ex-wife and a woman who looks like Mandisa's twin come out of the car and I'm already tense. Banzi squeezes my shoulders then places a kiss on my neck.

“I hope you don't mind, since she's practically family now I brought Mandisa's sister, Andiswa to come and stay here with us until her sister is recovered.” The she-devil announces with not so much of a hello. This is going to be fun.

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If you are in Jo'burg on the 24th and you feel like some wine and book talk, please come and join us. I will be signing copies of The Harvard Wife.

Let's meet again after target has been exceeded. Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 31

I have never seen Nathi this mad before. I can feel her anger radiating throughout her body, even Vuyo looks scared to even touch her right now. We get in the house and thankfully the kids go upstairs and leave us in awkward silence.

“Let me go and make us some tea,” Arenzia offers and her voice sounds strained. I stand up and follow her to the kitchen and I can see she's not her warm bubbly self.

“You know one of these days I'm going to kill that woman or even better leave Vuyo. I can't stand this almost polygamous set up we have anymore. He says I must understand, she is the mother of his children. Hogwash! And what am I? I have two young children who get terrorized by that woman.

She comes to my house whenever she feels like it and yet all her children are grown, have families of their own and I'm to here with her. Do you believe she just showed up and brought that girl with her and ordered Vuyo to take her to Jo'burg. What was that girl even doing in Cape Town?

Mark my words, I smell a rat! A big fat ugly rat and that girl has a dark aura surrounding her just like that sister of hers. If I were you I'd stay as far away from them as possible. Maybe I should just ask for a divorce, I'm tired of giving that old man ultimatums.”

While she vents I make the tea and what she said about Andiswa also gives me pause. Will we ever be fully free of Mandisa or will I find myself like Arenzia? She now has a cute girl who's younger than Aphile and it was a hoot explaining to Aphile that the girl she kept referring to as nana was actually her great aunt or makhulu.

I understand Arenzia's frustration I mean that ex-wife might as well be the first wife the way she still calls the shots. We gather the tea things and moved back to the lounge.

“None of this would have happened had you all listened to me and instead of breaking off the engagement, Banzi could have taken them both as his wives. Majola had already agreed but because you all tiptoe around the feelings of this one, you called my solution rubbish now look at us now!” you already know the only person who can utter such crap with her hands folded like she's some Supreme court judge.

Nathi let's out a loud sarcastic laugh. “Why? Because just like you, she couldn't take the hint that their relationship is as over as your marriage which has been for over ten years now but you are still here acting like a first wife?”

“Vuyolwethu will you let your wife disrespect your mother like that?” the shrew's voice has risen an octave. Vuyo tries placing a restraining hand on Nathi but she shrugs his hand off.

“Hayi nd'yeke Vuyo man! I've had it up to here with you. From before he was born, you've maintained that my son is not a Lunika and none of you ever corrected her or stood up for me and my son. Now you want him to be unhappy all his life to prove that he's a Lunika?”

Over my dead body! That is my son, do you hear me? He's mine! I will not stand here and listen to you guilt trip him anymore, the same way you guilt tripped him into becoming an accountant.

Andiswa your sister is sick and she needs medical attention not my son and why you think it's ok coming to my house is beyond me. But hear me good, this is my house and wena executive first wife, I want you out of my house and take Andiswa with you. This is not a bloody hotel. Nx!” Nathi eyes them both then goes upstairs, Vuyo follows her and Banzi keeps flexing his jaw.

I can't stand the tension and I go upstairs to pack my overnight bag and get my daughter. I hear a few choice words screamed at Vuyo then the door being banged and he stands at the corridor. He wants to

bang on the door but thinks better of it. He eyes the door like it's going to give him answers, shakes his head and I slip into Banzi's room before he notices me gawking. I have never seen Vuyo so flustered or Nathi so mad and losing her cool. But I guess she's had enough. I take my bag and find Samira in Khanyo's room.

Let's go baby, you have school tomorrow. I sign causing both their faces to fall.

Can't she live with us always? Khanyo asks and I just hug him and kiss his forehead. Nathi did say ever since Banzi moved out and got his own house, Khanyo has been very lonely. When I suggested she have another baby she laughed and said she's a grandmother now.

"Mama don't make this any harder, please just leave. My wife is right you've always disrespected her in her own house and don't even think of calling her names." We find Vuyo saying and his mother is fit to burst.

"Fine! Since I didn't give birth to you after 36 hours of intensive labour, I will leave your wife's house. Lunika drive us to a hotel please, we know when we are not welcome." She's already standing and Andiswa is also standing with her bag in hand looking lost.

Lunika senior is about to stand up when Arenzia says in a calm voice which is laced with finality, "If you drive her or leave this house with her, it's over between us. I'm taking my children and returning home."

Holly molly, I don't know what the Lunika wives are on today but I want me some of it. Poor grandfather looks like a deer caught in headlights while Arenzia continues to calmly sip on her tea. As entertaining as this all is I'm starting to feel a migraine coming on and I sign to Banzi that we are leaving. I'll say my goodbyes to Nathi over the phone. He insists on driving us even though his arm is sore, I offer to drive his car instead and he agrees but he's coming with us.

Since the grandfather is also essentially grounded, Vuyo asks if we can drive the old bat and her new minion to a hotel. Well I don't have Lunika wife privilege of refusing so we end up in Banzi's car with a quietly seething grandmother and Andiswa is just looking at us with a blank face. Banzi suggests that they use Mandisa's flat instead and punches in the address. I drive quietly and even Sami is subdued in her car seat.

The flat turns out to be a townhouse in one of those nice complexes which even has a pool. Banzi punches in the code and I drive us in. It's a beautiful place and Andiswa seems a bit animated ever since they got here.

“Bhut' Lwandle you bought this house for sis' Mandisa?” her voice is even similar to her sister's but she looks and sounds younger.

Banzi clears his throat uncomfortably and won't meet my raised eyebrows. “Erhm no Andiswa I rented it out for her for the first month but the lease is under her name.”

“Ooh,” Andiswa sounds disappointed and I'm more than ready to leave. “Will you drive us to go and see her? I don't really know Jo'burg that well.” Oh, hell naw.

I give Banzi that eye, the one which says we need to talk and he asks them to excuse us and we go outside.

You can't be driving until your arm heals, I sign the moment the door closes behind him.

But I need to at least show them the hospital and where she is, he signs back and I give him another baleful stare. He raises his hands in mock surrender.

Fine, fine I'll tell them to take an Uber or taxify.

“I can't drive now Andiswa because of my arm but you can use Uber. Here's Mandisa's card and phone, also the Hospital address. She's in ICU, if you need food just order in or you can go to Fourways mall it's not that far from here.” The grandmother is looking daggers at me as he says all this but I stare back at her.

We find Sami asleep in the car and I drive out of the complex and head to my home. When we get there, Banzi insists that I don't wake her up and carries her in even though he looks like he's in pain. I flop down the sofa. It's been an emotionally challenging day, riddled with surprises and I don't think I can cook. Maybe a shower will do me good.

Coming out of the shower, I find Banzi collecting pizza from the delivery guy and drinks as well as 3 Mc'Flurrys. I put Samira's share away and we dig in, none of us wanting to talk and unpack today's events.

"The results are back." I breathe in as Banzi hands me the envelope. It's been two days after all the drama and we've been cooped up in my humble abode. I think Banzi has moved in, not that we discussed it or anything but he's spent two whole nights here. He doesn't go to work because of his injury, he tricked me into staying yesterday. I agreed because I'd already asked ahead and Samira also refused to go to school. We just spent the day cosying up as a family and didn't go anywhere.

Today we left Banzi at home and he picked Sami from school and she can't stop talking about it. My baby is happy, her cheeks are even plumper now. I also got home to the lovely aroma of Shepard's pie. I checked his arm and it's healing nicely. We've had supper, Samira has been put to bed and he just handed me the letter that might change my life forever.

It's sealed from EasyDNA written in Bold outside the envelope; Full sibling STR test. My hands are shaking so much he takes the letter from me and kisses me on the lips until I'm calm. Then he hands back the unopened envelop.

Most of it is medical jargon to me until I reach the siblingship index which is at 1.37, uterine siblings 25% match. I shrug my shoulders at Banzi with a confused look on my face.

"This simply means you are half siblings, you share a biological mother and you're a 25% match." He tells me and I feel tears pricking my eyes. I'm so overwhelmingly happy and he takes me into one of his bear hugs and the tears flow freely.

I did it Nura, I found him now please help me reclaim your son. I know the Naidoos won't give up without a fight.

"What are you going to do next? Because from what you have told me the parents are likely to disappear with your brother, the moment you go and show them these results." Banzi echoes my thoughts and I honestly have no idea how I'm going to do this.

"What about we go see a family lawyer tomorrow and just hear our options tomorrow after work. Cool?" I nod and rise on my toes to kiss him. What would I be without my grizzly bear.

We're snuggling together watching The Notebook when I turn and take a good look at him. He looks relaxed and bored by my choice of movie but he's being a trooper about it. He feels my eyes on him and he looks down at me and smiles. He's beautiful.

How are you feeling? Honestly.

I haven't had a chance to ask him that ever since the shooting incident.

"Honestly, I feel like she manipulated me for so long and I was too busy feeding off my guilt to notice. Yet again I realize now that she's sick and all of it was a cry for help. I wish I could have seen the signs sooner you know. Been more insistent about seeing a therapist. Maybe we wouldn't be here today." He sighs and I bury myself even closer to him.

We can go check on her after seeing the lawyer tomorrow. He kisses my forehead.

"I love you. But I need you to tell mw when any of this gets too much for you, ok? I want you to know that I care about her but mostly all I've felt for her the past few months is guilt. I love you." His voice is sincere and my heart is happy.

I haven't told him about the baby yet. I just want this lingering dark cloud to pass us and then we can start on a fresh start.

Maybe a small part of me is also afraid that once Mandisa is out of the comma that he's going to turn his full attention on her and I don't want him to choose me just because we have another baby on the way.

I don't want him to feel trapped. I want him to be with me because it's what he wants most in the world. Just like I've chosen him. For now I'll try not to cry during The Notebook but I know I'm going to fail miserably and I'll hang on to the light inside me that's kept me afloat. Through it all.

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Any mid-week goals? Mine are to finally do my laundry 😊.

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 32

“I’m willing to compromise when it comes to many things but not love man. Not love. I've done that too many times and it's taught me exactly what I want from what I don't want. And listen it's not like the type of love I want is a fairy-tale...no. The kind of love I want is a very real thing. It's out there. What I want in love is respect. I want a love that has commitment. Has tenderness. Has laughter. Has playfulness. Has passion. Has morals and above all else is always felt.” Cici. B

His beard scrapping my inner thighs stirs me from a deep sleep. It takes a while for my sleep-muddled brain to comprehend what he's doing even though my body is way ahead of me. The build up and that toe curling sensation which has me seeing a blinding light for a minute brings me back to full consciousness even as my body shivers from the aftermath of his loving.

“Morning Freckles,” oh Allah his face is wet! I try to hide my shame behind my hands but he cages them and grins widely at me. “Don't hide, it's just your body's honest reaction to pleasure. We talked about this.”

No matter how many times we talk about squirting I still squirm when it happens to me. It just feels like I've wet the bed but he assured me that it's just my body paying him the greatest homage. It's like back in high school when I assumed he broke my virginity just because he made me cum. He gets up and without warning hurls my body up and throws me over his shoulder. I try wiggling down but that proves futile. He spans my rear end and commands me not to move.

I love waking up to this side of my bear. The fun and daring side, the past few days he's been using my body to forget and it was intense, the lovemaking. We spend way too long in the shower with him teasing my body and tormenting my libido. I come out wrapped up in a huge towel like a baby and find his equally troublesome spawn waiting for us on my bed. She can't stop laughing at the sight of me in a big fluffy towel like a baby.

“Papa why is mama wrapped like Athandwa after she's taken her bath?” always inquisitive and she'll probably store this away to embarrass me at some later stage.

“Because she's my baby,” Banzi says throwing sloppy kisses all over my face. I would slap him but my hands are inside this beastly towel.

“I thought I was your baby!” Allah give her strength because she's not staying in that position for much longer.

“You're both Papa's babies. Now go brush your teeth and mama will be there to help you bath.” Samira stomps out of the room clearly peeved that I'm stealing her spotlight. Banzi laughs clearly happy with himself and I glare up at him. I can't even sign for him to put me down and he knows it. The brute twirls around the room and I feel sick. The moment he puts me down I untangle myself from the towel and run to the toilet.

He's instantly remorseful and worried, serves him right. “Baby, are you ok? Did I hurt you?” I let him squirm as I brush my teeth. He's frowning and I can't help smiling at the worry on his face then I poke my tongue at him.

It's a struggle getting Samira ready for school because she's sulking until I threaten not to allow her any ice cream for 3 weeks. Breakfast is another affair. She doesn't want cereal, she wants eggs and I can't stand the smell of eggs right now. So we spend like 5 minutes arguing over her eating cereal because there's no way I'm making eggs. She's throwing tantrums and being a brat and weighing on my frayed emotions.

Right now my emotions are on a rollercoaster and Samira is working on my last nerve. Banzi comes in and diffuses the situation by offering to make the eggs. I take my cereal and stalk to my bedroom and leave them to their disgusting eggs.

By the time we drop her off at school, her father has managed to charm his way back into the top of her tiny heart and all is forgiven. She barely acknowledges me and I'm hurt that she seems to love him now and she hates me. I want to cry but I keep my tears in check. She goes some distance then comes running back to the car and hugs me.

“I love you mommy,” accompanied by that Gummy smile and all is right in my world again.

We only managed to squeeze in an early appointment with the lawyer. Fortunately, today I only have an afternoon class with the older students. The lawyer's offices are in Bryanston and it takes a while to get

there but fortunately we are on time. The receptionist is friendly and dressed in some serious couture pant suit. I feel shabby in comparison, the place screams sophistication and affluence. The offices are made of glass but you can't see what's inside the offices. The receptionist's high shoes don't make any sound on the dense carpet and we follow her swaying figure all the way down the corridor.

C. N Kiet

Junior Partner

Is plastered on the door along with qualifications. To think I once craved the same. I push the melancholy thoughts from my mind.

We are ushered into the lawyer's office, the room is huge and airy and the furniture was artfully chosen and placed in a manner that screams discreet wealth and could only have been the work of a professional designer.

The lady behind the mahogany desk looks petite and that impression doesn't change even when she stands up to greet us. She's tinier than me and she's in 6-inch stilettos, her suit looks like it was tailored on her body and her handshake is as warm and welcoming as her smile.

“Ms. Shabangu I read your brief and I must say I was intrigued by the facts that you gave me. I must tell you now of the complexities of your case. We are hoping for some custody of your brother but at best we might only walk away with visitation rights.” My heart sinks when she gets straight to the point but I'm grateful also for her candidness.

“You see when it comes to guardianship, custody or access to the child the courts are mostly guided by the principles of the Children's Act and the main one being the best interests of the child. According to what you told me we can question the legality of how they came to have your brother in the first place. That would mean we have to dispel the maternity of Mrs. Naidoo and it's a pity that your mother has since passed on. We can however rely on your DNA, we'll have to request fresh DNA testing though because the one you have was acquired illegally as well.

Even then we'd have to be able to discredit their parenting, to show that it's in your brother's best interest not to be raised by them.

From what you've told me of the well being of your brother, Ms. Shabangu this will not be an easy feat. However, I will see to it with everything in my power that your mother gets justice for the treatment she had to endure in their hands and that you're reunited with your brother. I can't promise you full custody but I'll do my utmost best.

You have to be prepared for prolonged litigation because at some point there are also the criminal implications of your mother's rape and how they falsely registered your brother's birth under the wife. You best believe the Naidoos will come out guns blazing and if you have any hidden skeletons I would appreciate if I am made aware of them upfront. The prolonged litigation won't come cheap, are you prepared to foot the bill?" my hope has dwindled into nothingness, I don't think I can afford to stand up against the Naidoos.

"Don't worry about the bill, we are good for it," Banzi says clasping my hand, more likely shutting down my protests rather than assurance.

I come out of the offices feeling burdened. I'm not comfortable with Banzi taking on such financial strain. And how long will it even take for me to pay him back? On the other hand I really need my brother. I'm wrestling with my thoughts until we reach the carpark. He hugs me even though I'm a little resistant at first.

"Hey, it's going to be ok. You'll get your brother and stop worrying about money. I still have money from my short rugby career, the injury pay-out that hasn't been touched not to mention my investments, bonds and my actual salary. I also put up that house for sale, I have other property. So we're good for the bill. And we'll make a plan to make more money, it doesn't matter. All I want is my baby happy, ok?" I find myself sobbing in his arms, bloody hormones. He's really my rock.

We pull up at the hospital. Mandisa is being taken off the life machine since she can now breathe on her own without the help of the machine. She's still in a coma though but they say the swelling around her brain has gone down. Small mercies. So she's being moved from ICU to another room. I'm able to understand and not judge her need to take her own life because I've been there. In that dark place where nothing makes sense anymore except ending it all.

The bandages are still on and her whole face looks swollen. Such a beautiful face at that. No one gets to see beneath her beautiful and beneath her ugly. I'm standing in front of Banzi, it's like he's wielding me as a shield and I wonder one day if he'll open up to me about the abuse she put him through. I always prefer it when he's open and vulnerable with me. This one thing he's keeping from me I can just tell.

He's blocking it out and I hope he will break down and bare it all. I'm not one for the macho silent type, I figure I'm silent enough for the both of us. I crave the constant intimacy of baring your souls to one another, the good, the messy and the ugly. I want it all and Banzi has a way of giving me that.

I think he's had enough of the hospital and we're about to leave when the door opens and the grandmother and Andiswa come in carrying flowers. I gag on the cloying smell of the flowers but I steel my insides and the nausea goes down.

“Bhut' Lwandle you are here!” her face falls when he turns towards her and she sees little old me. She must be crazy if she thinks I'm ever letting go of this one.

“Finally, you decide to come and see her. I see your mother really did a bad job at raising you,” the venom inside this woman. I wonder what hurt her so much that she has to lash out on everyone else.

“We were just leaving,” Banzi tries to diffuse the situation and I'm grateful for the reprieve.

“Bhuti before you go. I need to tell you something that the doctor said.” Andiswa says and she's looking at me nervously. I get the hint and I'm about to move away when Banzi holds my arm.

“Whatever it is, she can hear it too.” The grandmother snorts and we all ignore her. Andiswa seems nervous she's rubbing her hands together.

“The doctor told us that the situation sis' Mandisa is in, is not good for the baby...” I don't hear what she says after that there's a great whooshing sound in my head.

I'm feeling faint and the bitter taste of betrayal hangs heavy in my mouth. He lied to me. He told me he hadn't touched her since I came back into the picture. Tears blind me but I fail to get out of his grip and I feel a panic attack starting. I've gone through too many emotions today and my body is shutting down, I'm unravelling I can feel the darkness winning. I try to breathe and calm down, count down. It's not working, nothing is working. All I keep hearing are the words baby and I taste his betrayal over and over.

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Let's establish our nationalities, drop your motherland alongside your comment. Thank you for reaching and exceeding our target.

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 33

I feel drained, I haven't had a full blown attack in months. My mouth is dry and it tastes bitter and my eyes feel like they are sealed with grains of sand. I can feel my headache pounding and I don't even try to open my eyes. The darkness lures me into a false sense of security. I realize I've been neglecting myself, my mental health. I haven't been processing things as I should. Right now, I'm too weak to even try to put everything in it's right box it's jumbled.

I feel warm hands all over my face and then a stinging slap. What in Allahabad...?! I peel my eyes open and I'm met with Samira's big eyes so close to mine. She blinks them innocently and gives me her widest gummy smile like she didn't just slap me now. I glare at her and she giggles planting wet sappy kisses on my cheeks.

"See Papa I told you the slap will wake her up." When I called her a spawn I was not kidding, she definitely doesn't take from my side of the family.

I try to turn my head and I catch a glimpse of Banzi, he looks like he's trying hard to contain his laughter. Of course he'd find this funny. I rest my head back and close my eyes. Oh darkness, you sweet friend. Someone takes Samira off me and she's protesting.

"That's enough bubba, let mommy rest. She's tired." Thank Allah for Nathi.

"But I want to show her the picture I drew of us as a family!" she sounds like she's about to cry and resolutely I open my eyes and try to sit but I'm too woozy. Banzi helps me sit up and I look at Samira's drawing of sticks with really big heads that are supposed to be reflections of me, her and Banzi. Mine has a mop of rounded zeros which I assume are my curls. I still view it like I'm assessing a replica of the Mona Lisa.

It's beautiful, I lie through my teeth and my daughter who has no artistic bone in her body smiles as if she's accepting a Globe.

"How are you feeling?" Nathi asks as she fluffs my pillows and fusses over my blanket.

Like I've been hit by a train.

She makes those sympathetic noises and then takes her spawn of a granddaughter and leaves. There's silence after they leave and I don't think I even want Banzi next to me. He sits on the bed, getting way too close for comfort.

"You've been out for a whole day, don't scare me like that. I thought I'd lost you." His speech on loss reminds me of the baby that had been growing in me and I want to ask him if my baby is ok. Then I remember that he doesn't know of the baby and that he might be having another baby with Mandisa. I slip my hand from his loose hold.

"Are we going to talk about what triggered your panic attack?" he asks when I choose to remain mum and I shrug my shoulders. Even just doing that is exhausting.

"Talk to me baby," I look at him and just feel my tears welling up.

I've been having this feeling that you're holding something back from me. I couldn't even tell you that we're having another baby because...

"Wait, what?" he rudely interrupts me and I see the disbelief in his eyes and why is he looking betrayed. He's the one who betrayed me!

"We're having another baby?" each word is uttered deliberately and his stare is unwavering and making me feel uncomfortable.

"When did you know about this?"

It doesn't matter now does it? How could you...

"When Fatima?" his voice is acidic by now and I feel a frisson of fear.

On Saturday morning when I came to the doctor for check up but then you were shot.

“So you've known for a week? Wow! Just wow,” he stands up and looks at me like he wants to say something then he thinks twice about it. He picks up his car keys and looks at me, for longer this time. He stalks out of the room but doesn't bang the door. He just closes it with such finality.

What just happened? How does he get to be angry when Mandisa is lying in a coma with his freaking baby. The pounding on my head grows more insistent and I feel like a thousand chain saws are cutting through my brain. The machines start going berserk and a nurse comes in followed closely by a doctor.

“I'm going to need you to breathe ok? Your blood pressure is charting through the roof.”

The doctor has a calm voice which in turn calms me down and the pounding slows down and the machines quieten down. I want to ask him about my baby but I can't speak.

The nurse changes my drips and then they leave me alone with my thoughts. The exhaustion kicks in and I fall asleep.

I wake up to the sweet smell of food. My stomach growls loudly and I feel like I haven't eaten in weeks. I'm surprised to see Banzi back and even more surprised when he makes me sit up and then proceeds to feed me the chicken noodle soup until I finish the last spoon. He's gentle and careful not to burn me as the soup is very hot. I thank him and he doesn't acknowledge it.

“It's funny how I've slept next to you, every day for the past week. I've held you and told you my darkest fears and now you're going to use something said by a girl you've known for what? Two days. To justify the fact that you kept such news from me. What, were you going to wait another 6 years before telling me about this one too? Get some rest, I'll see you tomorrow. You have a check up at 9am.”

I wish he'd shout at me or scream but he was talking flatly and he barely looked at me. He shows me my overnight bag and takes out my pyjamas, bathing things and puts them on my table.

“Oh and there is no baby. Even if it had been there it wouldn't have been mine. Goodnight.” He says before leaving and closing the door behind him. I want to call him back and tell him I'm sorry. I take my phone and text him instead. He reads my text and doesn't respond.

It's been 3 days now and nothing has changed . He takes care of me and makes sure I've bathed, eaten and I get my vitamins and exercise but he barely speaks to me when Samira is not around. I've dealt with all sides of Banzi, when he's being arrogant, a jerk, an angry screaming mess, emotional Banzi, when he's being a goofy idiot. Never have I seen him so distant and cold. He's here but he's not here and that hurts most. I wish he could shout at me or something, anything is better than the silence.

We went to the doctor that next morning and he was there holding my hand. After the check up, Banzi requested a scan and that's when we heard the first heartbeat. With my first pregnancy I didn't get to enjoy moments like this because I was battling depression and anxiety. With this pregnancy I want to enjoy it.

Our baby's heartbeat sounded loud and clear, filling the room with its beautiful sound and I wanted so bad to cry but the tears just didn't want to fall. I saw Banzi wiping away a tear and he held my hand, squeezed it and kissed it. That's the only affection he's showed me. I wish I could turn back to when he was goofy and woke me up with kisses all over my face. But in his sleep he always places a protective hand across my stomach.

Right now I'm watching him be a "donkey" for Samira. He's a gentle giant and that daughter of mine is abusing him. She keeps kicking him until he throws her off and she falls laughing on the carpet and they start tickling each other. I'm just here watching them with a big smile on my face.

"Mommy come and be my other donkey!" she demands and I shake my head no but she's stubborn and I find myself next to Banzi on all fours and she's using us to "sow" her field. She's a taskmaster and we keep getting bitten with anything that her hands land on. We're told that Khanyo makes a better donkey than the both of us because we're so stiff. I'm glad when we are finally let go and I'm told that she's hungry.

I'm making her food and sandwiches for us when I feel him watching me. I turn and he's leaning against the wall watching me. I finish my task and Gummy takes her plate, I hand him his plate and he takes it without taking his eyes off me. Trust me chewing while someone is staring at you is very awkward.

"What makes me mad is that I've tried time and again to be the best version of myself for you. I am my most honest and vulnerable when I'm with you but you still question my loyalty and love for you. That I can't get over." He washes his plate, brushes my tummy and leaves me feeling like a total mess in the kitchen.

I need someone to offload to and who will give it to me just the way I need to hear it. I take my keys and I drive home. I leave a sticky note saying I've gone home and I'll be back. I'm very impatient to get home and I sigh in relief when I finally get in the gates.

"You hate your mother now and where is my granddaughter?" mama complains the moment I get in the house. I've been so stuck in the Lunika drama I've neglected her. I hug her and her hug is so comforting.

"I'm still your favourite father," I feel lighter already being around my family and being fussed over. I've lost weight, I'm scolded and apparently Samira told them some nights I just buy pizza. Argh that child will be the death of me. I wonder how long her snitching will last. I find Avuyile busy with Athandwa who doesn't want to bath and is fighting, splashing water all over the carpet.

"This is the reason I had my tubes tied. It gets worse when I have to comb her hair." She grumbles as she tries to hold down the wiggling baby. I take the wrapping towel and take Athandwa out of the water and just like that she stops screaming and she's looking at me with the cutest eyes. Shame her little face is red and she even has the hiccups.

As soon as she's dressed and had her bottle, she's out like a light and I put her to bed. She looks so adorable and I find myself brushing my tummy.

"You're a natural at this, don't worry you'll be fine." Avuyile says then we leave the nursery before Athandwa wakes up.

"So how's your baby daddy after the whole shooting."

I give her the lowdown on how we found his grandmother and Mandisa's sister waiting for us the day he got discharged, the drama then and going to leave them at Mandisa's flat. Then I tell her of the events leading to my big meltdown and how Banzi is giving me the silent treatment because I didn't tell him that I'm pregnant. She's been listening attentively and now I'm waiting for her to give me a talking to.

"Why are you always pushing Banzi towards Mandisa? Your natural instinct as a woman would probably be to keep him as far away from her as possible but not you."

I think about it for a minute and I hadn't even been aware that I keep pushing him in her direction. I just thought for there to be an us, he has to clear things with her and I kind of felt guilty about her losing her child like that.

I think she's everything I'm not. She can talk, she's successful and Xhosa like him. They have more in common. I admit to her and to myself for the first time.

“So you thought she deserved to have him while you didn't?” I wasn't ready for this line of questioning because it brings out all my insecurities.

I've never felt like I deserved him even back at high school, I wondered why he fell for me. I would have understood had he just wanted sex. I mean he's always been a spotlight kind of person while I always blended with the shadows.

“Do you know what he sees in you? Have you ever asked him?” I shake my head no and she goes on to the next question not even giving me a chance to breathe.

“Why didn't you tell him about the baby? Don't sell me that bull story about Mandisa.”

I'm afraid that this baby won't make it too, admitting my biggest fear right now has tears clouding my eyes and she let's me cry. I didn't want to raise Banzi's hopes up and only to break them.

“I know what you're doing because I've done it a million times. You're deflecting. You are running away from your demons and insecurities and instead you are fixated on trying to fix Aphile's father and on his problems. You're too scared to face your own challenges so you block them out. It's easier being the loving mother and the supportive partner. But trust me baby, you can't give anything on an empty tank.

I stuck at being a mother and housewife all these years because I thought I'd fail at everything else and so the one thing I was doing well, I obsessed over. Until I began to resent my own children and my husband because they were getting to live out their dreams which I helped them with while no one knew of my dreams.

Don't bury your pain and focus on his, you don't always have to be strong. And you have no reason to be insecure. I mean have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror? You deserve to be on cover pages.”

Her words ring in my mind and I can't ignore their ring of truth. I have abandoned my healing journey and I've been more focused on helping Banzi. He wasn't using me as a crutch, I was using him as a crutch. Maybe it's time I went back to the drawing board and take a good look in the mirror.

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My sincere apologies for the late post, I woke up tired. Those who've been asking if The Harvard Wife is available online you can get it from Loot and UPPERCASE Books has it on special at R232. Happy Weekend 😊😌

Love and light 💎💎💎💎

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 34

Dedicated to Tshepang Kiet on her birthday, founding member privileges lol. But on the real her constant hounding made me consider writing the continuation of Farrah and her bear's story. Happy Birthday Skeem.

"I love fiercely and once I learnt to love myself that way, everything changed. In a good way. In the best way. Because once you know how that feels like, you won't accept anything less." J.M Storm

"Don't run Aphile!" I watched amused as Banzi scowled darkly at his princess.

She slowed down all of three steps then when Thobeka came out screeching, Samira broke into a run. She tumbled just before reaching Thobeka and fell on top of her. While Banzi was cursing next to me, the girls were giggling and rolling around the driveway. Not even a fall could break the happiness of their reunion.

"Aphile, you could have seriously hurt yourself and Thobeka. I told you don't run!" Banzi berating Samira is not something I see often so I watch and try to hide my smile. He doesn't know how manipulative she is yet.

Samira wraps her little hands around his legs and gives him her big eyes, I know that look. I've fallen many times for that look. I want to tell Banzi to look away or close his eyes. It's too late, his dark scowl has fallen and he's struggling to still look stern.

"Sorry Papa. I love you Papa bear." The icing on the cake and just like that Banzi is back to being as mellow as marshmallows in hot chocolate.

The moment their sweet moment ends Thobeka grabs Samira's hand and says they should go and play with Athandwa, "...she's like a real doll but only cuter, until she starts crying and she poops a lot. Her poop smells too."

Before Banzi can react they are running into the house and he looks so frustrated. It's funny how easily he fell into full overprotective father mode. Then again, Banzi has always been overprotective of Nathi, Khanyo and me.

"You can't always stop them from falling and hurting themselves you know. You just have to be there to help clean the cuts and kiss the hurt away." I hadn't noticed that daddy was busy with his flowers. He's walking towards us and I meet him halfway and hug him. He hugs me back and kisses my forehead.

"Molo Tata," Banzi greets and my dad responds calling him a boy. Banzi asks to talk to him and they move into the house to go to dad's office. I'm left forgotten on the driveway. Oh well. I get in and find my beautiful ladies in the lounge teaching Samira how to hold Athandwa.

"Hey baby. Go into the kitchen and make some refreshments for your father and his guest. Take them to the office."

Wow, the love I'm getting from my family today is very low. I didn't even get to sit down and be fussed over. I want to argue that we just ate but mama gives me the eye and I drag my sorry behind to the kitchen. I know dad loves his meat and so does Banzi, I make the some club sandwiches and add iced tea as well as lemonade to the tray.

They are having some deep conversation but the moment I get in the office, they keep quiet. Ok. This must be why Banzi used to sulk the first times I met his family and they all fussed over me. It sucks being

forgotten in your own home. Plus the plan had just been to drop off Samira then move on to our 'date'. I guess I just have to put my big girl knickers on.

Things between us have been better, not great yet because we haven't really talked. The silent treatment has fallen but I'm still not getting any. He's doing it on purpose too. He bathes and comes out of the shower with some droplets on his chest and only a towel hanging down his hips, his happy trail just screaming for my attention. I've actually thought of tying him to the bed while he's asleep and have my wicked way with him. He just hugs me and kisses the back of my head. He sleeps in the nude, holding me close while I feel him poking my arse and lower back. The things I'm subjected to!

But it has given me time to self introspect and go through my exercises which I have been neglecting. Sexual frustration will have you up at 2 in the morning writing letters to yourself. Somewhere in me, the girl who had big dreams is still there and I just have to dig her out. I've managed to get off a few of her layers but I have to fully dedicate myself to my self-healing journey. I read and meditated on a prayer, something I haven't done since before the abduction and it felt good. Me and Allah still have a lot to iron out but I am slowly finding my way back to my faith.

Finally, Banzi comes out with dad and they are laughing like they have been buddy buddies for years. We say our goodbyes and we leave. I insist on driving and he's looking at me like I'm planning on killing him.

"I don't trust your driving skills," I glare at him and he's not taking back that hurtful statement.

Walk then, I sign then get into the car. He sighs dramatically before also getting in the car and he's barely strapped in his seatbelt when I drive off.

He looks at me quizzically as I stop the car. At least he's finally shut up for once, he couldn't stop telling me how to drive and I almost dropped him off in the middle of the highway. I unbuckle my belt and open the boot. By the time I take out my board and markers from the boots he's leaning at the car and waiting for me. He sees the board and breaks into a smile. This is where it all started and how it began, I brought him back to our park. Sorry city of Johannesburg but I'm claiming this park in Braam as ours.

Fortunately the park is deserted and we sit on the bench and I'm suddenly nervous. I don't know if you've noticed this about me but opening up is really hard for me. I'd rather bury the feelings deep inside and question everything in my mind. I'm the first to admit that I suck at communicating my thoughts and my feelings.

Yet here I am today, willing to open up without being prodded. I should have just written him a bloody letter. My hands are shaking so badly. He holds them and kisses them, I forget that I'm nervous and my hands stop shaking. Here goes nothing, I start scribbling on the board.

I didn't tell you about the baby because I don't think it will make it. I was sparing you the pain I went through losing our boy and you losing Mandisa's baby as well. I am afraid to even bond with this baby.

I hand him the board and he reads it. I study his face carefully, a lot of emotions pass through his face but the prevailing one is hurt. He puts the board on the bench and takes the marker from my hand and puts it on the board. He tucks in stray tendrils from my face and cups it up.

"You don't get it do you? I was upset because I want to be there for every part of this pregnancy even if God forbid this baby doesn't make it, I want to be there. Share every heartbeat, first kicks and get to brush and kiss your belly.

I want to hold your hair while you vomit and hold your hand for every doctor's appointment. I want to be there with you, through the good and through the ugly. Let me be there for you and our children." His earnest gaze gets misted by my tears and I try to blink them away. I nod my head and he kisses me gently on the lips.

I was jealous of you and Mandisa. From that day when I saw you bending over her tiny bump at that baby store and how you looked at her when we got her to the hospital. And I resented that when I was in a strange hospital in Nigeria, I was alone with a big scar on my abdomen. I hated how you somehow managed to move on from me and replaced me with someone who was everything that I am not. She's Xhosa with a full figure and has an accounting degree and I have none of that.

I would have written more but I ran out of space on the board and so I hand it over to him. He takes even longer read it this time around. It's hard admitting to feelings of resentment. He sighs and rubs his eyes.

"You're nothing like Mandisa because I wasn't looking for your replacement just wild sex to make me forget for just that while about the aching in my heart. Mandisa may have had me physically but my heart was firmly yours and she knew that. I'm sorry I wasn't there for you but I'm here now and it hurts when you shut me out. I can't take back what happened but I offer you the present and the future. I promise you won't ever be alone." Because he's dramatic, he kneels in front of me and places one hand on his chest. I shoo him up and I can't help the smile on my face.

We continue talking, me opening up until I come to my insecurities.

I've never felt good enough for you even back in high school. What do you even see in me?

He reads this and he's shaking his head in disbelief and he's chuckling even though the mirth doesn't quite reach his eyes.

"You're kidding right? If anything you are the one who's too smart to be with someone like me. Every guy back in high school wanted you but they, we were too afraid to approach you. There were bets over you and yet you only had eyes for me. I'm still grateful that you chose me.

I see your beauty, your face is not only beautiful but it also shows your strength. I still love your eyes because they never lie to me and they show me how you are feeling every time you say you're ok. Have you ever seen your body woman? I cringe every time I'm out with you and some pervert keeps checking you out! You're kind and loyal to a fault. You sparkle whenever you're around me and you have no qualms telling where to get off when I try bullying you.

I never have to pretend to be strong or perfect around you, you accept me for exactly what I am. I love how you love and respect my family. I'm actually over the moon about the second baby because it meant you aren't leaving me yet. For a while I thought I'd fucked up so bad that you wouldn't want me."

It felt good to just open up to him and listen to him opening up to me. It was getting dark now but I didn't want to leave the park bench just yet. He made me wear his jacket and I rested my head on his shoulder and he rested his on mine. We watched the sun dip behind Jo'burg Theatre and it was beautiful. I begged him to sing for me our song and he didn't hesitate belting out Perfect by Ed Sheeran. He looked at me when he got to this part and I felt the message behind the lyrics.

"Well I found a woman, stronger than anyone I know

She shares my dreams, I hope that someday I'll share her home

I found a love, to carry more than just my secrets

To carry love, to carry children of our own

We are still kids, but we're so in love

Fighting against all odds I know we'll be alright this time

Darling, just hold my hand

Be my girl, I'll be your man
I see my future in your eyes.”

There's silence for a while after he finishes singing and I just soak in being at peace in his presence.

“Promise me one thing. That you won't always hold things within and try to be strong for me at your expense. I want you to make me your sounding board. I'm here Macaanto and nothing, not even wild horses can drag me away.” I pinkie swear and he gives me a piggy ride back to the car.

I feel lighter like a huge burden has been lifted off my shoulders. We're both in a good mood while driving home and decide not to pick up Samira so that we can properly make up in every surface of my cosy little cottage.

We find a sleek car parked in front of my house. It's black with tinted windows. The moment we park, a tall man unfolds his body from the low car, he's almost the same height as Banzi but I can't really see him properly in the dark.

“Wa ‘alaykum as-salām,” his greeting is a formal Arabic one and his voice is monotone but carries this commanding quality. “I'm Aarash, may I speak with you in private, it's a matter of grave importance.”

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To a week filled with prosperity and love 🍷

Love and light 💖💖💖💖💖💖💖💖💖💖

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 35

We're inside the house now all three of us and the tension is thick. Banzi didn't take kindly to someone just waiting outside for me at around 7pm then asking to talk in private. A few choice words were

exchanged and voila here we are. Aarash is sitting uncomfortably in the one sitter while Banzi and I share the other seat. My house feels like it has shrunk all of a sudden.

There's a formality to Aarash, his shirt is buttoned up to the last button and everything is in it's rightful place from tie to the gleaming leather of his shoes. His beard is neatly trimmed and not a strand of hair is out of place. His complexion is fair but dark enough to be mocha. His eyes are a light green almost golden pupils and are heavily hooded. He looks like a delicious cappuccino. Banzi's voice breaks the silence and my dangerous thoughts.

"How can we help you?" Did I tell you he's had his arm prospectively around me this whole time? Marking territory much, but I feel safe with his arm around me.

Aarash purses his lips in slight disdain looking at Banzi briefly then turning his full attention to me. "As I said it's a matter of grave importance. Your father, Fatima is on his deathbed and he has requested to see you and explain a few things to you before he dies."

If I could laugh I'd be pulling off a sarcastic laugh at this point, but I can't so I settle for giving him a blank stare. He squirms under my scrutiny and I don't take my eyes off him.

I don't have a father. I sign and he looks at me like I've grown horns on my head.

Oh so their stalking didn't reveal to them that I'm a mute.

Now he looks to Banzi for help and my bear chuckles before standing up.

"I'll be in the kitchen, let me give you both some privacy." Aarash is now seriously flustered and he keeps clearing his throat uncomfortably.

"I'm sorry for being rude earlier, please sit. I don't understand sign language and I had no idea that you cannot speak." I can tell that this is probably something he wasn't accustomed to, apologising. He was naturally arrogant, arrogance poured out of his pores.

Banzi sits and tells him what I just said. Aarash looks alarmed, "You do have father, his name is Ibrahim Awid Ibrahim al-Bradi and he needs to see you before it's too late."

Please go back to whoever sent you and tell him that my father died the day that my twin died, at this point I'm feeling very emotional. After Banzi's translation Aarash shakes his head firmly, I wish he weren't so handsome.

"He's alive for now but he needs to see you. I was instructed not to come back without you."

I don't want to go see him, so what are you going to abduct me again?

"Al Shaba would never hurt his own flesh and blood. All he wants is to see you." Aarash sounds personally affronted that I would even suggest such a thing about Al Shaba. My bravado and anger is wearing off and Banzi notices my shivers.

"I think it's best that you leave now. She's told you she doesn't want to see him." They are standing now toe to toe. While Banzi is bulkier, Aarash looks like he's forever ready to strike. A bear pitted against a panther.

"I will be back please think about his request." He slightly bows and leaves. Banzi follows him and bolts the door also setting the alarm. I'm shivering more visibly now and he scoops me up from the couch, carrying me to the bedroom and puts me gently on the bed.

How did they find me? Yes, he didn't threaten me and neither does he look as animalistic but still he could be just like the Boko Haram crew. Samira! Thank Allah my child wasn't here and I need to text home and ask them to keep her for a while. Banzi comes back and undresses me while I am deep in my thoughts, he scoops me up again and the instant chemistry of our bare skin touching distracts me.

He lowers me into the bubble bath and gets in behind me. My whole body relaxes and I lean back against him giving him access to knead my breasts. Just what the doctor prescribed. I forget about the Taliban and my father as my body lights up from his touch. His hands explore my tummy and also massage it and I'm craning my back. My bear has the magic touch and I'm impatient for his hands to go even lower. By the time his finger slides inside me, I have no other coherent thought except of his hot lips trailing kisses on my shoulder blades and him nipping at my neck. Now I'm shivering from passion overload.

“Ibrahim would strip me in front of Shekau's men and whip me till I lost consciousness. I begged and pleaded with him but that was not my Ibrahim it was like he was possessed. He would kick me until you came and threw your little body on me and Samira followed you.”

Images of my Nura being stripped in front of everyone and the long coiling end of the whip tear the delicate skin on her back till she was bloody and lost consciousness fill me and I'm just standing helplessly and watching. Then I'm seeing the healer and she's shaking my shoulders firmly, her voice threatening.

“All this, is usually caused by an upset baby guide that is left unnoticed in a person's life. You lost him because the male guides in your family are not happy, they are not happy that your father didn't recognize you and you twin. Her soul is also lost and seeking...”

Grown up Samira standing in the clear water of the falls and our embrace. Her sing song voice reaches me clear as day.

“It wasn't your fault sister, let go of the pain it was meant to be me not you. And I am still your companion, I will always be your companion...” then the clear water turns the murky colour of blood and we're back in the camp as toddlers.

She swats the flies that are swarming around me in the arid hot weather. She smiles at me showing off her four teeth and I smile back. We are making mud pies our faces are dirty and so are our hands but this is so much fun. A shadow falls across us and its two men. Their faces are scary and their cheeks have been slashed in matching scars. These ones have huge machetes slung across their robes and one kicks me with his scuffed boots.

“Get that one,” its Arabic I don't know how I know that but the man grabs the little girl and she starts kicking and screaming or is that me screaming I try to stand but fall on my bottom. I crawl after them following her screams but they are walking too fast and I'm crawling too slow they fade into one of the tents. The screams are fading and I'm crying.

Her screams are now whimpers but I see that huge man over her and there's so much blood, I want to crawl to her but I'm kicked back and I just scream a piercing scream and her whimpers stop, momma wails. There's so much blood.

“Baby, wake up it's just a dream. Please wake up.” My eyes spring open and sweat is dripping down my back and my nightdress is plastered against me. The bed looks like someone was fighting and I notice a glaring patch, I wet myself. I haven't had the nightmare in a while and I'm shaking from it.

“Come here, it's just a dream ok?” I cling onto him for dear life. He carries me on his lap, not minding that I'm wet or that I smell of sweat and urine. The voices felt so real and the dreams too but in his arms they start receding. I feel safe and he keeps kissing my wet curls until I'm calm.

“Let's get cleaned up,” his voice is gentle and holds no trace of pity.

I check the time on the nightstand 02:49. I get up and he helps me take off my nightdress. We take a shower and then he insists on taking out the bedding and putting it into the washing machine. I don't want to fall asleep anymore and we move to the lounge and put on a movie. It's an oldie, The sound of Music. We snuggle up naked with a blanket around us and we watch all 3 hours of the movie. Exhaustion takes over at the crack of dawn and we fall asleep on the couch.

I came over to Nathi because it's become apparent that my demons are far from over. I need Dr. Brown's help, she somehow managed to get through to me. We woke up around 12, tidied up then bathed and went to get Samira. I've been anxious about her since last night. She was happy to see us but even happier that we were taking her to cool uncle. When we got here, they disappeared to his game room and Banzi disappeared with Vuyo so it was just me and Nathi.

“You need Dr. Brown's contacts are you alright?” she sounds genuinely worried.

I'm ok just backslided a bit. The nightmares are back.

She nods, she's familiar with my nightmares so she doesn't ask any questions then she's brushing my tummy. “How's my grandbaby treating you.” For a moment I had even forgotten that I'm pregnant. I feel guilty what kind of mother am I?

Banzi comes back and tells me that Vuyo is asking to see me in his study. On our way there I ask him what it's about and he just shrugs his shoulders. Very helpful. Vuyo still intimidates me.

“Sit makoti I promise I don't bite,” he's enjoying my discomfort but I still sit across him. Age has been really good to him. He only has a few laughter lines across his mouth and a few grey hairs which are barely noticeable. He can still pass as Banzi's older hot brother.

“My person has been looking into the Naidoos and we found more than we bargained for. You might not need to take him to court after all.”

He hands me a file and boy is it thick.

I page through it and to say I'm shocked is an understatement. There's nothing Mr. Naidoo isn't involved in from fraud to participating in child prostitution as a regular client. Apparently the younger they are the more he wants them. There's pictures of him in various compromising situations.

His bank statements to his tax returns, he has a couple of hoax companies. They even did a check up on the maids who followed Nura and most have crippling stories to tell about him. By the time I finish reading I am horrified at the kind of person he is and the wife for turning a blind eye all these years. My brother looks happy though in the pictures and this gives me a little sense of peace.

These aren't admissible in court, I sign after going through the whole thick file.

“I know but having friends in SARS as well as other departments such as SAPS comes in handy. Tipping them off anonymously will sort our problem. But first we use this as leverage to get him to sign off full guardianship to you.” I sigh as I contemplate what to do. Going to court isn't going to guarantee I will even get access to him and since Naidoos have unlimited funds it will be like hitting my head repeatedly against a brick wall.

On the other hand do I really want to go down the blackmail route? Then I remember how he repeatedly raped Nura while his wife watched until they were sure she was pregnant. Sometimes you just have to be ready to get dirty in order to wrestle with a pig.

“It will be preferable if you don't get involved, we will tell them we are doing this on behalf of Nura. That way no harm will come to you and my grandkids.” Of course Nathi told him of my pregnancy and he's grinning like he's about to say something outrageous. “I see you two still don't want to follow my advice, at least now you are no longer making the babies under my roof.”

Banzi is snickering and I take that as my cue to leave. They laugh as I get out of the study as if the devil is following me. That's the reason why I always keep away from Vuyo. Ping! There's a text from an unsaved number.

“Please consider your father's request. Time is not on our side. Aarash”

The smile I had on vanishes and I frown looking at the message. On the one hand I remember the healer's words during Samira's cleansing and on the other I'm thinking seeing my father will be like opening a huge can of worms. Is my voice worth my peace of mind?

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Love and light 

P.s target still includes shares.

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 36

“Make your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.” Nelson Mandela

I'm just lying on my side and staring at this soul who knows me so well. I think my nightmares have reminded me of just how much he's seen me down and out but he's still stuck around. Sometimes love doesn't need to blaze but just be ambers which warm your soul. It's easy to forget at times when you've been together for a long time, what you've gone through and you become more focused on whatever you're going through now.

“R5 for your thoughts?” then he opens his mouth and you remember that he's also a clown.

He's also lying on his side and he keeps drawing patterns around my stomach. There's no movement yet, my stomach is even flat but I woke up to him putting his ear on it. He's really excited about this baby and I know he secretly wants it to be a boy and so do I. Which brings me to the issues of seeing my father.

I've asked all the wise people in my corner what I should do. Their varying responses all boiled down to this, follow your heart. How do I follow something that has never left my chest? Even Avuyile didn't tell me what to do, it's a conspiracy I tell you.

Tell me what to do, I sign and try my best Samira manipulation look.

He kisses my pouted lips and my freckled nose. "You already know what you want to do, you just need me to validate your choice."

Maybe taking those Skype therapy sessions with Dr. Brown together with him hasn't been such a good idea, now he even talks like her. We've been taking them for a week now and I'm grateful for the good doctor I really was unravelling. Aarash has been getting more and more restless but I waited 25 years to know my father, a few weeks shouldn't kill him.

What if he's as cruel to me as he was to my mother?

"I won't let him come anywhere near you. I told you I'm here for you and I'm not letting go of you until the day I die." By now I'm sprawled on top of him and I'm listening to his steady heartbeat.

I've been meditating on the scriptures lately, looking for some divine intervention. All they have served to do is make me more anxious.

"Love and respect your parents, they will bring you in Jannah."

"The Lord's pleasure is in the parents pleasure, and the Lord's anger is the parent's anger."

What made me more anxious is that while this meant I had to honour my father's dying wishes wouldn't I be betraying my mother's memory? The woman who raised me, who worked to the bone to make sure that I had everything. She consistently sacrificed herself for me and her ultimate sacrifice was giving her life for my freedom. Yes, she said she forgave him but this was the man who disregarded her dignity, accused her of being a whore and then abandoned her and us.

Now that he's in his deathbed, he's looking for some atonement from me. Where has he been all our lives. I want him to look me in the eye and tell me why he made us go through what we went through while he was busy playing a purist. I have so much pent up anger that I feel will only go away after I confront him.

“Stop thinking so hard. Get ready, we're going out.” Before I can even protest, I find myself made to sit on the bed.

We agreed that until we knew Aarash's intentions then it was safer for Samira to be alternating between the grandparents. There she's safe and can't be used for leverage. I miss my little bean. I go straight to the fridge and take one of her kiddie yoghurts, crème soda is her favourite. I open it and start eating it with my hand and it's the most amazing yoghurt I've ever eaten. Banzi is looking at me like I'm crazy but I ignore him until I'm done eating then I open another one and I make short work of it too. I wash my hands and carry another one just in case I start missing Samira again on the way.

In the car a phone call interrupts Ella Mai's Boo'd Up and Banzi accepts it via Bluetooth.

“Molo baby,” just the sound of his grandmother's voice is enough to make me open the 3rd yoghurt.

“Molweni makhulu.”

“I have the best news nyana wam'. Uvukile uMandisa!” she sounds so happy and I'm also relieved that she didn't die.

“That's good makhulu I hope you've called her family.” I search his face and he also looks relieved.

“I called them and they are on the way. Maybe you can collect them from the airport on your way to come see her. She's been asking for you.”

“They will have to find their own way from the airport because I'm not coming to the hospital,” his voice is even and the grandmother gasps theatrically.

“Lubanzi what is that girl giving you to make you so heartless. Majola lost your baby and just woke up from trying to kill herself and you don't care! How heartless can you be?” she's clearly outraged.

“I'm sorry but being heartless is leading her on to believe that there could be more for us to pursue or that I feel for her anything other than caring friendship. Mandisa doesn't need me leading her on. She needs to get help at a mental institution, so please grandmother stop selling her dreams and let her get the help she needs. Bye.” He drops the call just as her grandmother is spewing fire over the phone.

He looks straight ahead as he drives and I squeeze his thigh. He takes my hand and kisses the back of it. I'm glad Mandisa is awake and that Banzi is finally letting go of the guilt. I agree with him, she needs help to deal with all those demons that she revealed in her letter.

He brought me to Nura's grave and I'm grateful that he's standing a distance away and giving me space. As always the graves are immaculately kept and all I do is plop on the grass next to her. I'm at peace whenever I'm here. I'm actually thinking that maybe we can make a small plaque for Bandile as well next to his grandmother even though he's buried in Banzi's home. I will have to talk to her about it.

I clear my mind and just concentrate on Nura. It's not hard thinking about her. Images of her just flood my mind and in all of them her smile remains the same, serene and beautiful.

What should I do Nura. La'aantaa ma joogi karo (I can't be without you) in this journey.

Nothing happens even the leaves don't move in a slight breeze and not even a bird sings. I'm alone. I'm all alone and I need my mommy so bad. I guess we never stop needing them. Even if half of the time just before she died I was mad at her but now I just need her with all that is in me. No amount of tears will bring her back and it hurts. Someday I'll remember her with a smile in my face but right now I just need her.

A memory comes to mind. It was in high school after I had been bullied and I was in a sullen mood. I found Nura cooking as she sing-chanted some scriptures from the Qur'an. I banged the door and she looked up and smiled warmly at me. That made me angrier still and I threw my back pack on the floor and threw myself on the bed. Without even chastising me, she picked up my bag and took off my shoes and blazer. She continued cooking and singing and at some point I wanted to throw the pillow at her. How could she be so happy while I was feeling so sad.

“Food is ready Macaanto, come and eat,” her voice forever calm. I shook my head tears blinding my eyes. “I won't know what's bothering you unless you tell me baby.”

Why do we have to be here? Why can't we go home? They hate us.

She had wiped my tears away and stroked my head as she kissed me.

“Oh Fatima don't cry. Allah tests different people with different trials, because everyone has a different level of patience, tolerance and faith. This too is a test and it shall pass. You want a real Jihad? Smile even in the face of your adversaries, stay calm when faced by storms, forgive them even when they haven't asked for forgiveness. Pray about every situation and keep your heart pure always and Allah will reward you handsomely.”

The memory feels so real I want to reach out and touch her but she fades away and remains just that, a figment of my memory. My heart feels lighter and I'm at peace with my choice.

Waxaad tahaay naftayda (You're my soul) Saffiya Nura Omar Hashmi.

I feel his presence even before he puts his hand on my shoulder. I look up at him and smile, he smiles back and squats next to me. He touches the tombstone, brushing it lovingly as he starts talking.

“Thank you for bringing her back home and I haven't forgotten my promise to you. I intend to honour it until we meet again.” I'm so touched and I squeeze his hand and we sit quietly for about five minutes.

I was thinking we can make a small plaque for Bandile just right there so we can visit him too when we're this side. I sign and he beams down at me.

“I love that thought MakaAphile. We'll have it done, I'll talk to Tata and Ta'mkhulu.” It's the first time he's calling me Aphile's mom and I feel a warmth in my heart. “Have you made your decision?” I nod my head and take out my phone.

I will go and see him, when we close schools in two weeks time. I send the text to Aarash and he responds almost immediately.

That's too far, we really don't have much time left. We have to leave this week.

That's too bad. I have a job and a life. Tell your employer that I waited for 25 years. 2 more weeks won't kill him. He can take that or die, his choice.

With that I place my phone in my pocket and Banzi helps me stand up. We leave the grave yard and I feel like I've made the right choice. We're going to see my father and while there I'll make an effort to go and see my mother's family. I'm not sure if that's going to be successful but we're going to try.


“You realize though that this will be our first overseas vacation? We should go shopping.” Allah this feels like our Matric dance all over but I just paste a fake smile on my face and he laughs, a deep belly laugh.

“You should see your face right now! I've never met a woman who hates shopping more than you. I won't even suggest that we wear matching outfits.”

I mean seriously, what are we? Samira and Thobeka?

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Happy mid-week

Love and light 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 37

Time flies when you have a lot on your plate. The truth is I needed those 2 weeks to prepare myself, emotionally and physically for the meeting with my father. I needed to be in the right mental frame. I've been managing my anxiety by identifying my triggers and with each trigger I need to learn how to control my body's reaction so that I'm not overwhelmed and shut down. It doesn't always work but it's my new coping mechanism.

The Board was impressed with my performance and they have extended my contract into a more permanent one. Mphathi encouraged me to apply for a study package from the school since I was doing my Honours and I was actually approved. The great thing about working at this school has got to be the benefits and of course the cute children, but mostly the benefits. I don't pay rent and I don't need transport and it's really ideal as Samira also learns there. I love my cosy apartment and even with Banzi staying with me there's still space.

Yesterday though while we were at our dating appointment scan, Banzi did raise concerns about our living arrangements once the baby is born. A crib can't fit into my bedroom or Samira's room. I told him it's still too early; we're at eleven weeks and I was given the go ahead to travel, everything was in place baby was perfectly fine. I'm still not showing yet and I'm rarely sick. It's like this baby is making up for my horrible first experiences with the twins. It helps that my stress levels this time around are low and I'm in a safe and loving environment.

So like after our Scan I got a text from Bongs. We haven't seen much of each other lately because life happens and her fiancé who hates me, is very possessive. We caught up and then she surprised me by saying that her fiancé wants to meet up with me over lunch. To 'clear the air' and get to know each other better. I was very sceptical and when I told Banzi he said I'm just being paranoid.

She hates me, I told him and he'd waved my statement away.

"She doesn't hate you, she just feels threatened by how close you and Bongs are. Plus have you seen your arse lately baby? Damn woman!" the brute actually spanked me and that led to some quality appreciation time for my arse.

I was feeling mellow so I told Bongs to give her flat arsed partner my number. She texted and we set up a date for today but can I just confess the whole conversation sounded forced and awkward. Yet I still find myself today preparing to go and have lunch with her royal iciness.

"You can at least wear a smile instead of a frown," he's watching me from the top of his laptop. He's working on a few things before our departure tomorrow.

He wouldn't understand I haven't had the best record when it comes to making female friends my own age. I was never the popular girl, just the bullied one who preferred it when everyone else just ignored her existence. My Zodwa experience also left a bitter taste in my mouth, I just think I'm better off

keeping to myself and my small circle. I would rather be having a date with Samira right now and Thobeka.

“You're going to be fine and you might even enjoy lunch if you let yourself relax. Are the passports and visas packed?” I nod and point at my handbag. He went shopping for the both of us and I packed. We're good to go now.

We had tiny trackers installed into our bodies. Vuyo isn't taking any chances this time around and if anything were to happen I can press the panic button which is buried in the bracelet that Banzi bought for me and Banzi has one in his watch. It feels like we're in a James Bond movie. I don't blame them, my father is after all one of the most wanted fugitives in the world.

I'm done dressing up and I let my baby daddy know. Having him around has made me lazy to drive and he doesn't mind chauffeuring me around. He drops me off at The Buzz Shopping Centre and tells me to text him he'll be at the office submitting some papers. I find Whitney already sitting inside Capello, her classy red scarf blending in nicely with the décor.

She's sipping on a cocktail and she stands to give me a stiff hug, I wonder why she even suggested we meet. She orders crumbled chicken salad and a sparkling water while I order Nachos, spicy winglets and a side of fries with pink lemonade. Her small beady eyes almost pop out and I ignore the judgement. My man loves my arse.

The small talk is brutal and I'm grateful when the food comes and I promptly dig in. She's talking about her job blah blah blah but I'm only listen with one ear. I think these spicy winglets just gave me a mini orgasm.

“... I hope you don't mind, she really wanted to talk to you and she's not really a bad person, she's just hurt.” I look up from my pink lemonade and the colour drains from my face. What the actual fuck? I watch as Mandisa walks up to our table and Whitney smiles reassuringly at her.

I'm not having any of this, I wonder why they are so determined to shove Mandisa down our throats. The puffiness around her face has gone down and she's wearing a wig which I assume is covering the bandage on her head. I open my purse and take out a couple of notes and place them on the table and stand up to leave. Mandisa holds my arm and I stare at her hand and she takes it off.

“Please, just five minutes is all I ask for and I promise I won't bother you again.” Her speech is slow and slightly impaired, her jaws are not opening that wide. I'm guessing from the bullet to her brain. Her eyes are begging and I slowly slide down my chair. Not before I send a text to Banzi telling him Whitney tricked me here to make me come speak with Mandisa. I can't risk it, next think you know bullets are flying and I'm the recipient.

“I hope you also read my letter,” talking is a struggle for her and my heart softens a bit when she mentions the letter. “I'm sorry that I put you all through that. I wasn't in my normal state of mind. I am moving to a private rehab tomorrow. I'm going to get help. Please tell Lwandle I'm sorry. He didn't deserve any of that. I didn't mean to shoot him and I shouldn't have done it at his house. And I apologise for my sister. Mostly I want to apologise to you. I knew how much he loves you and I wanted that love for myself. Please take care of him, he's a great guy.” She pauses to catch her breath and wipe her tears.

I look at her and I see a woman who should have been broken by what she's been through but she's slowly picking up the pieces. I see me some 5 years ago. I hold her hand and squeeze it, I've forgiven her and I hope she forgives me too for coming back and snatching her fairy-tale ending.

Banzi comes in followed by Bongs and their eyes search the restaurant until they find us. Banzi looks like he's about to blow a gasket but his eyes become gentler when they land on me. Whitney is paler than usual and I understand why when I see the look in Bongi's face.

“Are you ok baby?” he asks and I nod repeatedly then he looks at Mandisa. She's shaking and I am still holding her hand. “I hope you heal.” She nods as tears fall down her cheeks.

He takes my other hand and I let go of Mandisa and we stand up and leave. Whitney looks like she's in a lot of trouble, Bongiwe leaves her at the restaurant and comes with us. No one says anything in the car and I actually welcome the silence.

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I feel teary when we say our goodbyes to Samira. I wish we could go with her but we're not exactly sure of the reception we're going to get there. I hug her little body against mine and sniff her hair. She's sobbing because she wants to come with us and Banzi has to promise her the moon and the stars before she eventually lets go of my neck. I hate goodbyes. Vuyo drives us to the airport and that's where we meet Aarash. He's still his tall, austere self in another suit. He bows slightly to me and Vuyo, him and Banzi seem to have a pissing contest going on.

“Don't worry, whatever you find that side, we are still your family.” Vuyo says while hugging me and he slowly picks me up and swings me around.

We board the plane without much hustles. We're flying with Emirates to Muscat which is an 11 hour flight then connecting from Muscat to Khasab via local flights then continuing the rest of the way to Jebel Al Harim by road. Me and Banzi are seated together while Aarash is sitting alone without even a slight smile on his face. There's so many questions I have about my father but Aarash isn't the chatty type. He didn't tell me how they managed to track me down and each time I mentioned Boko Haram, he would growl so I quit asking and just let him be.

Eleven hours is a long time to be stuck in one place especially when you're pregnant. My feet are swollen and were just on six hours. Banzi is massaging my feet and the hostess brings me some cold water in a bucket to cool my feet. Banzi kept a steady flow of chatter throughout the flight destructing me from my thoughts. I must have slept the rest of the way because I woke up when we had landed at Muscat. We didn't see much of it just the airport lobby and had a meal then boarded our next flight. This one was blessedly short and we were in Khasab.

The first thing that hits me was the arid heat. I was never ready, at least I'm wearing a long flowing dress and a loosely tied turban, my bear's t-shirt is soon plastered to his torso with sweat while Aarash seems chilled in his full suit. All buttons done up as usual.

“It's getting late, may I suggest that we go rest in the airport hotel and freshen up then meet again in 3 hours? It's much better to drive at night because it will be cooler while the mornings are even hotter than this.” I can't even imagine how hotter than this looks like. We agree and the moment we get into our room I flop down and sleep.

We're woken by the alarm set by Banzi and we have only 20 minutes left to refresh. For once we find Aarash in cargo pants and a white shirt rolled at the sleeves, he's also got a turban on his head and advices Banzi to put on one to cover his face and mouth from the sand.

“We're taking the backroads, they make us arrive quicker. Most of the roads are still gravel or dirt roads and only the major highway from the UAE border to Khasab is perfectly built for the increasing traffic. So there's plenty of sand and dust.” He explains as he leads us to a huge jeep, Banzi has to lift me up for me to get in and we sit behind while Aarash sits in front alone.

He throws us a big bag full of snacks and water, my heart smiles when I see the chocolate bars. It's at night the landscape is mostly illuminated by the moonlight and stars but it's stunning even in the not so bright lighting. The stars look so close and clear twinkling merrily as we speed past in a cloud of dust. Somehow despite the ruts and the constant shaking of the jeep and the dust, I manage to fall asleep on Banzi's lap.

I wake up when the sky is slowly turning orange and the stars are fading into blue skies. The sight of sheer walls of sawtooth cliffs that plunge down into aquamarine waters, makes my breath catch in wonder. It's so beautiful and mountainous. The breaking of dawn over the water is so majestic and I'm in awe. Banzi wraps his arms around me as we watch then I start taking pictures for those at home, mostly Nathi. I take a face shot of us and we're both grinning into the camera.

"The mountains have housed extremely isolated communities for centuries and many coastal villages can only be reached by boat. Some Bedouin communities are still today closed for non-Omanis. Your father stays in one of the isolated coastal villages under Jebel Al Harim. It's the highest mountain with an altitude of 2,087 meters above sea level." Aarash speaks with pride of his homeland and this is the most he's said to us without being prompted.

"We'll take a wooden dhow boat to Khor Al Najd, at least now there not too many tourists with their noise and constant pictures." The way he sneers when he says the word tourists it's as if they are the worst scum of the earth. I hold my camera defensively.

Surely enough when we get to the tiny harbour, he parks his car and I gather he's very famous because everyone calls him by name and has animated conversations with him in Arabic. We get aboard a wooden dhow boat, it's not full there's only a few of us. It's early morning and few people are around.

"Look at that!" Banzi says excitedly and I look across at the fjord-like khors.


I stop breathing for a while when I notice the dolphins as they jump out of the water, frolicking and splashing around. Such splendid creatures. One is swimming quite close to the boat, I reach out and touch it. It's skin is slippery but it doesn't swim away. The emerald blue water is cool and I just want to take off my clothes and take a dip.

I see Jebel Al Harim mountain, it's so huge and I can't even see the top from here. I wonder how it feels like to wake up every morning surrounded by such grandeur.

“We're almost there, you see those big fortress walls just under the mountain?” I nod after shielding my eyes and looking at what can only be a palace of some sort the way it's barricaded around. “That's your father's house and every one is waiting for you. “

This is it. My moment of truth. I wonder what kind of truths lay behind those huge walls.

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Love and light family 

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 38

“You don't have to defend or explain your decisions to anyone. It's your life. Live it without apologies.”
Mandy Hale.

We find a car waiting for us, this one more sleeker and screaming money. I might have been impressed, if I wasn't feeling this angry. He left my mother in that godforsaken camp, shit he left me and my sister there and he has been living in all this? Hell my mother had to clean the Naidoo's toilets, handle 3 jobs just to send me to school and afford the rent at Safari but he was here sitting large.

I know I had resolved to hear him out and not judge but right now I was judging like my life depended on it. Banzi turns at my heavy breathing and he holds my hand. When that doesn't calm me down, he starts trailing kisses on my neck. I'm relaxing head thrown back when I catch Aarash's dark scowl, I wonder what got up his pants.

The gates automatically swing open when we approach and close when we get inside. I don't know what I expected. Maybe an impersonal looking old style mansion, you know the type which resembles the temple. But what I got instead was a very posh and modern building made mostly of glass, it's not as daunting as I expected.

There aren't any men wearing flowing white thawbs with checked red ghutra and eghal, slinging AK47s across their shoulders just like I saw in the movies. I mean this is the house of the phantom one of the most wanted religious terrorists in the world. I'd expect security to be swarming around the place but it's empty, not a soul in sight.

“The way this homestead was designed it so that three separate residences are brought together in one place on a piece of land, each with its own courtyard. Each time a son starts a family, he is built his own residence but it must still be attached to the main house. Though modern in design, the house places great value on the Arabic Islamic culture of family and respect for elderly parents.” Aarash puts some emphasis on respect for elderly parents and I roll my eyes.

“Since he has more than one wife, do they all stay in the same house?” Banzi asks looking at Aarash keenly. Aarash disdainfully waves his arm as if dismissing his question but still responds.

“They do but each wife has her own wing and then the children have their own wings as well as well as the master. All the wives are treated with the utmost respect not like some haram.” Must be nice being a wife of the ‘master’.

The car has stopped and Aarash leads us in. The coolness of the foyer is much appreciated. There's a male servant who looks older yet his servant robes are made of fine silk.

“If the madam could follow me this way to her quarters and her guest will be taken to his own room in the other wing,” he says bowing slightly. I feel panic rising and I cling on to Banzi. He holds my shivering body close to him and he gets why I'm panicking.

“There won't be any need, my wife and I will be sharing a room,” he chose his words well, I guess he did read the guide I gave him.

Aarash looks taken aback by the title of wife and he looks at our entwined hands for confirmation.

The elder looks at Aarash for direction. The latter shrugs and they seem to be having a secret conversation with their eyes. It comes to an end and we are led to a big room in the west wing. I want to ask when I will see my father but I don't want to appear too needy so I let them be. He's the one who summoned me here so I will see him whenever he's ready.

I get tonnes of notifications on my phone. Seems like they have Wi-Fi yay, most of the texts are from my family they are all very worried. I Skype call them and the first face I see is my Gummy bear. She lost another tooth and she looks extra cute. She tells me everything about her day and what they've been getting up to with Thobeka. Then I talk to the parents, they are happy that we travelled well but their

faces seem drawn, when I ask they brush off my concerns. Vuvu takes the tablet to her bedroom and says she wants to have a girl talk with me and everyone laughs.

What's happening? I sign the moment she closes and locks the door behind her. She let's out a breath and I know it's hard.

“Banele called. Apparently a Nigerian syndicate ring who call themselves the Air Lords got burst in London recently. They specialize in trafficking women and children turning them into sex slaves and they also do narcotics and general smuggling. Banele is hopeful that Nokuzola was part of the women who were freed but he's not sure yet. Over 2000 women of different nationalities were found, it's going to take a while to identify all of them.” I'm grateful that I'm sitting because this just took the air out of my lungs.

“It's bad Fafa, we were listening to the testimonies of these women. The recruiter explained that they either approach girls directly or through their families offering fake jobs abroad in a supermarket, or as a cleaner. Apparently one of the girls kept asking for water. The men did not like it so they threw her out in the desert in Libya.

They were sent to keepers who raped them because they had better chances of not being deported while pregnant. They are in many European countries and they arrive knowing they must earn a sum, which may be from 30,000 to 60,000 euros before they will be free.” She takes a gulp of air and her eyes are already tearing and I wish I could hug her over the screen.

“Nokuzola may have died along the way or been raped repeatedly and treated as a sex slave, I don't know what's worse. When I first joined this family she was barely 10 years old. Why is the world so cruel? Such a beautiful soul, bubbly and impatient.” we're both crying now and Banzi looks pained.

When we finish crying she signs off without saying anything and I know how hard she's taking all of this. Avuyile has always been the glue of the Shabangu family, at least that's what mama always says. This takes me back to my own ordeal and my anger against my father burns even more.

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We've been summoned to his study. It's big and austere but what catches my eye is the man standing by the window with his arms behind. He seems strong and unaffected, he's got the staunch shoulders of someone who's not afraid of hard labour. He's not tall or short just storky with a mop of curls on his

head, only his are tinted with grey hairs. He turns and he looks just the way Nura described him, only older with lines around his face.

He goes around his desk and looks at my face as if searching for something deep. I stare back at him with as much disgust as I can muster. There's no way this man standing in front of me has ever been sick. He's the picture of health.

"Fatima," he says slowly touching my cheek and I shrug of his hand. He lowers it down slowly, sadly but I feel nothing for his forlorn look. The he looks behind me and his face hardens. "And who is this?"

"I am LwandleLubanzi, her husband," Banzi says offering his hand. The older man only grunts and ignores his proffered hand.

The tension in this room could be cut with a knife. "You can sit," he waves us to the plush armchairs across his desk and he sits behind his desk.

"I know you must have a lot of questions and I also want you to hear my side of the story. I loved Saffiya, an obsessive kind of love. She brought out the best side of me. With her I could effortlessly be good and she grounded me. I was actually in exile when I met her and I fell in love. Then I had to go on the run again because her father was after me and he had managed to join forces with the Iranian force. My happiest moment was when she agreed to come with me.

I had compatriots in Abuja and they helped me with safe passage. My time in Abuja was the time I was most content but my family in Iran was under attack and I had to act. Reluctantly I left your mother and went back home. I had to take my family out and managed to smuggle them to Khasab. By then I was under a lot of heat even the UN was behind my trail and I had to lay low before I went back to take your mother.

After a year I eventually found my way back to Abuja and I was so happy to find that your mother had had you and your sister. You were both so beautiful and so much like me I was over the moon. My happiness was short lived because I started hearing stories about your mother. That she had been sleeping around with most of the men in the camp while pregnant with my children. I did say my love for her was obsessive. I didn't stop to listen to her. I was consumed by a jealous rage. I'm not proud of the animal I turned into. I wanted to embarrass her the way she embarrassed me in front of everyone.

And my worst mistake was leaving her and you behind. When I came back to look for you a month later I was told that your mother ran away with both of you and I was still consumed by a jealous rage. I didn't look hard enough. That was the last I heard of your mother and you. That is until last year."

I can't tell you how many times I've wanted to stand up and leave but Banzi has been holding me down. He's been holding my hand and now he's even holding it harder.

"One of Darul Akeem Shekau's right wing men had a fallout with Shekau, he was being hunted and he came to me for protection. That's when he told me the whole morbid affair, how Shekau wanted your mother. How he molested your twin to death..." his voice breaks at this point and I swear I see tears in his eyes.

"That Saffiya had to run away to save both your lives. He told me how he tracked you down again and what he did to my Saffiya. How he killed her."

Now he's really angry his fingers are digging into the table and that makes me feel a bit appeased but I lost her because of his friends. "I started looking for you in earnest then and I knew that Shekau could also be looking for you. You went under the radar until I saw you in a video and I sent Aarash to come and get you. I know no amount of apology can make up for the life you've led. For the suffering and the loss of your mother and your sister. But please find it in you to forgive me and for you to come back home where you rightfully belong. I need to protect you my angel."

I look at him he's so earnest even has tears in his eyes but I feel nothing. Nothing at all. I look at Banzi and he lets go of my hand.

Tell him I accept his apology but unless if he can bring back my mother, my twin and my son then he can leave me to continue with my life.

Banzi clears his throat before interpreting what I just said.

"Fatima I am still your father. Just because you have yoked yourself with kāfirs (Muslim nonbelievers) doesn't mean you can disrespect your father." How quickly he's changed from apologetic to a ticked off tiger.

I've heard enough. Obviously he's not dying and he only brought me here to atone his sins. He has no plan to be my father or get to know me.

I stand up and Banzi follows me. I look straight into his eyes and I see the pride and self-righteousness of a fanatic. I got his side of the story and I want nothing else that will tie me with him. We leave his study and almost get lost going back to our room. Fortunately, we didn't unpack. We share a shower and Banzi has already booked our flights back and we're leaving. I drag the smaller suitcase while Banzi drags the bigger one.

We are at the lounge when we meet my father and Aarash with some men looking a bit hostile. Well I'm not going to show them that they intimidate me.

I move towards the door when I hear the sound of a gun cocking. I turn to see a bulky man holding a gun to Banzi's head. My whole body freezes and I wish I could utter some sound. This feels like a Mandisa situation reincarnation. I look at my father and he looks back at me emotionlessly.

“He only leaves here alive without you, if you're thinking of leaving know that he's coming with you in a body bag.”

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Thank you for your patience. I was busy with The Harvard Wife and I'm happy to let you know that because of your sharing; as from September we are a 100 books shy of reaching 1000 copies sold in stores countrywide.

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Love and light 🌸

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 39

I don't want to lie, I'm shit scared and seeing the cold metal pressed on my bare like this is making me sick to my stomach. These men mean business, none of them is even looking into my eyes so how am I supposed to plead with them. I try Muzi's exercises so that I can at least protest but nothing comes out of my mouth and the frustration makes me want to cry.

Tear of helplessness, frustration and anger mingle into an unshed cocktail, blurring my view. Then I think of my little Gummy who just got her father and I resolve there and then that come what may come, Banzi is going to get back home. For my baby girl.

I step towards my father and the men draw out their guns. I'm telling you I'm five to shitting on my pants. My father berates them in rapid Arabic and that validates my decision for me as they take down their guns. I ask him for a pen and paper. I ignore Banzi's eyes even though I can feel them drilling holes on my back, questioning and cautioning. This is my mess and I have to go with my gut on this one.

I'm handed the paper and I get to writing. My hand is shaking so much my handwriting comes out almost italicized as if I'm a doctor writing a patient prescription but I'm sure he'll be able to read. I hand over the note and he reads it while frowning, his bushy brows almost touching.

I must say I understand exactly what drew my mother to him in the first place. His aura is just deep and intimidating. He looks calm but at the same time he has this authoritativeness that assures you he can get the job done. Maybe he even used to smile back then relaxing his square jaws a bit. I didn't question my paternity when I saw him, it's clear where I got my bushy eyebrows and curly hair, my square-ish jawline and almost thin full lips. I am my father's daughter.

"Can you not just take my word for it that he will be unharmed?" he asks in Arabic just as I requested in the note.

I firmly shake my head no and I see a glimpse of a smile on his face. He's about to bark out orders when a beautiful girl who could have easily passed off as my twin comes waltzing into the room with a determined spring in her step. I hear my father curse quietly under his breath.

"Yebba! I told you holding them hostage here won't work. It will only harden my sister's heart against you. You just don't listen to me babba," she has a sing song voice and I already notice the gentleness in my father's countenance as he regards her.

“Zainab, I told you not to get involved. Where is your guard and ladies in waiting? Did you give them the slip again?” his voice is still gruff but also warm, the way Banzi sounds whenever he's trying to chastise Samira.

“How do you expect me not to be involved, she's family and you taught us that family is important. Instead of forcing her into submission did you try asking her nicely?” she totally disregards his last two questions and I expect him to flip but his eyes twinkle even as sighs in exasperation.

“I'm too old to ask nicely.” I'm watching their exchange in fascination and I feel robbed. I was cheated out of a chance to have the same loving antagonistic relationship with my father. You can feel the love these two have even as they are spurring. Zainab narrows her eyes at the Phantom and takes out a sleek phone from under her garments.

“You leave me no choice then but to call the zawjat.” My father looks panicked at the mention of his wives, a whole international fugitive afraid of his wives. Any other time I would have found this whole exchange hilarious. Now I can't because a gun is still trained on my baby daddy.

“Fine, fine. Leave us!” he commands his men and they leave at once, even Aarash. My poor bear looks lost, their conversation was in Arabic.

I rush to him and just launch myself in his arms. He squeezes me so tight, he's shaking as the adrenaline rush eases up in his body. Shame my poor bear was scared and his heart thundering against my ears. S'cishe safa people. I just hope he doesn't cry then my father will be on his case. Ibrahim clears his throat disapprovingly and I let go of Banzi. Our saviour is widely grinning at us and she comes towards us. Without hesitation she folds me into her embrace and squeezes the life out of me. Damn she has one strong grip.

“You must be Fatima, I'm Zainab but you can call me Zain. I'm your sister!” her eyes are actually emerald green and her hair is long and wavy, her smile is so wide I can't help but beam back and embrace her again.

“Forgive our father, he isn't very good with emotions or negotiations. I doubt he has a single diplomatic bone in his body, but his heart is in a good place,” I don't know about that as I glare at my father. The man has been nothing but narcissistic and when he couldn't bully me into submission he resorted to physical coercion.

“Ah, I see you got his stubborn heart and quick temper,” her eyes are twinkling again. She is so much light. Not a fast talker like Avuyile or bubbly like Nathi but she just has a way with words, she doesn't even need to raise her voice.

“What your father wanted to ask of you is that can he get to know you and prepare the Sunnahs for you, welcoming you into the family.” We're all sitting cross-legged on the cushions. Banzi shame he looks uncomfortable but he's putting on a brave face for me and he's my interpreter.

Isn't that done with new born babies? I ask Zain and she smiles.

“Usually yes, but since you didn't have it done we can do it now.” My father is back to his sullen silent self, letting his daughter do all the talking.

Ok but I have conditions. I'm not shaving off my hair. After the ceremony he let's us go back home without any hustles. He helps me find my mother's family and he apologise to Banzi for having a gun pulled to his head.

When Banzi finishes translating my father's eyes are wide and indignant. “Never, the last one is never going to happen!”

Then we are leaving. Our eyes meet and carry a silent duel.

“Abbi, you promised to be nice!” There's no question that princess here has her father wrapped around her little finger.

“I'm sorry for being a hostile host,” he finally concedes looking at Banzi and offers him a handshake. Banzi takes his hand. “At least you have a firm handshake but you are still not good enough for my daughter.” Not really the heartfelt apology I was demanding but we'll take it.

Then we sit and discuss the ceremony before we are allowed to go to our room. I'm tired and the first thing I do is sink into the sunken bath with my bear. Daddy dearest tried to get us to sleep separate rooms but after the stunt he pulled I'm not letting Banzi out of my sight.

“How do you feel after everything that happened today?” he asks blowing some bubbles from my nape.

I'm grateful to still be alive and that Zain came to our rescue. I saw the humane side of my father and somehow I crave that. I'm happy that you're still by my side.

“What was in that note?” I knew he'd ask and I contemplate lying but end up being honest.

I asked him to let you go and I'd remain here. Before you say anything, I knew he wouldn't hurt me but he wouldn't hesitate hurting you. I needed you away from here so that you could go home and make a plan to get me back. I said I'd only remain if I saw you boarding the plane without harm, he could have still had you shot.

“I don't like that you're always so willing to sacrifice yourself for me. I'm a man Farrah and I need you to let me take care of you.” See why I wanted to lie?

You're my man and I love how you take care of me but I also love taking care of you, I sign before shutting him up with a deep kiss.

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I can't believe how huge my father's family is. He has three wives, twelve sons and only 5 daughters including me, then about twenty grandchildren not counting Samira and our coming baby. Two of his sons are married and still stay home but built their houses separately yet still connected to the main house as Aarash said. Aarash is my father's right hand man. The other 3 daughters are already married except Zainab. She says she simply refused to get married and is studying a Master's in Robotics instead. She's the free spirited one and her father's wild card, she never covers her head except when she really has to.

Today is my ceremony and the fuss these people are kicking you'd swear it's my wedding day. Let me try summing up what Sunnah means, it's a welcoming ceremony for a new born baby into the family or in my case the prodigal daughter that has returned. It's basically six Sunnahs, the first being the Adhaan should be recited in the right ear and in the left ear Iqamah. Then there's Tahneek where they put bay in my mouth because I'm a girl. Aqeeqa, in easy words, is a form of Sadaqah which safeguards your boy or girl from all the Evil.

Since I was already named I asked him to make Farrah my first name then I was given my father's last name, I was omitting the shaving of the head and I didn't need to be circumcised. Because I was a twin and my twin died, a sacrifice had to be made and incense burnt then I would have fully acquired the recognition and acceptance from my father and family.

My hijab is made of the finest silk and the veil has actual little diamonds studded around it making it to shimmer in the sunshine. I was given a massage, waxed, full on pampering and even had a glam team. I can't even recognize myself. I took a lot of pictures and sent them back home. I spotted Banzi as I walked into the courtyard, he looks like a proper Sheikh in his gold attire. Dashing is the word.

Ibrahim really went all out there's dancers, professional dancers and musicians. It looks more like some carnival than a simple welcoming ceremony. Every Sunnah is done accordingly and it's during the last sacrifice that I feel something heavy settling on my chest and I can't breathe. I clutch at my chest feeling faint. The next moment I blacken out.

I'm in a beautiful meadow the grass is lush and green the breeze refreshing and teasing my unbraided hair. I'm sitting cross-legged on the grass watching the water fall in a clear seamless curtain down the rugged steep slopes and gather into a blue calm waterbody. I've never been here before but it feels like home. I hear singing like nothing I've heard before. The voice is angelic, soft yet so clear. The kind of voice that gives you goose bumps on your whole body.

The song is as serene as the water fall and the breeze. Happiness and contentment mingle and wrap around me in a warm cocoon. It's Samira she's singing and dancing more like twirling while Nura is playing the harp and laughing happily. I join in and we are dancing and I feel the sudden urge to scream that I'm free! My voice comes out clear and strong, Samira and Nura cheer me on and then I see them fading before my eyes but the contentment remains with me.

The light is blinding as I open my eyes and I see Banzi's worried face looming in front of me. I close my eyes again and I feel so parched. He's threatening to kill everyone if they poisoned me and I squeeze his hand. He immediately stops shouting curses and turns his focus on me. This time when I open my eyes I'm not as blinded and I realize that we're in a room now, we're no longer outside. I clear my throat it's on fire and I really need water. He sees my struggle and he rushes to the table next to my bed and pours water into a glass. He comes back and helps me sit up.

"Try taking little sips ok?" I nod as I drink the water and I feel way better.

I remember the dream and I open my mouth. Nothing comes out, I try again and nothing comes out and I'm losing hope. My whole face falls and tears just trickle down my face. I really thought this was it. I'm getting my voice back.

“Hey, hey it's ok. I've got you baby and I love you so much.”

He hugs me forgetting the glass of water and the water goes right to my boobs. It's so cold and I screech. An actual sound comes out of my mouth and I'm shocked. So is Banzi because he lets me go like he just got electrocuted. He looks at me in wonder and now I'm afraid to open my mouth. Courage Farrah, Omar women are made of steel. I'm prepping myself and I give it one last shot.

“I love you too Papa bear.”

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A blessed new week😊😊😊. Our girl has found her voice and yes that means our story is drawing to it's closure.

Love and light ✨️❄️❄️❄️

P.s I'm going to post our upcoming event today, please indicate if you're coming so that I have an estimate of how many bottles of wine to buy😊.

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 40

“Attitude is a choice.

Happiness is a choice.

Optimism is a choice.

Kindness is a choice.

Giving is a choice.

Respect is a choice.

Whatever choice you make, makes you. Choose wisely.” Roy T. Bennett

Have you ever had something you've wanted for so long? Something you've longed for and dreamed about your whole life? For some it's not even that deep, it's like that shoe you want so badly and you see it whenever you pass the shop windows but you just can't afford it, you get sick just looking at it. That's me right now with a voice. You should see me I even talk to my reflection on the mirror and I'm not even shy about that. I don't know if I naturally have a husky voice or it's because I'm not used to it yet but it's husky and thick. I sound like someone who loves wine and I'm not even much of a drinker but my favourite sound is my laughter. It's deep and throaty, contagious too if I do say so myself.

“Hey beautiful,” I'm talking to my reflection in the bathroom mirror. Don't you dare judge me. I try singing, ok I sound like a goat bleating during it's dying moments. We'll work on that, I mean Whitney Houston didn't just belt out I will always love you the moment she started talking right.

“Do Oman and the world a favour; never sing again! That sounded horrible,” he's not even going to hide his laughter. What happened to being supportive and standing by me? I throw the brush I've been using as a microphone at him. He ducks only after it's grazed his arms a bit.

He gets up charging at me then twirls me around, I squeal then throw my head back and laugh as he tickles me nonstop. Abruptly he stops and stares at me until I catch my breath.

“What?” I ask when the staring hasn't stopped. He's making me self-conscious.

“This. You. Laughing. Your squeal and snorting reminds me of Aphile. Your laugh gives me tingles in my stomach. Trust me I've seen you happy, I've seen you wild but I've never seen you this uninhibited before.” I bury my burning face on his neck and from his vibrating chest I can tell he's laughing at me.

“But you know which sound I'd love to hear most? The sound you'll make when you're clawing my back as you cum. I wonder if you're a screamer or...” I close his mouth with my hand, he can't do that to me in my father's house. Have me all hot and bothered. I know that look in his eye and I want him too. Ok maybe I'll be silent.

I take off my hand and kiss him. He's still carrying me and now he has me against the bathroom wall. He makes me straddle him and I can't help the loud moan that escapes my mouth when he starts grinding into me while his hot lips are latched onto my neck.

"Definitely a screamer," he whispers into my ear and my vagina clamps. "Are you a dirty talker? I want to hear every moan, every grunt, every sigh, every cry and every scream." I gasp as his hot mouth circles my nipple before he sucks on it, hard. I'm trying so hard not to scream and this idiot is not making it any easier.

I'm feeling the build up when there's a loud, urgent knock on the door. Banzi groans loudly and I want to cry. Banzi curses as he sets me down. My legs are shaky, I hold onto him until I'm steady and the knocking hasn't stopped. I yank the door and Aarash is standing there looking displeased. He looks me up and down in disdain, I think I have that thoroughly loved look and I know I have bite-marks on my neck.

"The master requests your audience." He says primly, I just nod. The stuck up Arabian doesn't deserve my voice shame. "He's waiting for you in the lobby, you will be going out." Why can't he just ask me to dress up, the prick.

I close the door on his face and find my bear waiting for me with a painfully evident hard-on. It's poking through his boxers, distracting me.

I have to go, my father summoned me.

I still find myself signing from time to time, force of habit I guess.

"I just need five minutes baby," he whines pointing at his groin and I give him a bashful stare. "Ok I'll make it in ten minutes I promise." Before I can even respond he's tackling me to the bed and I can't help but laugh at his urgency.

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I only get to the lobby 30 minutes later and my father looks peeved. That's what you get if you don't schedule meetings beforehand. He wants to reprimand me but I can tell that he's holding himself back. He offers me his hand and I take it. We walk while two of his servants are fanning us discreetly. I don't think I was made for such a life or that I'll ever get used to it. I just want to be in my small cottage

making lazy meals for my people. We reach the edge of a cliff and the water is lying in all its splendour way beneath us and from here we can see the boats but they look like tiny speckles from here.

“Saffiya did a good job raising you. You are strong, resilient and you're a natural born survivor. I'm really sorry that I wasn't there for you growing up. Please give me a chance to right my wrongs.” I pick up a stone and throw it as far as I can and it doesn't reach the sea.

“I forgave you a while back. You have to accept that I'm my own person with my own life. I don't belong here, I have a family back home.” He sighs like he was expecting that.

“I know and I've accepted that but please do visit us often and do come with your family. There are many rooms in my house.”

“I will come,” I can already imagine Aphile, Thobeka and Khanyo running amok around this place.

“I found your grandfather and the plane is at your disposal whenever you're ready to go and meet him.” I'm so happy at that news that I embrace him. He hesitates for a while before hugging me back. His arms are trembling and I swear when I let him go his eyes are wet. I clear my throat.

“Thank you Yebba. Please avenge my mother and sister's deaths.” He looks at me in surprise and I keep my face straight.

“As you wish ebannah.”

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Leaving is actually harder than I thought it will be. Mostly because of Zain. She's clinging to my hand and I also don't want to let her go. Of all my siblings, she was the warmest to me and she looks like me the most except the eyes. We got along like a house on fire and last night, much to Banzi's annoyance I slept in her room. We didn't even sleep much we were talking and she was telling me stories about her and our father. The lovers she's had.

I cracked up at the story of a Sheikh who bought her a whole island when she broke up with him and even today she says he still calls her declaring her undying love. She offered me use of the island anytime I felt like taking my bear on another baecation. I'm definitely holding her to that. She told me of private parties in caves and that having sex in the desert isn't all they make it out to be in the movies. Her exact words were, "Imagine all that sand up your arse!". I laughed so hard last night and I really wish I could take her with us, but her life is here and mine is all the way in the other side of the world.

The whole family came to see us off and the hugs are unending. Finally I hug my father and he hugs me longer before letting me go. We get in the plane and buckle up. As soon as the seat belts on sign goes off, I crawl onto Banzi's lap. He gets that I don't want to talk, I just need him to hold me. He rubs my back until I fall asleep.

"Wake up baby, we're here."

I rub my eyes as I look out at the brownness outside. Even the grass is brown and burnt. We're in Ulheed a town close to the Red Sea Coast and near the Cal Madow mountain range. Did I tell you that Aarash came with us? Well I'm grateful for the knowledge he has around the place and soon we are in a rickety van in a narrow winding road. Nura's beloved Somali, just as she described the trees and the landscape. It barely showed the amount of suffering that her homeland had suffered. It felt like I was finally coming home.

We finally stop in front of what used to be a huge homestead only now it looks worn down and lacking some love. There's a dog by the front porch and it raises it's head lazily as we get into the gate and it barks half-heartedly at us before resting it's head again and staring at us. The door opens and a lady with a huge bossom comes out with an apron over her pinafore. She smiles widely and some of her teeth are missing and for a moment I think of my Gummy.

"Soo dhaweyn, soo dhaweyn," she welcomes us warmly and ushers us inside. The inside is much cleaner than the yard. It's shabby but very clean. There's a fire burning in the heath even though it's hot outside and there's an elderly man in a wheelchair next to the fire. He looks up when he sees us and gasps when his eyes focus on me.

"Saffiya! Is that you? Papa has waited so long for you to come back home." I feel the tears flow from my face and I'm glad my mother spoke Somali to me all the time. I kneel besides my grandfather and he takes my face in his shaking hands wiping my tears.

“No it's not Saffiya, I'm her daughter Farrah. She talked about you a lot. I'm your granddaughter,” we're both in tears now and he's smiling.

We're at the dinner table and Heraa has gone all out, she prepared xalwo a special confection reserved for special occasions such as weddings. It's a feast and it pains me that my grandfather only eats morsels of the delicious meal even though he has this big smile on his face and he won't stop telling us stories of my mother when she was young. His whole face lights up when he talks about his Saffiya.

“Way isoo jiidatahay (She's so attractive). No?” he asks Heraa while beaming and squeezing my hand I smile back at him and try not to let the tears fall. Bloody hormones.

“Way quruxleey baad tahay. (She is beautiful)” Heraa agrees with him as we sit around the fire and listen to his stories.

I ask to put him to bed and he looks like I've offered him the Royal diamonds. I can tell he's exhausted by the time I fluff the blankets around him and his head hits the pillow.

“I wasn't angry at her anymore. The next day I woke up not angry and I wanted to bring her back home. It was too late. That monster had taken her and I couldn't find my little girl. I waited all these years for her to come back. My whole family died but I've been here hoping she'll come back home so that I can tell her I'm sorry, papa should have protected her more.” He's talking with his eyes closed and a single tear comes out of the corner of his eye.

“She loved you so much, she talked about you and the waterfall you used to take her to. She talked of home and she wanted to come back but life happened.” I tell him as I squeeze his hand.

“I will take you to the waterfall tomorrow then I can finally rest knowing that you brought her spirit home. Knowing I will finally meet my Saffiya.” I try hard not to break down, I just found him but I can tell he really is tired.

“Rest grandpapa, we'll talk tomorrow,” I kiss his leathery wrinkled cheek and switch off the light as I go out of his room.

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Choose peace. Happy Tuesday

Love and light💎💎💎

The End of Her Silent Screams

#Insert 41

“Samira Aphile Lunika, come and clean your mess right now!” My voice rings across the house and I don't get any response. I move around the rooms looking for her and I hear giggles in the laundry room. I find her and Thobeka hiding under the table. Count to ten Fatima, I caution myself but I haven't even gotten to 3 when I yank the both of them out by their ears and they howl.

“I've been calling you for the last fifteen minutes and you've been hiding. Go and clear the mess in your room and bath or I'm leaving you behind when I take Thobeka home.” I can tell they have a lot to say from their scowls but they don't dare saying anything back. They know me better than to even try.

“She was better when she couldn't talk, now she's always shouting at me,” Samira whispers to Thobeka. But I can hear her perfectly.

“It's not the talking that's the problem it's the baby, mama also shouted at everyone before the baby came.” Like I'm too stumped to even respond or react to Thobeka's remarks. These children will be the death of me.

It's been a month since we came back home so I'm guessing the novelty of me having a voice has finally worn off and now my darling daughter finds me annoying. What do they even know about babies? I mean my bump is barely visible but Banzi and his spawn talk to my belly everyday. It started out as cute and now it's just plain annoying. Having to stand for like 15 minutes listening to them baby talk can get on even the Pope's nerves.

Grandfather did wake up the next morning and he kept his promise, he took me to the Lamadaya Falls and I will never forget that day. He looked stronger than the previous day and I was hopeful. Aarash drove us to the falls but Banzi rolled grandpa's wheelchair to a safe distance from the falls then they both gave us space. He had that faraway look as he looked at the falls.

“They called them Lamadaya meaning not to be looked at because of the waterfall’s steep incline atop the hill, maybe that’s why your mother loved the waterfall so much. She hated chores with her mother and she would rather sneak away and come to the barracks to be with me and on our way back home would demand that we come and see the waterfall. We would stand here for hours just talking and watching the water and she would be content.”

What kind of freaked me out was that the waterfall was the exact one that featured so consistently in my dreams. The rugged steep slopes, the water fall in a clear seamless curtain into a blue calm waterbody. I went closer and touched the water it was so cool and refreshing but I could also feel the power of the tide in the seemingly calm waters. I could feel Nura's spirit strongly that day and I could almost see her standing next to grandpa’s wheelchair, stroking his hair and cheeks. It was a beautiful moment one embedded in my memory.

Grandpa lived to see me restore his home into it's former glory, with the help of my boys of course. It's funny how they ended up getting along. I would find them laughing as I brought them lemonade to refresh themselves in the Somalian heat. Grandpapa would be watching and beaming from his restored porch. Heraa said she hadn't seen him that alive in ages.

I was grateful because I was able to help him bathe, make his favourite soup with cumin, cardamom and cloves. I also got to oil his skin and clip off his toenails while he told me tales of his time in the military. He even let me brush his hair as he quoted the scriptures for me.

“You have a beautiful heart daughter of my daughter. Hearts like yours are pure and rare to find,” he said as we admire the finished renovations two days later.

“Never let anyone or any situation take the goodness of your heart away from you. That is your ultimate strength.” Then he kissed both my cheeks and my forehead as he chanted blessings before smearing some oil on my forehead and touching my hard tummy.

He died in his sleep that night and I was happy that I even got to spend that week with him and that I was able to hold the most dignified funeral for him in his then beautiful yard. He was buried next to his wife and children. He was buried a fulfilled man and I hope he is finally with his Saffiya. I asked Heraa to stay on in the house and continue housekeeping and I pay her now. One day I'll take Samira and our little coming bear to go and see their grandmother's home.

When we got home after the funeral, everyone was in love with my voice. Nathi and Vuvu cried so much I wondered if maybe they also had pregnancy hormones. The parents couldn't stop thanking God and Samira kept calling me mommy just so that I could respond and say "Yes my Gummy." Today she's telling Thobeka that I was better without a voice! I text that to Banzi and of course he finds that hilarious. He went out for a boys night last night, one of his friends had a bachelor party. He's still not back.

I check on Samira's room and they have picked up all the clothes and toys that were on the floor and even attempted to make the bed. They love these sleepovers of theirs but the two of them under one roof is exhausting. They are busy splashing water right now in the bathroom and I breathe heavily before heading there.

A video call from Zain distracts me from those two divas and she couldn't have called at a better time.

"Hey baby sister! Look at you glowing." She's always on some high.

"You're only older than me by ten months Zainey and it's not a glow I was getting Samira and Thobeka to bath. I ended up wetter than both of them." I complain and she laughs at me. As if they can sense who's calling they come into the lounge and scream when they see Zain on my screen.

"Aunty Zainey! Aunty Zainey. Pretty please tell Thobeka about the time you rode an elephant and your pet white leopard!" I might as well go and change from these soggy clothes because I've been overthrown from my own video call.

I come back dry and I find them still giggling at Zain's insane stories and I tell them to go have breakfast so that we can go. Zain seems like she was enjoying their conversation.

"Soooo where is hunky P?" she asks looking like some love-struck teen. Hunky P is Mphathi, she can't pronounce his name so she calls him P.

So one day I was in my office and she video called, Mphathi came in looking for some files I stood up to look for them and when I came back those two were busy flirting on my Skype. They hit it off and left me holding not a candle by the forgotten file. They are both smitten but Zain has commitment issues and Mphathi is still trying to get over his wife. Banzi said I shouldn't try to be a mediator or matchmaker.

“He's my boss, how should I know where he is on a Sunday.” She pouts and I wonder why they didn't just exchange details or something. “I'll send you his e-mail address just now.” I concede and she's shrieking before I even finish my sentence.

“How are you? How's the baby treating you? Abbi and Aarash say Hi,” no one is crazier than Zain, she moves the screen and I see a grumpy Aarash and our father is even wearing glasses whatever they are discussing must be important, Zain couldn't care less. They both say Hi as instructed then after a short chat go back to being busy.

The girls have finished eating and are now impatient, I end my call with Zain, take my bag and car keys and we leave.

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It's Sunday lunch at the Shabangus but there's no loud laughter and arguments as usual, only hushed conversations and the clinking of knives on plates. The day we came home two great things happened, depending on which side you're on.

“Leaders of the notorious Boko Haram syndicate found dead after brutal mutilation and alleged sexual assault!” this was one of the less dramatic heading but yes basically they were found in a heaped pile just next to a Nigerian military base. Shekau was found in the worst state with his head mutilated from his body.

I was happy and at peace, daddy had come through for me. What? Grandpapa said I had a pure heart, he didn't say I'm a saint. Plus the world is definitely a better place without Shekau and his accomplices. The second great thing that happened is Nokuzola came home with Banele. It was one big teary reunion, everyone was crying our prayers had been answered. Nokuzola was back home and I could finally speak, you can imagine just how emotional everyone was.

Their happiness was soon replaced with worry and anxiety. Nokuzola barely said anything to anyone, she didn't eat much and didn't come out of her room. They tried therapy, talking to her and prayers but nothing seems to be working. Like now she's sitting with everyone in the dining table but she's lost in her own world while she twirls her food on her fork. She's lanky but one can tell at some point she had generous curves like her mama. Even her hair is limp and lifeless. Her complexion is waxen and sickly.

“Is the food not nice enough Zola?” mama asks almost plaintively. Nokuzola turns her dead eyes to her mother and shrugs her shoulders.

“Its great mama,” you can just tell she wants us to leave her alone to wallow in her misery and thoughts. Instead Avuyile holds her hand gently and squeezes. Mama continues fussing over her plate. Nokuzola looks like she's drowning from the fussing.

“Maybe she'd prefer eating alone,” I suggest and Nokuzola looks relieved.

I know that the fussing is only making her even more anxious. She's reminding me of myself after the whole Nigerian ordeal. I only saw the pain and suffering for a couple of months and it changed me. It had become Nokuzola's life for the past 6 years. I can't even imagine what she's lived through. She doesn't wait for them to argue with my suggestion, she picks her plate and leaves the table.

“I'm just worried about her, I want my baby back.” Mama says and starts crying in her husband's arms.

“You need to understand it will take time for her to stop living in her horror and for her to open up to you. Just respect her need for space don't be too invasive.” I say and she nods through her sniffles.

We chill but the mood is at an all-time low. I'm asked to go and check in on her. I knock for a while on her door and there's no response. I go in and her bedroom is empty, the half eaten plate of food is next to her bed. I move to the bathroom and the sight which meets me has me paralyzed momentarily with fear. She's inside the tub submerged and she cut her wrists so the water is red. I rush to get her out of the water and she comes out spluttering weakly.

I scream Avuyile's name as I try to stop the blood on her wrists and I'm pumping her chest. Water comes out of her mouth and nose and I'm just grateful that she's still alive. She coughs out more water as she tries to say something. I move closer to hear what she's saying.

“The screams in my head, they just won't stop.” She says weakly then she's clinging onto me and I wish I could transfer my healing to her.

“Listen to me. The screams are not worth your life, I've been were you are right now and it looked like I wasn't going to make it out alive. But here I am today, I had no one. You have a family that loves you

and is willing to help you. Don't drown alone let them help you." She coughs out more water and I can tell she's growing weaker.

"Avuyile!!!!!!!" I scream even louder and I hear running footfalls. Soon enough Banele bursts into the bathroom door. He assesses the situation in one sweeping glance and he manages to scoop her out of my arms and is met by Avuyile by the door. She takes a throw from the bed and wraps her. Mama screams when she sees Nokuzola in Banele's arms and they have to hold her as she also slumps in a faint.

Lungelo is now carrying mama into the car and I watch as the cars speed out of the yard. Avuyile and I remained behind with the kids. Barely 5 minutes after the cars left Banzi drives into the yard. He's panicking when he sees the blood on my t-shirt dress.


"Baby is there anything wrong with the baby? Are you hurt?" the panic in his face makes me smile and I wrap my arms around him.

"I'm fine baby and everything will be fine." Inside I'm praying hard that Allah gives Zola the strength to carry those screams and break free from the clutches of depression. I wish her the same healing I got.

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I'm sorry for posting late got caught up preparing for the book signing. Please don't forget to RSVP.

P.s our story is drawing to an end, brace yourselves for the FINALE

LOVE and LIGHT 

<https://m.facebook.com/events/325712844879288>

The End of Her Silent Screams

FINALE (Part One)

“You never really understand that some people never really grow. They never learn their lesson. They never recognize their mistakes, they never acknowledge their faults, they never admit they were wrong. You will never receive an apology from them, and you will never see their behaviour change.” Bakwaas-Word Porn

I'm a sucker for pain. That's the only excuse I can come up with for the reason I'm sitting here in this beautiful garden with the backdrop ocean as it's background. Trying to look as inconspicuous as possible, holding my breath as Nathi keeps walking up and down, ordering everything to be perfect until her husband literally has to carry her away to her seat. One would swear it was her wedding.

Now I understand why she could never warm up to me. I couldn't understand it at the time, I mean ndimhle guys and I was on my best makoti mode the first day we met but her hug was cold and limp. She wasn't mean or anything but her welcome was just lukewarm. What am I saying, I practically had to invite myself to their home.

In retrospect, and after close to 2 years of intensive therapy I realise that I tried too flipping hard and in my mind I had made up this perfect relationship that never existed. According to Marietta, my needs to be accepted go way deeper and are rooted to my troubled childhood.

“I'm going to the wedding,” I boldly stated in our last session, a part of me wanting to shock her from her usual prim and nondescript expression that used to drive me crazy the first week I admitted myself into Papillon Psychiatric Recovery Centre. I hated how calm she looked with all those butterflies in her office and that irritating plaque behind her chair. It was neatly written and you couldn't miss it:

“We believe in looking forwards and not backwards – living in the past does not serve anyone – you need to build on what you have today - once you have made peace with your life as it was” - Yolandé, MD of Papillon

Just as she asked me how it felt that my mother allowing men to sleep with me at a fee from the age of 16 to pay for her bills and our school fees, calmly without any affliction in her voice. “Why is it so important for you to go to the wedding?”

“I need closure to bow out respectfully at the face of their love.” Two years of therapy has your speech almost holistic and soulful. Marietta's green eyes eyed me passively yet at the same time it was as if she could look into my soul.

“Didn't you do enough soul searching while you were with us? I feel like you are regressing and this will be a major setback. You've been doing so well Mandisa,” la mlungu can't pronounce my name to save her life but she did save my life. I was unravelling and shooting myself and the man I proclaimed to love was the last indicator that I wasn't well.

With its white and green exterior design, neat little hedges, beautiful garden and pool, Papillon was more of a holiday retreat than a loony bin. Yes I had to fork out about R16500 to R18000 per month but dammit it was worth every penny. Waking up with only my sister crying next to me in that hospital made me realize I needed to be selfish for my own good.

So I cashed in the education fund I had set up for my young brother. Honestly that little ungrateful brat isn't even going to make it to college, all he knows is stunning on social media with clothes bought by my money, using the iPhone I bought him and angtholanga kwa dankie san'. I'm sure my lobola money should cover his varsity fees if he by some miracle makes it, that's if his parents haven't breezed through the lobola money already.

“As long as you are aware that any desperate act you might pull won't make him love you. He might pity you but that won't transcend to love and it will leave you feeling even emptier.”

Sweet Marietta never sugar-coats anything. It was the one thing I loved most about her. That and her teaching me how to meditate. I'd spend most of my days meditating next to the pool, after I had spent months in denial and progressively self-harming myself.

Some people spent three months at that retreat, I ended up spending a year and this year I've been an outpatient who rents a tiny room in Ferndale. Just to be close to the centre. It's funny how I've found a home mostly among white people, there I'm not dramatic Mandisa, attention seeking Mandisa or clingy Mandisa but I'm a woman who's gone through a lot in my life. I even took a bullet but I'm still standing, I'm not my scars or my bipolar disorder. They allow me to just be me.

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Marietta shouldn't worry about me, I've grown and I really don't want to cause any drama, I just need to firmly close the door on that part of my life. The venue has quickly filled up but the place has an intimate whimsical feel to it, almost like their love story. I couldn't believe it the first day Lwandle talked to me about her. He was a bit above tipsy but I swear his eyes legit glistened when he mentioned her name. I wanted a guy to talk about me in the same way, his whole face illuminated. My first mistake was thinking I could settle for second best in his life and my second was thinking I could ever replace her in his heart.

It's just that at times when you're used to receiving scraps and pieces of affection when someone finally offers you a tenderized thick and juicy steak of attention, the hunger in you is piqued. When you've become used to being treated as a sperm dish, the first guy who comes along and actually treats you like you're worthy of love and respect in a short period of time. That guy becomes your beacon of hope. Yes, I was also obsessed with the guy or as Marietta put it the idea of being loved that way even when the love is never translated into reality.

Speaking of which, he just walked into the room and he's commanding attention without even trying. I'm drooling at how beautifully the off-white tux fits his buffed up body. He looks like a thug in a suit, you know not your Rock kind of vibes but there's no denying that he's packing some muscles underneath. Una la thing, la vava vooom which makes my lady walls clinch with unbidden lust. Ok, ok cool down Patricia.

I am disappointed that he didn't look at me or somehow felt the pull of my eyes on him. Maybe it's these Arabic men who are all so intimidating and why are they all dressed in white? They look like oil barons and poor old chubby me is lost behind them. Maybe that's why he didn't feel my gaze.

No, Felicia he doesn't feel your gaze because he ain't feeling you like that. My petty subconscious shuts down my whole crazy line of thought, effectively putting me back in my lane. Closure. Moving on. No more grasping at straws or obsessing over him. He's standing next to his father, who's his best man and his young brother is his only groomsman. It's like looking at three versions of the same person and right now their eyes are fixed on the aisle and they share the same fixated smile. Oh it's the little brat walking in.

Only she's not so small anymore, all her teeth are in place and she looks adorable in her exotic costume. She went for a gold Jasmine look and it's working on her, the little crop top and Arabian belly bottoms make her look like a ballerina, all lithe limbs and gracefulness. I want to be bitchy about it but my heart she's totally adorable and she's holding a little Aladdin with a white buttoned up suit that resembles that of the men sitting in front of me and a precious golden turban.

The little tot is struggling to walk but is being a man about it and the little brat is patient taking tiny steps with him. Everyone is busy oohing and I'm here thinking my son would have been around his age. Would he have also formed part of the little procession. I know this line of thinking will drive me straight into destruction but I can't help it.

The procession is going beautifully until the little Aladdin spots his father and yells Dada before breaking into a waddling run, impatiently shrugging off his sister's hand. He barely runs two steps before toppling over and Lwandle is there in a stride picking him up and whispering something in his ear. He throws him

slightly in the air and the little man is giggling and demanding “Higher Dada, higher.” I can't help the sob that escapes my mouth and I'm given an expensive smelling silk handkerchief by the tallest Arab sitting next to me. I look up to say thank you but he isn't even looking at me. Oh well, the really yummy ones are usually arrogant arseholes anyway.

Then there's a beautiful little girl who walks down the aisle at a faster pace and she's carrying a briefcase written top priority and it's cuffed to her arm. Her brothers and an Indian boy are standing in as her security in cool men in black suits complete with shades and those spiralled walkie-talkies in their ears. A bit over the top if you ask me but to each their own. I personally wouldn't have had any kids on my bridal party or even the grooms party. They are just too much admin and I know, I was a deputy parent growing up.

With the way my parents abused alcohol, I had no choice but to raise my siblings and I. I'm childreaned out. At first when I discovered I was pregnant I was just going to have an abortion, I mean we weren't that deep with Lwandle but my sister convinced me that I wasn't getting any younger, Lwandle is a catch kaloku and having a baby will definitely make him love me. I was sceptical but then he showered me with all this love and attention, attending all doctor's appointments. I had grown really attached to my bump, I swore I would be a better mother. I guess it was never meant to be, I've learnt to forgive myself and live with the pain.

For a moment I thought it was the bride walking in but it looks like her sister, the resemblance is striking except for the green eyes and the sister's hair has no curls. Aren't they supposed to cover their heads? This one's hair is being ruffled by the wind and so is her flowing dress and it makes her look like a free spirit, worse she's barefoot. She winks at an uptight looking guy at the row just across mine and he blushes. He looks like the type who will break your knees fucking you without even cracking a smile, but she's making him blush. I must ask these girls what their secret is. How do they have such a hold over these men.

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“Perfect” starts playing and everybody stands up, what an old song to choose but ke it's not my wedding so I stay firmly in my lane. I wish I can say she's not all that or that she's grown ugly since I last saw her but hey usisters una that glow, the type you can't get from make up or drinking 3l of water per day. If I didn't know better I'd say she's pregnant but her exposed belly from the crop embellished top she's wearing is taut and flat like she's an erotic dancer. I expected her to be in one of those long gowns pure like Meghan Markle's wedding dress, not this almost racy get up exposing her belly, arms and perfectly respectable cleavage.

She's one hella sexy bride even I can swallow my pride and admit that. Where did she get those hips? The last time I saw her she was in some long flowing shapeless dress at the ceremony then I wasn't really in the right state of mind in that restaurant. She tied her hair in an Ariana top bun and her curls are tamed. She's being walked by a short yellow lady with big clear eyes which she blinks a lot.

When they are halfway down the aisle Lwandle starts moving to them with Aladdin's head resting on his shoulder. Whitney's ex-fiancé makes a remark and everyone in the front laughs, I really didn't get what she said. I can't believe she dumped Whitney after she pulled that stunt of helping me speak to Farrah. I really meant her no harm and I felt bad for Whitney. She moved to America last year, she came to see me before she left. So you're wondering who invited me? No one really I was stalking Lwandle on Instagram and he was updating his followers on his dream wedding.

There's some commotion when Lwandle tries to pass over Aladdin to Nathi and the little chimp is simply not having it. He ends up giving up then he takes the mic from his young brother.

“Before the ceremony begins, I have a little something prepared for my wife to be. You've saved me from myself more times than I can count and I just want you to know that I appreciate your presence in my life. I thought I'd lost you forever but Fate brought us back together and you made me whole again.” His voice is gruff like he wants to cry. He nods to the guy who is behind the piano. Lwandle clears his throat before looking into her eyes.

“I found love in you

And I've learned to love me too

Never have I felt that I could be all that you see

It's like our hearts have intertwined and to the perfect harmony

This is why I love you

Ooh this is why I love you

Because you love me

You love me

This is why I love you

Ooh this is why I love you

Because you love me

You love me”

The way he's soulfully crooning the chorus gives me goosebumps all over my body. He stops singing but the piano continues playing and I'm a bit confused then I hear the sweetest voice join in. It's his princess and she has the most pure most angelic voice I've ever heard.

“I found love in you

And no other love will do

Every moment that you smile chases all of the pain away

Forever and a while in my heart is where you'll stay”

The daddy-daughter duo is bring some tears from the ladies especially when they sing the chorus together. Then they are alternating, the brat has a big voice for her size and age.

“This is why I love you

This is why I love you...” Aphile

“Because you love me

You love me!!...” Lwandle

“This is why I love you

Ooh this is why I love you...” Aphile

“Because you love me

Me” Lwandle

In this moment I realize that his heart was meant for her and hers for him, there was never anything wrong about me. I could have been the most beautiful, unbroken sex goddess and that still wouldn't have kept him from her. He's tearing up as he sings the last verse, I never pictured him as the crying type even when I threw the hairdryer at him he just flinched but he didn't cry.

“I found love in you

And no other love will do

That's why I love you”

They have their own private family moment up there with kisses thrown around and my heart doesn't experience the sharp pain it usually experiences whenever I thought of him with her. It's at peace as I finally accept that my love wasn't meant for him and that's ok. It didn't make me any less a woman or unworthy of being loved. It's sad that the only person I can share this with is Marietta.

I zone out when they start saying their vows and through the sermon. She has a husky voice it's almost seductive but they are both locked in their own world where no one else exists. I wonder how they can get so consumed in each other.

There's cheers and as people move towards them to congratulate the happy couple, I slip away unnoticed and go straight to The Bungalow and I choose a chair at the bar. While the barman is mixing my poison, my phone rings and I groan before answering.

"Yinton' ingxaki yakho Mandisa? You haven't sent us money in months gqiba you don't answer your phone. What are we supposed to eat? You know Siya has to go for ezi extra lessons but you're just silent. I don't know what to expect from you, you failed to even keep a man for a year, maybe it's time Andiswa comes back home and takes up your duties."

Breathe in and out Ndisa, don't let her trigger you. You're better than this, you are above her taunts and you are more than enough. I count to five before responding.

"Andiswa is not coming back and I'm done bleeding myself dry for you while you drink your life away. Goodbye mama." I hang up before I lose my nerve and I do something I should have done a long time ago. I block her numbers, Tata's number, Siya's numbers and I switch off my phone.

I can't help the tears trickling down my face. I'm freeing myself from my parents expectations and I've been working so hard to forgive them from using me the way they used me and always threatening to do the same to uAndiswa. I have forgiven my mother for letting our father have his way with us while she pretended to be too drunk to notice. The first time I tried telling her she brushed me off and that's how it's always been. I have forgiven her but that that doesn't mean I have to keep them in my life. They constantly pull me back to that dark place and I am tired of the darkness now, I want to grow in the light. A silk handkerchief is handed to me again and I see the guy from earlier in the wedding.

"Do you have a factory of these?" I try to diffuse the tension and lamely fail, he's looking at me like he's reading my soul.

“A beautiful lady like you shouldn't cry alone in a bar,” his voice is cultured, prim yet oh so sexy. I find myself smiling at him and his face relaxes somewhat.

“You have the most beautiful smile with those dimples.” Ok that's so random. All I can do is smile again awkwardly.

“Thank you, Mandisa,” I introduce myself offering my hand for a handshake. He takes it but instead he bites my inner palm sending a frisson of excitement all the way to my honeypot.

“Aarash,” he says looking at me with a smouldering gaze. Oh la la, I can already imagine myself at his mercy. It has been a very long 2 years and some hot sex with an Arabian sex god wouldn't hurt now would it?

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Thank you for your patience, the second part of the Finale is coming please exercise the same patience.

Love and light ❖❖❖❖❖

The End of Her Silent Screams

FINALE- Part Two

“She does everything with passion stained hands. Looks at the world with burning, fire-lit eyes, loves with a splintering chaos, deep in her bones and smiles with a secret mouthful of mischief. She feels everything, all at once or not at all, with a soul that runs deeper than any hell, and more intense than any heaven you know. The world isn't ready for the havoc in her blood, and the storm on her skin, but she doesn't stop for anyone; and she walks with thunder in her shoes.” Unknown

“Are you sure he's not crying for me?” her sweet voice is filled with anxiety and yet I'm seriously turned on right now. Whatever spell she cast on me is deep. I want to snatch the iPad from her hands and throw it on the wall and watch it disintegrate into a million tiny pieces, but I know better than to

provoke mama bear. Five minutes pass and she's ooing now at our cub in his bear onesie, I swear you can never get him to wear any other pyjama especially if he's still awake.

"I miss you already baby," Ok I've had enough now, even a saint would be exhausted by now. I decide to play dirty. I can't go for her neck because I don't want my son getting any ideas. You don't understand; I'm not shy showing affection to my wife in front of our children but Ayabonga copies everything he sees. It doesn't help that he's with maShabangu.

I sneak my hand under her skimpy summer dress, I just love it because it gives me full easy access to my nirvana. She tries clamping her thighs together but she's too late, the Fingernator has already breached the barricade. I prise her thighs apart with my other hand while I let my hand continue with it's mission. Staunchly I ignore the airstrip landing and the tempting seduction of her already pulsing and erect clit. I'm tempted to stroke her silkiness but I'm a man on a mission.

"Ummm please don't forget to give him his sinus drops and Aphile needs to take..." her voice has become breathy, her pitch unnaturally high.

Seeing as how sensitive this mission is, I decide to send in not one but two of my best agents on the offensive at once while giving the tempting clit a thumbs up or rather thumbs circling. She screams once when the Fingernator and fellow agent impale her, shocking her mother and Nokuzola. I strengthen my attack and she is in a predicament because she can't lower her hands from the iPad to forestall my attack, without exposing my undercover mission.

"It's nothing mama I think something bit me," she lies weakly the last syllables coming out in a semi-stifled moan. My mother-in-law looks concerned while Nokuzola just had a light bulb moment and is trying hard to contain her mirth.

Time to take the offensive into its lethal and final stage. The agents have served well and they slide out of the trenches, drenched in her juices. She shudders and relaxes assuming the assault is over, a rooky move on her side. Never underestimate a man on a prowling mission. Her scent alone has brought out the beast in me. I need my fix before my male parts combust. I finally have her all to myself after more than two years and she thinks it's ok to check up on the cubs and neglect me.

I try not to breathe hot air onto her nirvana lulling her into a false sense of amnesty. Her breathing has gone back to normal and her voice is extra husky but less pitchy. Her thighs look so smooth and I'm tempted to bite, the beast in me is bursting to mark her but I am focused on the end goal, getting my freckled beauty off the bloody video call! I push the tantalizing thighs apart, even with some resistance

from the guardian of the nirvana fort. There shall be no flicking this instance, no matter how much her pink, swollen nub is screaming for some loving. I impale her core heat with my tongue and her convulsions and moans almost suffocate me but I don't let up my attack.

I don't know when she hung up but I do hear the device crushing to the floor and her small hands urging my head deeper into the trenches. I full on suck her and her scream is loud, primal and uninhibited.

“Baaaaaaanzi...!!!” that is the sound of victory, ladies and gentlemen. Level smashed out of the water and now all I have to do is having her screaming like a banshee.

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“Damn woman, were you planning on waking up the dead?” I ask as I topple next to her, careful not to crush her waiflike frame. We're both sleek with sweat and I can proudly say she hasn't touched her phone or mentioned Ayabonga or Aphile or Rajesh in the past 36 hours.

She turns red around the face and hides her burning face on my neck causing me to chuckle. It amazes me that after all these years and after the way she always gives herself so freely to me, flexing all over me, she's still shy. She's still that girl who gave me her innocence on her 18th birthday and the even greater gifts of my princess and my prince. The only difference is now she screams. Farrah is a loud lover and she let's every touch, every passion she feels be felt using her voice.

Tonight though she's on another level, not that I blame her. I've never tied her hands to her legs before and had her opened up like my very own Christmas gift. I owe Bongiwe for all the tips, I can safely say I've learnt all the angles of my wife's body and what pleases her most. It's a good thing we took up her sister's honeymoon destination prezy and we are in our own very private bubble. We haven't toured the island yet, I can't get enough of my wife.

Wife, at some point I gave up on the idea of her taking my last name. She's so stubborn and strong willed and I was even harbouring doubts that we'll ever get here today. She wanted to finish her degree and graduate first, get a job. Which she totally doesn't need, I mean for our wedding alone her father gifted her with an oil rig. He's been heaping money on her and she has enough now to buy her own islands. You wouldn't know when you see her doing her sign classes in the little centre she's opened in Hilbrow. Or when she and Nokuzola are holding workshops with abduction survivors. She's still the same girl I used to pick up every morning from Safari, it makes the fact that she's loaded now less intimidating for me.

Her soft snores let me know that she's passed out on my neck. Maybe it's time I give her a little break but I'm not making any promises I have a newfound hunger for her. After all it's just her and me now. I love my cubs but they do cramp our sex life. The random heated encounters all over the house only happen when they are at their grandparents because Aphile has the worst timing and a knack of walking in on us in the most compromising positions.

Farrah now has a Xhosa name curtesy of my mother, Aphelelisa, something about them being the A team. I love my mom but her and Farrah are still a very lethal combo and still manage to exclude me from their little bond. I push a curl from her damp forehead and she scrunches her cute little nose in her sleep. Aphile does the same exact thing in her sleep and it weakens me every time.

Dr. Brown says I still harbour the fear of her being abducted and she's damn right. I don't breathe ok when I come home from work and I can't find her barefoot in the kitchen making dinner or frowning over her files or helping Aphile with her homework. Somewhere in the back of my mind lingers the image of that thrashed apartment in Safari and that hulk of a man lying in a pool of his blood face down on the floor.

My friends called me whipped until they stopped inviting me to night clubs. I still go when it's our date weekends or when I need to let off steam but my whole circle has changed and only those who understand and respect that this vixen and her cubs always come first in my life. I will drop our plans last minute whenever my family needs me. I'm that guy who'd rather fight for the remote at home than go watch a match at a sports bar with the guys. I'm grateful that my rugby career ended now I can't imagine myself travelling and leaving them behind. Yup I'm whipped alright and I wouldn't change it for the world, I snuggle my baby closer and fall asleep.

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"Come join me bear," she whines before diving back into the water. I'm rather enjoying the view of her skinny dipping, it's much more stimulating than the water right now. Never mind that I'm the one who came up with the idea of skinny dipping. It's just us on this side of the island. We get to walk in the nude in the white sands. The sky is a startling blue and the waters are calm and cold.

"Banzi stop being a chicken!" she says splashing me with water before wiggling her bare arse at me, the little tease. I still can't get over how she calls me, it's an instant turn on. I can't have her calling me names so I jump into the freezing water and I swear my balls drop. Shit! I swim towards her and she keeps evading me. I didn't just almost lose the seeds of my loins for nothing, I'm going to catch her. When I do we'll see exactly who's the chicken.

“She hates me!” she protests while straddling my butt and massaging the sunscreen onto my back. It's really hard concentrating with her mound touching my arse but I know I need to act very attentive before she sulks and I might as well kiss honeymoon love making goodbye.

“She doesn't hate you, Aphile just feels neglected ever since Ayabonga came into the picture and I don't blame her because I feel it too sometimes.” I groan when she abruptly stops massaging. You see why I hate these deep talks.

“You're accusing me of neglecting you and my daughter Banzi,” I know that tone and if I don't fix this soon I may have just signed my own jail term sentence. I turnover and she's distracted by my baby-maker and that makes it twitch with pride. She's biting her lips and pressing her thighs together.

“Come here,” I command her and she doesn't hesitate moving next to me. I sweep her off her feet and make her straddle me again. We both groan as she sheaths me fully and I sink into her heat. “You're not negligent as a wife or as a mother, you just tend to obsess a little over Ayabonga.” I grit my teeth, it's a miracle I can even talk.

“I can't help it, he's like my do over baby, I never got to enjoy or experience all these firsts with Aphile. I look at Ayabonga and I see my little angel Bandile and I'm so afraid I'll lose him too. Aaaaaaa,” she shudders as I thrust upwards and she has to balance her hands on my biceps.

“I know, I feel the same too but we have to pay our daughter the same attention remember she was without both our attention for the greater part...fuck! Baby... of her life.” She's started twerking slowly and lazily on me and I can only grip her butt as she takes control.

“I'll do better,” she hisses the promise and I take one of her pink buds in my mouth and she throws her head slightly back allowing me to suckle on her. “You...damn papi... have to promise me that whenever you feel neglected... right there baby you're hitting it just right... Promise you'll let me know.”

The way she's gripping me with her walls I would have promised to buy her this Island if she'd asked for it. I'm shuddering and struggling to hold it in as her bouncing rhythm grows more frenzied and deliberate.

“Promise me!” she cries and I curse as I feel myself losing control over my body.

"I... I Fucken Promise!" I scream as I utter a guttural sound that tips us both over the edge. Her screams as she lets go and the vibrations of her legs drive me insane and I feel tears welling up in my eyes and tipping over at the overwhelming emotions. She's left me wide and vulnerable, my soul bare and naked in front of hers.

She wipes my tears with her hands after we're both spent and her touch is so tender, I can't resist nipping her wrist. "I love you so much Lwandlelubanzi, you're the end of my silent screams. You heard me clearly without me uttering a single sound. My heart beats solely for you and maybe I obsess over Ayabonga because all I see when I look at him is a mirror image of you."

Her proclamation is more raw than her vows maybe because we're both naked and bare on the beach, with only the stars and moon witnessing our promises. I draw her into my embrace and bury my face into her curls which smell like strawberries and wild honey.

"I can't wait to explore the world with you by my side. To grow old with you and make more babies under the stars. God couldn't have made a better companion for me. You're everything I need in this world Aphelelisa kamama. I love you Freckle-face, to the stars, the moon and out of this Galaxy."

She chuckles to hide her sniffles but I feel the wetness of her face on my chest. Nothing like raw and honest love making to make you open up and leave you feeling sappy and emotional. I entwine our fingers just as our souls are entwined right at this moment. We remain in perfect silence and our souls are doing all the talking and connecting. To think I almost lost her, not once but twice yet here she is today.

She heard my silent screams for help, she held me down through my daddy issues and helped me fight my addiction. She made me sing again and loved the sensitive mommy's boy hidden underneath the hard-core jock who was captain of the high school rugby team and silently screaming for his father's acknowledgement.

"Banzi?" her voice is soft and hoarse.


"Yes baby?" I respond lazily, snuggling closer to her.

“I can feel you growing inside me and I'm all out of screams,” her voice is accusing and she really does sound wiped out but my baby maker has a head of it's own, like literally.

I can just imagine her screaming when she discovers we just made another baby. I know she's on contraception and all but I felt it, we just made another cub to fuss over. I really hope it's another princess. I can only take competition from Ayabonga. If it's another boy I'm royally screwed, excuse the pun. I silently laugh when I hear her moaning, I haven't even moved yet.

THE END

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Thank you for being with Farrah through out her journey. Many blessings during the festive season. If you don't have a copy of The Harvard Wife make sure it's on your wishlist 

Love and light- Busisekile Khumalo