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Prologue

There is an interesting but rather overused saying which goes; "Life is an interesting journey for you never really know what you're going to get". In truth, it may be overused, but in truth, it is the most frank saying of all. Many times we see men promising women heaven and earth; even writing their own marriage vows to show them that they mean each and every word. Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever. Often times, women become so enwrapped in men and their lives, that they forget about themselves. Women in most parts of the world are still raised to make the man the center of their entire universe; to worship them, but once they do better than them – they change and they want to leave or make the wife feel inadequate by getting involved with another woman. In black culture, many women are still side-lined for coming from a different background or culture than the man but what happens when she is educated and well off?

Samarah Sithole, born and bred in Christiana, North West goes through a lot of heartache and pain all at the hands of her stepmother, while her father knows nothing. Little did she know what her very own father had done to her mother soon after she was born. Samarah's loves story becomes even more tragic, when she intimidates her husband's family. Once the husband becomes successful, he completely changes into something she cannot even recognize.

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

1

“We love because he first loved us.”

There’s something about love; yes, some may feel it is a bit overrated, but most people never really experience true love, while most of us want to experience it or get the very first experience thereof in our teen years. Much like our parents, we tend to fall in love when we’re typically 16 and or above. That was the same situation for Grace, who much like any other teen was starting to fall in love with the typical high school crush on every girl’s mind, unfortunately. Such boys always get judged by appearance; they have a killer body, they participate in almost every sport in school and they are most likely the head boy in most instances. Girls can’t get enough of them, while boys want to be them. Teachers wish these boys were their sons, while their mothers wish they get to marry girls who come from the same family that they do.

In most instances, they do come from rich families, which is the exact kind of family Richard came from. He was just a year old than Grace; him being 17 and in Grade 11 while she was in one grade lower than him. She was exceptionally gorgeous; with an absolutely curvy body, big bust and she was what they would call the average plus size girl, with such beautiful, buttermilk skin with a golden complexion. She loved her books and was quite timid, and she wasn’t bothered by what people said

about her weight; she was confident – which is exactly what attracted Richard in the first place. That was the typical love story – rich boy meets poor girl. She wasn't exactly poor, she was just a little below middle class. Raised by single mother and being the youngest of two daughters, she knew exactly why she had to focus on her books just until she reached her dreams. It was on that fateful afternoon, just after the last exam papers were being written, that Richard spotted her. She was just greeting her friend goodbye, when he saw this golden gem, standing right in front of him.

Grace: "I'm so glad that the exams are finally over."

Judith: "Yoh (oh), friend. Rea tshwana (Me too). I just can't wait to finish school, yoh (goodness)."

Grace: (laughing) "You still have two more years left."

Judith: "Unfortunately. Anyway, I'll see you around. My mom asked me to meet her in town."

Grace: "Okay, I'll walk home all by myself. Bye."

Judith: "Bye."

Richard just couldn't resist the beauty of that girl. He kept looking at her robust figure and thought that she was the woman of his dreams. So many girls had been dying to be his ever since he started attending Christiana Gekombineerde Skool, but he just saw her for himself. Christiana was a very small town, much like a rural farm area and everyone knew everyone, literally. While she started walking home, he found himself running after her so that he could catch up with her.

Richard: "What's a beautiful girl like you doing walking home all by herself?"

She took one look at him and got bored once she saw that it was Richard. She was incredibly charmed by him, no doubt, but she knew all about his little reputation that he had created for himself over the years.

Grace: “Oh, it’s you. Since when do you find the time to even try to talk to me?”

Quite feisty she is, he thought to himself, but he absolutely adored it.

Richard: (chuckling) “You’re clearly a girl who knows what she wants in life. I admire that.”

Grace: “You admire me? Wow. That’s nice.”

She was clearly disinterested, so he thought, but in actual fact she was just playing hard to get. Her mother would have gotten a fit if she saw her walking with a boy – more especially Richard Modise, the son of Thandi and Robert Modise, who owned a chain of tuck shops around Christiana, making them one of the prominent and rich families around. Thandi being one cocky woman, there was no way she would have agreed to them dating, let alone get married. His mother would never even think of approving their relationship, so Grace’s mother didn’t want her daughter to get hurt.

Richard: (frowning) "I'll get you to be mine, Grace. Even if I suffer for a whole year."

That sounded much like a challenge for her.

Grace: (amused) "A whole year? I like that thought."

Richard: "I didn't mean it literally."

Grace: "Oh? So, meaning that I'm not worth waiting for?"

Richard: (confused) "Grace, you're confusing me now. I thought you didn't like me."

Grace: "Maybe I don't."

Richard: "Okay, how about I take you out for a movie this Saturday?"

Grace: "Hmm, this Saturday? Oh, no. Why would I go out with you? I barely know you."

Richard: "We go to the same church together."

Grace: "In that case, I'll see you at church."

Before he knew it, they had reached her house. He was so confused at first

but seeing her chuckle at him and smile like that with her deep dimples, gave him hope. He had quite a lot to learn about wooing a girl, although he had slept with quite plenty of them. He didn't feel about them the way he felt about Grace.

Richard: "I'll see you around Grace!"

She just smiled at him and continued to walk home.

"You'll be mine one day, I promise", he thought to himself. That was the perfect beginning of their beautiful and

rather strange relationship. Much like Romeo and Juliet, all odds were against them from the moment people saw them walking together in the street that day. Grace walked in and found her elder sister home. Her mother; a local teacher in the area and a well respected member of the community hadn't come back from work yet. Her sister was a lot slimmer to her, but that never bothered her. They were very close, and the sister was engaged to be married to her suitor, although unlike Grace, she was rather lazy. She hated chores with all her heart and her future husband loved her like that.

Grace: (frowning) "Aowa (no), man, Hope. Sale o dutse fela (you've been sitting) ever since I've been at school? Look at all these dishes."

Hope: "Sorry, Grace. I was busy and before I knew it, they were piling up. Di hlatswe hle, ngwaneso (please wash them, my sister). I'll pay you."

Grace: "Now you're talking. How much?"

Hope: "R50."

Grace: "Add another 50 on top of that and we have a deal."

Hope: (frowning) "Fine, but o rata tshelete le madi le wena, man (you love money)."

Grace: "Ke te tshwanela le wena (just like you). You did become a lawyer for the money, didn't you?"

They both laughed while they carried on with the usual banter. While Grace was cooking later on, her mother walked in with a rather serious concern.

Hope: "Ah, Mama! Setse o boile (you're back)."

Mama: "Yes, I'm back. Grace, how was your last paper today?"

Grace: "It was really nice, Mama. I really enjoyed it. I bet I aced it."

Mama: “Hmm, anything odd happen today?”

Grace: (frowning) “No, Mama. Sa go tshwana le eng (something like what)?”

Mama: “You won’t guess what Mma (miss) Tladi told me just now.”

That woman was the nosy neighbour. She knew everyone’s news and was the first to announce who died and who was getting married and who gave birth.

Grace: “What did she say?”

Grace didn’t have anything in the faintest of what her mother was about to say.

Mama: “She told me that my youngest daughter was seen being walked home by Richard Modise.”

Her sister was rather interested at that turn of events, while Grace was a little embarrassed.

Grace: "Oh."

Mama: "O re oh (Is that all you can say)?!"

Grace: "Mama, if I had a boyfriend, you'd most definitely be the first one to know."

Mama: "O batla go re eng, hantle (what exactly are you trying to say)?"

Grace: "I'm just saying, I'm not dating anyone, Mama. He just decided to walk me home because Jenifer wasn't available. She had to meet her mom in town. I swear, I was walking home alone when he just came running after me."

Mama: "I have a bad feeling about this, Grace. Stay away from that boy. His mother will never approve your relationship. You don't want to end up like me."

Grace: “But, Mama, I am not dating anyone. Least of all Richard.”

Mama: “That’s how it starts, my child. I don’t want you to be ridiculed by that woman. She already thinks no one is good enough for her son, now what do you think she will do exactly once she hears of this? I’m warning you. Stay away from him.”

She went to her bedroom to calm down and think of all the possible things that could happen. She herself was in a similar situation, many years ago with her children’s father, but what she didn’t want to happen to her children is for them to suffer the same fate.

Hope: “O jola le Richard, wena (you’re dating Richard)?”

Grace: “No, he was just walking me home.”

Hope: “Eh (Wow), he is hot and all, sister, but please. Refrain from dating hot guys. You saw how that ended for our

mother. She only wants the best for you and so do I. Believe me, it is better this way.”

She really wanted to go that route, but something within her just lit up and sparked whenever she even thought of Richard. Love is a dangerous emotion, more especially for those quite immature to experience it. If not careful, those in love could be completely consumed by their emotions and love for one another and forget about everyone else around them. Slowly but surely, Grace was warming up to the idea of dating Richard, much to the dismay of many. It simply felt like history repeating itself for her own mother.

2

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.”

Two days later...

By then it had been Saturday, a day before weekly church service. Word had already spread that Richard was looking towards making Grace his potential wife, all thanks to her Mma Tladi. The stares and glares from around the community made her so uncomfortable, but she would never have shown it to them. And to make matters worse, her mother had sent her to go buy some bread and a few vegetables at a nearby store, which happened to be one of the Modise’s spaza shops.

Grace: “Eish (oh), Mama. Can’t you go? I mean, I’m not feeling well.”

Mama: “Grace, ke roma wena o rom anna (I send you and you decide to send me instead)?”

Grace: “No, Mama. I’m honestly not feeling well.”

Mama: “Ska nhlolla (don’t upset me). Go get those things. If you really have nothing to hide, you’d face those people with no care in the world.”

She had absolutely no escape, she had to face all the gossip like a woman. She walked out and of course, she could see them pointing fingers and whispering to each other. That was typical black people for you. She kept her head high and walked towards the nearest tuck shop. She couldn’t even skip it, because even the next shop belonged to the Modise’s. Just as she thought things weren’t bad enough, she found Richard helping out at the store. While she was picking the few things she was sent to and put it in her basket, he appeared behind her.

Richard: (smiling) “Toni Braxton.”

Grace: (frowning) “Excuse me?”

She could feel her heart literally vibrating, which was an obvious sign of the feelings she had for him emerging.

Richard: "You remind me of her."

Grace: "That's funny. I don't even look anywhere near her."

Richard: "You don't have to look like her, in fact, you look better than her. Besides, I'm calling you that because of your husky voice. It's beautiful, it commands respect."

Grace: (blushing) "Oh."

Richard: "Do you need a hand with that basket?"

Grace: "Richard, I don't want you to get the wrong idea, and besides people are already talking."

Richard: "I know."

Grace: "What do you mean?"

Richard: "You honestly think that my mother didn't give me the pep talk already?"

Grace: "What pep talk?"

Richard: "She told me how I'm too young to get anyone pregnant and how she won't allow me to marry anyone that isn't as rich as me."

That was a little hurtful for Grace.

Grace: "Oh."

Richard: "The truth is, Grace, I am not the rich one – they are. And besides, I don't care what people think; I like you. I really like you and I want to explore this relationship."

Grace: "Wow, jumping the gun, aren't we?"

Richard: "If it is me jumping the gun, then so be it. I told you, I'm willing to wait."

Grace: "Oh, yes. A year, you said."

Richard: "That doesn't mean I don't get to court you within that year."

Grace blushed immeasurably. No boy had ever made her feel that way. He took her basket and placed all her items on the till. He was about to pay for her, when she quickly stopped him.

Grace: (shaking head) "No, don't do that. My mother would literally kill me if I come back with all her money in tact."

Richard: "Then just give her the change and keep the rest. It is my gift to you as a potential boyfriend."

Grace: "Okay, then."

He took all her items and placed them in a carry pack and carried it for her all the way outside.

Grace: "You don't have to walk with me, you know. I know the way."

Richard: "You really need to watch romantic movies more often. This means that I care about you. What kind of man would I be if I let you carry all these home all on your own?"

Grace: "A man? I don't know about that, but well, I suppose you could help me carry it. Just don't let my mother see you."

Richard: "Mma Tladi has probably told her already."

They both laughed. It was the first time Grace felt that someone of the opposite sex actually understood her.

Grace: "Well, this is the end of the road for you, Mr. Modise."

Richard: "Well, I'll see you tomorrow, Ms. Tlou."

Grace: "Tomorrow?"

Richard: "Church, remember?"

Grace: "Oh, I forgot. I thought you hated attending church."

Richard: "Before being your potential boyfriend, I attended it to suit my parents, but now, I am doing it to see you."

Grace: (laughing) "That is so disturbing. You should really love God, you know."

Richard: "Who said I didn't? I'll see you tomorrow, Toni Braxton."

Grace blushed all the way home, trying so hard to hide it from the nosy neighbours. Once she was home, it only took a second for her mother to notice the broad smile on her face.

Mama: (irritably) “You took so long.”

Grace: “Tshwarelo (forgive me), Mama. I’ll finish up the cooking.”

Her mother just nodded and went to keep herself busy in the bedroom. Grace was even humming to a Toni Braxton song, that was just how powerful new love is. While she was about to wash the dishes, after cooking, Mma tladi graced them with her much unwanted presence.

Mma Tladi: “Koko (knock knock).”

She was a rather tall woman in her 70’s, with nothing to do with her time.

Grace: "Oh, dumela Mme Tladi (Hello)."

Mma Tladi: "Where is your mother? May I come in? I thought I would come by for a cup of tea."

Grace already knew what she wanted to talk about.

Grace: "She's in her bedroom. I'll go and call her."

She went to call her mother who came out in a few seconds.

Mama: "Ao (Oh), Mma Tladi. A dilo di siame (is everything alright)?"

Mma Tladi: "Oh, everything is alright. I just came by for a visit."

She wasn't even her mother's closest friend yet she just decided to barge in for a cup of tea and meaningless gossip.

Mama: “Oh, dula fase (sit down). Grace, bidisa ketelele ngwanake (heat up the kettle, my child).”

They had a seat right there in the kitchen with nowhere for Grace to escape. She was starting to sweat profusely because her mother was about to find out that she was taking a walk with Richard yet again.

Mma Tladi: “Hey, o godile Grace (Grace is so grown now). She will be finished with matric in no time and will be someone’s wife.”

Mama: (frowning) “My daughter still has to go to school and dreams to fulfill, Mma Tladi.”

Mma Tladi: “Oh, yes. We all said so with our children, but when they start entertaining boys at her age, who knows what the future may hold for her?”

Mama: (annoyed) “Excuse me?”

Mma Tladi: “Oh, I just came by to talk to you – as a concerned friend. I mean, people are talking and if only you knew what Thandi has to say about her relationship with Richard.”

Mama: (frowning) “What relationship? My daughter is not dating anyone let alone Richard. Besides, if she were, I’d be the first one to know.”

Mma Tladi: “Clearly you don’t know your daughter as well as you think you do. She was seen at the store earlier today with him and he was even carrying her plastic bag for her all the way home.”

Grace could tell her mother was livid, yet she was just too afraid to face her.

Mama: (angrily) “Mma Tladi, ka hlompo (with all due respect), you have some nerve. O nale sebetse, mosadi ke wena (you really have some nerve, woman).”

Mma Tladi: “Aowa (no), ne ke sare ka go kwatisa (I didn’t mean to upset you).”

Mama: “You say people are talking but we all know that those people is actually you! What is it with you people of Christiana? Don’t you have anything better to do with your time than to keep an eye on my daughter?! We all know your daughter was forced to get married to hide her pregnancy scandal. I don’t care what you think of my child and I care less about what you think about her and Richard. They are allowed to date whomever they want to. It is people like you who just ruin children and drive them into depression. Just stop with your nonsense. The next time you decide to come to my house, it had better be for something useful.”

Mma Tladi: “Aowa (no), ke maswabi (I’m very sorry). I didn’t mean to upset you like this. I just wanted to let you know what people were saying.”

Mama: “Ga ba voetseke (Let them piss off)! If you want to join them – piss off as well!”

Mma Tladi: “Yoh (Oh), alright. I hear you. Janong tee yona (what about the tea)?”

Mama: “The offer has expired. Please, leave my house.”

She got up reluctantly and said her unappreciated goodbyes. Once she was officially out of the yard, Grace’s mother just stared at her with so much rage and disappointment in her eyes.

Grace: (panicking) “I swear, Mama. I am not dating him or anyone.”

Mama: “Grace, do you want to end up like me? Old, angry and hateful of men?”

Grace: “Aowa (no), Mama.”

Mama: “Your father decided to use me and once he was done, he filed for divorce and took half my pension. Everything I have worked so hard to build, Grace. I had to buy him out of this

house with a part of my half of the pension. I'm telling you, nothing good will come out of your relationship with that boy."

Grace: "Mama, we're not dating. Besides, we shouldn't judge. Isn't that what the Bible says?"

Mama: "The Bible says a lot of things, including Matthew 7 verse 15. I'm telling you, that boy is no good and his family is even worse. You're still young, and I can't tell you what to do. All I can tell you is that you need to try and guard your heart by all means."

She said nothing further to Grace and went back to her bedroom. Her mother had been through so much with her ex-husband, and Grace even entertaining the entire idea with Richard, opened up old wounds. That night, Grace's mother slept with a very heavy heart, while Grace on the other hand, slept like an angel. She just had bubbles floating in her tummy throughout the entire night, with so many thoughts about Richard. They hadn't even started dating yet, and she was already thinking of the possibility of marriage for the both of them. The following morning came, and Grace was so deep asleep, that she didn't even hear her alarm clock go off.

Mama: (loudly) “Grace, weh (my goodness)! Tsoga (wake up)!”

Grace: “Oh, sorry, Mama. I didn’t hear it ring.”

Mama: “Hlapa (take a bath), we have church to get to.”

She didn’t have to tell her twice because she had been mentally preparing for church throughout the entire night. She even had her favourite outfit in mind. She wanted him to look at her as if it was the very first time he saw her. She took out her black polka dot dress, along with her black pumps. Her mother had her fair share of trouble and stress and wanted nothing to do with a man ever since her divorce. She was deep in debt and was nearly done paying off the debt that man had left her in. So she loathed the idea of love at that time. Grace took her time in the bathroom, much to her mother’s annoyance. She was acting way out of character, and unfortunately her mother could already see the signs even before the relationship had begun. Once she was finally done

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there wasn’t even time for her to eat.

Mama: “Ke nako ya go tsamaya (It is time for us to go). Akere wena ne o iketlile ka metsing, mma mogashwa (you’ve been way too relaxed in the water, mermaid). You’ll eat when we come back. Let’s go.”

They even had to walk to church since her ex husband kept the car. Marrying in community of property really ruined her. Luckily for Grace, church was about ten minutes away and there was no need to drive. She didn’t mind; when you’re head over heels you don’t even mind walking in the rain. Mma Tladi greeted them from behind her gate, and Grace’s mother greeted her in haste although she didn’t want to. Once they arrived at church, she could tell that the news had spread like wildfire. She already knew what they were saying; “Why her?”, “She’s not rich enough”, “She’s not skinny enough”, “She was raised by a single mother, so what on earth will she learn from marriage when her own mother’s marriage failed?” So many negative thoughts were racing through her mind, and the more she dwelled on it, the more she started to fear. She didn’t want her daughter to be subjected to so much hatred, all because of her mother’s circumstances caused by her father’s choices. Of course, she had to run right into Thandi Modise, the most feared woman in the church.

Thandi: (smiling) "Ao (oh), Valencia. How nice to see you. Of course, you never miss a day of church."

Mama: "Hello, Thandi. Nice to see you too."

Then, she looked at Grace from top to bottom and frowned. She was already judging the poor girl.

Thandi: "You must be Grace. Hmm, people were right about you."

Mama: (frowning) "Right about her?"

Thandi: "Oh, nothing major, they just said that she's too plain and a little meaty, you know."

Grace's mother was highly annoyed.

Mama: “The last time I checked you were also quite meaty until you altered yourself, medically.”

She might have been broke, broken and talked about on a daily basis, but she never allowed anyone to speak about her children in that manner.

Thandi: (irritated) “Hmm, you still have quite a mouth, I see.”

Mama: “I could say the same about you. See you when I see you.”

Thandi: “Hmm.”

Mama: “Grace, a re ye (let’s go).”

Grace: “Sala pila, Mme (Stay well, Ma).”

She didn’t even greet Grace back, that was just how much she thought of her. She sat right next to her mother in church,

while they waited for her sister and her husband to get to the church. Her lobola had already been paid and they were just waiting on the formal wedding, which was due to come in January. While in church, she spotted Richard, who didn't hesitate to go and greet them both.

Richard: (smiling) "Dumela Mme (hello, ma). My name is Richard, I'm sure you've seen me around."

He extended his hand while Grace's mother was taken aback by that boy's humbleness. Grace was anxiously waiting to see if she would actually shake his hand. I mean, she had known him since he was a boy, but he saw it fit to introduce himself to her like that. That said a lot about his character. She shook his hand.

Mama: "Dumela (hello), Richard. Yes, I know you. I have known you since you were this little, remember?"

They were both chuckling, while Grace just couldn't stop blushing.

Richard: "Oh, but I just had to introduce myself yet again, Mme. It is only polite."

Mama: "Hmm, are you doing this because of your interest in my daughter?"

She just had to drop a bombshell like that, leaving Grace so embarrassed.

Richard: "Eish (oh), you got me right there, Mme. To be honest, that is partially why I came to you today. I have tried holding myself for quite a while, but I have failed. Mme, I am falling deeply in love with your daughter. I'd like your permission to get to know her. I know, we might be from different worlds, but that doesn't mean that I can't love her. I'm not rich, Mme, my parents are. I would just like to be given a chance to court her and show her how much I can love her."

Did he just say "love"? Grace was taken aback, to say the least. She didn't expect that from him. They hardly even knew each other, but the fireworks were real. She tried to read her

mother, who seemed to be analyzing Richard at that point. She couldn't read her face, so it was hard to tell whether she was happy or surprised or shocked or even angered.

Mama: "Hmm, you do know that your parents are not going to like what you've just said, right?"

Well, that was a sign that she was at least considering it.

Richard: "Yes, I know that, Mme, hence I have already spoken to my father about Grace."

Mama: "Hmm, let me think about it. If you can, how about you come by my house later on for Sunday lunch? That is if your parents will allow you to."

Richard was beaming with pride and joy.

Richard: "I will be there, Mme. I truly appreciate your time, Mme. I'll see you later. Bye Grace."

He smiled at Grace who in turn smiled back. It was so hard to hide, that when her mother gave her a stern look, she just tried being serious, but she failed dismally. She was happy, her heart was happy and so was her heart. Could that have been the man God had saved for her? Could Richard have been her happy ending? There was only one way to find out. The sermon had finally started when Hope and her fiancé joined them. Hope couldn't understand why Grace was so full of smiles, until she caught her catching a glimpse of Richard who was sitting three rows across them. The sparks were flying between them throughout the service. The pastor spoke about something that really caught Valencia's attention.

Pastor: "Change. Change is a really hard thing to do but we all have to do it at some point. Past difficulties and hurts are part of life; they shape who we are in the future. You being here today, means that you came out a better person than yesterday. You beat the odds because you are still here. You didn't die. A lot of us parents are so hung up on the past and the ways of raising our children, but honestly, our children are growing up in a time that is very much different to ours. When children are born, we vow to love them with all our hearts. Discipline might mean different things to different

people, although Proverbs 13:24 says; “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” Parents, choose to love your children first, above everything else.

We know, so many times, they just go their own way, but the more you yell and scream at them for following their heart, is the more you push them away. Collosians 3:21 says; “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Encourage your children on a daily basis, let them know when they are doing something right. Praise them when they are doing good and also firmly reprimand them when they are going astray. Children too, need to not forget who birthed them. Many parents are too strict, but that is the only way they know how to raise children. It doesn't mean that your parents hate you if they shout or yell at you, or even beat you, but you too can do your part by abiding to their rules. Proverbs 1:8-9 says; “Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.” Children, I say unto you, learn to heed your parents' warnings. You only can decide your future and what it holds for you, but your parents will guide you and give you a stepping stone to choosing what is right. Lastly, I leave this with you;

Exodus 20:12 – “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” Honour your parents, and you will reap the benefits thereof. Parents, if children still choose not to listen to you, by all means do not write them off. No one will love them like you do. I pray you learn to listen to your children as much as you’d like them to listen to you. I pray that you allow them to make their own choices, using God as your foundation. May the good lord bless you and keep you.”

God has always worked in mysterious ways. It truly felt as if the pastor was speaking to Valencia, as if God had used that specific day for him to preach about those specific words. She took a good look at Grace and held her hand, with teary eyes. She knew just then what she had to do.

3

“As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.”

The church service was rather overwhelming for most, except for the Modise's. While Richard was still reeling from his intense conversation with Grace's mother, his parents were not so impressed by the sermon. Richard tried to get a word or two in with Grace after the sermon, but they were already in Hope's husband's car by then. He figured that he would speak to her later on, when he would be having Sunday lunch with them. He intended on going, without a doubt. Richard gave Grace a brief wave goodbye once she was in the car and off they went. Valencia was so quiet in the car, but she never let go of Grace's hand. It was almost as if she could just see Grace's future. Parents know their children and they can already see the kind of adults they'd become whilst growing up.

Hope: “Mama, you're awfully quiet today. Are you alright?”

Mama: “Ag (oh), ska itshwenya ngwanake (don't worry yourself, my child). I'm just deep in thought.”

Hope: "Alright. Grace, will you be cooking for us today?"

Mama: "Hope, ke gore o pallwa le ke go phega rice ya rice (you can't even cook rice out of all things?)"

Hope: "Eish (oh), Mama. You know how it is. I have tried, but ka hlolega (I've failed). It's in my blood."

They all chuckled and were at home in no time. Grace didn't bother changing as she normally would have, but she went straight for the pots instead.

Mama: "Grace, you don't have to cook today, my child. I'll do it."

Grace: "It's honestly okay, Mme (mom). Besides, I'm on holiday, so you go and relax with Hope and John outside. I'll be okay in here."

Mama: “Suka (nonsense), I’ll call Hope to come and help you. She can at least peel something instead of cooking her rubbish for us.”

Grace chuckled, but was met with quite an unusual surprise at the door just as Valencia was about to go outside.

Richard: (clearing throat) “Dumelang (Greetings). I hope I’m not late.”

When Valencia invited him over for Sunday Lunch, she didn’t expect him to be that early. He was courteous enough to bring a bottle of fine wine with. Valencia was really flabbergasted, but deep down, she was so impressed with that boy. He had manners, more than she could ever have said for his mother.

Mama: “Oh, Richard. I didn’t expect you to be so early.”

Richard: “Oh, tshwarelo (forgive me), Mme. I had to dodge my own family before they started dishing out. It would have been quite rude of me to come here with a full stomach.”

She just had to laugh, which rarely happened. Grace could tell, Valencia Tlou was deeply impressed.

Mama: "Oh, alright. There's quite a lot to do still, I mean, Grace is only starting to peel the vegetables now. I'll go call her sister to help her."

Richard: "There's no need for that, Mme. I'll gladly help her cook, if that's okay with you."

That was the perfect opportunity for Richard to shoot his shot; to show Grace just how much he really wanted to be with her.

Mama: "Alright then. Just don't do anything funny. I'll be right outside."

Grace: (chuckling) "Okay, Mme."

She walked out, leaving the both of them alone in the kitchen. It was quite smaller than what he was used to, but he didn't mind at all. All he saw was the beautiful Grace standing before him. Seeing her chop those vegetables with that apron on her, made him envision her in their own kitchen one day.

Richard: (clearing throat) "Hi."

Grace: (blushing) "Hello."

Hope barged into the kitchen just as they were about to start conversing.

Hope: "Oh, I am so sorry for interrupting. I just came to fetch the bottle of wine you came with."

Richard: "I put it right behind the counter over there."

Hope: "Oh, Merlot. You have taste wena sani (you, boy). I hope you didn't steal this from your parents' bar or something."

Richard: "No, I asked my father if I could take it with."

Hope: "Alright then. I'll get myself some glasses. Be good now. Thanks for offering to help in the kitchen on my behalf, Richie."

She walked out leaving him chuckling all to himself.

Richard: "Is she always like that?"

Grace: "Not really, only around her family and friends."

Richard: "Okay, where should I start?"

Grace: "I've already boiled the rice. You can start by peeling the pumpkin. You do know how to do that, right?"

Richard: (laughing) “Toni Braxton, I used to spend a lot of time with my grandmother, so I would like to think that I might know all about Sunday kos – perhaps more than you do.”

They both laughed. The conversation flowed effortlessly. She found out so many things that not even many knew about Richard.

Richard: “Well, if I had known that getting the most beautiful girl in school would be so much work, I’d have started earlier.”

Grace: “Getting all girls should be hard work, and besides, I am not the most beautiful girl in school and who said you have me?”

Richard: “Well, I’m in your kitchen, cooking with you on a Sunday, that should say a lot.”

Grace: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, don’t be silly.”

Richard: “I don’t mind being silly with you.”

Grace: "You do know that I'm not a very outgoing person, right?"

Richard: "Yes, I do, because Jenifer mostly goes out without you. Let me guess; you love reading, I mean I can tell because you sometimes wear glasses. You also love watching tv and you're hardly ever on social media."

Grace: "Are you stalking me?"

Richard: "Nope, just very observant."

Grace: "Okay then. Yes, I love reading."

Richard: "What's your favourite book?"

Grace: "The Handmaid's Tale."

Richard: "Hmm, Margaret Atwood. She's a good author. You're into science fiction, huh?"

Grace was a bit surprised by the fact that he knew all that.

Grace: (surprised) "You know the book?"

Richard: "I know plenty. I personally love *Alias Grace* more. I thought that her writing in that one was quite exceptional."

Grace was growing more and more impressed by him. She hadn't met a guy whom she could click with like that at all.

Grace: "Wow, you're full of surprises."

Richard: "What do you mean?"

Grace: "Don't get me wrong, but you don't seem like much of a reader, I mean you're the most popular guy in school and you're about to be the head boy next year."

Richard: (Frowning) “So, being popular means you don’t like reading?”

Grace: “In most cases, yes.”

Richard: “There’s a lot you don’t know about me, Toni Braxton. Give me time and I’ll show you what you’ve been missing out on.”

When he spoke to her, he would often glare into her eyes, and get closer to her. His scent was so hypnotic, it just did things to Grace.

Grace: “Hmm, one year, remember?”

Richard: “One year of adventure and fun.”

They continued about their chore until they were finished. He even helped her dish out for everyone. Hope, John and Valencia went into the lounge to eat.

Mama: "Let us pray."

Richard offered to pray for the food, of which it was quite obvious he was trying to score as many points as he could with Valencia. So

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he was a God-fearing boy, that was a bonus on her list of qualities of him. They ate and she started grilling him about his life and his goals and what he really wanted to do in life. He didn't mind at all, in fact, that was the most interested any adult has ever been in his life, apart from his grandmother. After the lunch, he offered to help Grace wash the dishes as well. He obviously didn't want to leave as yet. Afterwards, he obviously needed to get going to spend more time with his family before news spread like wildfire.

Richard: "Mme, thank you so much for the meal. It was lovely."

Mama: "It was a pleasure, my child. Go well and be safe. Grace will take you halfway."

That was exactly what she was hoping for.

Grace: "Alright, kea boa (I'll be back)."

They walked out side by side, and even though fewer people were visible in the street and Mme Tladi was nowhere to be seen, that didn't mean that she wasn't peeping through the window. The walls had ears and eyes everywhere no matter what time of day it was.

Richard: "I really enjoyed my day today all thanks to you."

Grace: "Well, I think you also had a hand in it. I've never seen my mother ask someone so many questions unless it was at work."

Richard: (laughing) "Come on, I bet she's way better than my mom. She can be quite a handful."

Grace: "So I have heard."

Richard: "Well then, may I take you out to the movies this coming Wednesday?"

Grace: "I'll have to ask my mother first. Besides, aren't you concerned about what people are saying? News is spreading like wildfire, you know."

Richard: "People will always talk, Grace, but so what? Let them talk. Or are you embarrassed of me?"

Grace: "No, it's just that, I know your parents would never approve of me."

Richard: "I'm not doing this for my parents. I'm doing this for myself. So what if they don't approve? My grandmother didn't even like my mother and she still doesn't yet here I am."

Grace: (laughing) “You just had to take it there, huh?”

Richard: “Yes, if that is what it takes to show you how serious I am.”

Grace: “If she agrees, then I’ll go with you.”

Richard: (smiling) “Okay then. May I please have your number? I promise you I won’t text you all the time and distract you.”

Grace: “Alright. But don’t call me, please. My mother gets really suspicious of phone calls.”

Richard: “I promise I will ask for permission before calling you.”

She entered her number in his phone, and just like that the deal was nearly sealed.

Grace: “This is as far as I can go before she starts yelling at me.”

Richard: "Alright. I'll see you Wednesday, Toni."

He gave her a brief kiss on the cheek, leaving her reeling from deep within. She was completely paralyzed for a few seconds and regained herself. It was quite hard to stop herself from blushing but she had to try or else people would have assumed she was going mad. Upon her arrival at home, she found her mother waiting for her outside. She always used to sit under the tree with her latest novel and would read.

Mama: "Come sit next to me for a minute."

She did as told and thought that she was about to get lectured, but she got the total opposite.

Mama: "I can see how much you like that boy and he obviously likes you too."

Grace was anxious, but she waited for her mother to finish talking.

Mama: “Look, I know, you’re not me and I don’t want you to be me. I just want what is best for you – just like I have always wanted what was best for Hope. I don’t know what will happen because his parents clearly look down on us, but he is humble and respectful, and I just hope he doesn’t change on you otherwise, ke tla kgaola mpya marete (I’ll cut a dog’s balls off).”

Grace: (laughing) “Mama hle (goodness)! Does this mean you approve?”

Mama: (sigh) “Yes, I approve, on one condition. I don’t want you to start having sex without telling me. Should you ever decide to do it, by all means, use a condom. If anything and I mean anything hits the fan, Grace, please don’t ever be afraid to tell me. I’ll support you in every way, but I don’t want you to disrespect me. Should you two ever do that I don’t want to see that shit in my house. Okay?”

That was the best news Grace had heard all day.

Grace: (excited) “Yes, Mama! Thank you so much. I promise you, I won’t disappoint you.”

Mama: “You’d better not, my baby. Men change overnight. I don’t ever want you to feel inadequate because of his feelings and actions. By all means, if he starts doing shit you don’t like, you dig deep within your gut and you follow it.”

Grace was happy to hear of her mother’s approval, yet she still had planned on making Richard run after her as promised. He needed to sweat first before having her as his official girlfriend. Once she was in her bedroom, she updated her sister on everything that happened, including her mother’s approval. She was happy that her timid and introverted sister had finally gotten a boyfriend, though nothing was official as yet. Jenifer on the other hand was so excited, she just couldn’t wait to rub it in everyone’s faces that her best friend was the girlfriend of the hottest and most wanted boy in school. Grace was happy and so was Richard. It didn’t take too long for him to start texting her on WhatsApp.

Richard: “Hey, Toni. I’m home.”

Grace: "You really have to stop calling me that, man. I'm glad you're safe."

Richard: "It's either that or Babe. Which one do you like better?"

Grace: "Really? How about Grace?"

Richard: "No ways, what kind of boyfriend would I be if I called you by name?"

Grace: "Lol, you're not my boyfriend, Richard."

Richard: "Yet – I'm not your boyfriend, yet. Anyway, did you ask your mom about our date?"

Grace: "No, but she did agree to us dating."

Richard: "Are you serious? This just made me the happiest! Babe, you and I will officially be a couple by the end of December, you just wait and see."

Grace: "One year, remember?"

Richard: "I don't know if you will be able to hold out that long."

Grace: "Lol, well, alright then. Let me go to bed. We'll talk tomorrow."

Richard: "Bye, girlfriend."

Grace had never felt more alive. She was over the moon in fact, while Richard just couldn't sleep. He was still smiling all to himself, when his father walked in to check up on him.

Robert: "Son, are you alright? You were gone all afternoon and now you're all smiles. Is there something you'd like to tell me?"

Richard: "Papa, ke maratong (I'm in love)."

Robert: (wide-eyed) "So it's actually true. You are in a relationship with that Tlou girl?"

Richard: "Well, not yet, but we're almost there."

Robert: (sigh) "You know what that means, right? Your mother would never approve."

Richard: "That's not the point, Papa. What about what I want? I really like her. I'm falling for her with each day that goes by."

Robert: "Son, I've been there. You honestly think that your mother was my first girlfriend? I have no problem because I know these things. It will blow over."

Richard: "I don't think so. Even if you feel that way, speak to Mama, please. Make her see that I like Grace and I should be able to date whomever I want."

Robert: “I’ll try, just don’t get her pregnant, please. I don’t want any drama.”

Richard’s mind was far away from such topics. All he wanted was just to be Grace’s boyfriend. He really liked and respected her enough not to think of her in that way as yet. The road to their love story, would be lovely – and rather brief.

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

It had been a few days since Richard and Grace had been talking to one another. Their relationship was growing rapidly and everyone around them started to notice. Grace’s mother was fine with the fact that Richard was someone Grace had so much in common with and he respected her too, while Richard’s father assumed that Grace was going to be a fling that would just pass by quite soon. His mother noticed just how much closer Richard was getting to Grace and she didn’t like it one bit. Having the entire neighbourhood converse about it didn’t make it any easier for her reputation. She hated the fact that someone of Grace’s class had captured her son’s heart in that manner. Richard on the other hand couldn’t care less what people were thinking. They soon became the topic on school WhatsApp groups and the school’s Facebook page, whereas most were calling them the next power couple of the school, and of course, jealous teenagers were calling her names and claiming that she just wasn’t his type. Grace tried by all means to ignore all of that, with Richard’s reassurance, and so, it was weighing a little heavy on her. She was only human after all. It was finally Wednesday, the day of their very first

date. Grace asked her mother for permission and she agreed with no hassles, but when Richard had to ask his parents, Thandi Modise decided to speak her mind. She most definitely had no timing whatsoever.

Richard: (smiling) “Dumelang ka mo gae (Good morning family).”

Robert: “Hello, son.”

Thandi: “Where are you going looking so dapper?”

Richard: “Mama, I told you I have a date today with my girlfriend.”

Thandi: “Oh, my goodness, Richard. Were you serious? I honestly thought you were joking. I thought she’d just be a simple hit and run fela (only).”

Robert: “Thandi, butle pele le wena (wait a minute).”

Thandi: "I'm just being honest."

Richard: "Mama, ka hlompo (with all due respect), Grace isn't like that. In fact, she has never even been with a boy before."

Thandi: "Yes, because she's fat, my boy. No one wants to sleep with the fat girl."

Robert: "Thandi! That's enough."

Richard: (angrily) "You know, of all women, Mama, I thought you'd be sane enough not to judge. You weren't skinny your entire life, and Grace's weight has never bothered me. I honestly can't believe you just said that. When Grace comes to have dinner with us along with her family, I ask that you please behave yourself. I will not allow you to disrespect and humiliate her like that. I have fallen for her – hard. I don't want anyone to ruin the good thing that I have."

Thandi: (bored) “Oh, no one told me that we’d be hosting the lower class. When are they coming?”

Richard: “On second thoughts, Papa. I’ll take a taxi. I initially wanted to ask you if I could borrow your car, but I’d rather walk.”

Thandi: “Wait! My son can’t be seen walking around in the streets. What will people say?”

Richard: “I don’t care what they say. Don’t call me. I’ll be back later.”

Just like that, he left them right there. His father was rather embarrassed that his wife could even speak like that of his son’s new girlfriend, though Thandi couldn’t even be bothered by his reaction nor feelings. Meanwhile, Richard went ahead and caught a taxi, with no care in the world. He only worried about his darling Grace. He decided to take a detour first before heading to Grace’s house. He stopped by the mall to buy a bunch of flowers and a box of chocolates for her. He could have done that along with her once they had arrived, but

he wanted to set a standard. He wanted to do something really special for her, just like in the movies. He got into another taxi heading to her house and fixed himself before entering the yard. Of course, Mme Tladi was right outside watching the entire thing, but he wasn't bothered by gossipmongers.

Mme Tladi: (shouting) "Dumela (Hello), Richard!"

Richard: "Dumela (Hello), Mme Tladi."

Mme Tladi: "Le ya kae na le le pila so (where are you going looking so nice)?"

He chose to ignore her and act as if he didn't even hear a word she had said. He fixed his Tshirt one last time before knocking on her door. Of course, Grace was already waiting for him. It didn't take very long after the knock for her to open the door.

Grace: (smiling) "Hi."

She looked so gorgeous, dressed in a white, figure-hugging maxi dress. It accentuated her figure so well, making her look so desirable and absolutely flawless. He couldn't fault her on anything. She had dreadlocks which were quite long, and she had let them loose that day. She normally had them in a pony tail.

Richard: "You look absolutely beautiful."

Grace: (blushing) "Thank you."

Richard: "I brought these for you."

Grace: "Thank you. Let me put them in my room and then we can go."

Richard: "No, we can't leave without me greeting your mom first. It would be very rude."

Grace: "Alright then. Come in."

While she went to her bedroom, he greeted Valencia.

Richard: "Dumela, Mme (Greetings, Ma). How are you today?"

She was watching tv at that time, but she smiled at him as soon as she saw him.

Mama: (smiling) "Hello, son. I'm alright, how are you?"

Richard: "I'm very well, thank you. I've come to take your daughter out on our very first date."

Mama: "Alright then, please be safe."

Richard: "We will be, Mama. Keep well."

Mama: "Alright, bye now."

Once they walked out of the house, Richard didn't hesitate any further and held her by the hand.

Richard: "Are you ready to go?"

Grace: "Yes, I am. But, what are people going to say about us holding hands like this?"

Richard: "Do you care about what they think?"

Grace shook her head.

Richard: "Well then, there you go. The only people that matter right now is you and I."

They left walking hand in hand, without a care in the world. Sure, everyone was talking about them, but they weren't bothered about it. They got into a taxi, with Richard opening the door for her and letting her walk in first. He sat right next to her and placed her hand further in his.

Grace: "Which movie are we watching today?"

Richard: "It's a surprise."

They made it to the mall and were right on time for the movie. After buying their tickets and the movie snacks, he strictly offered to pay for everything.

Richard: "No, this is my treat. I mean, I can't expect of my girlfriend to pay for her own movie, can I?"

Grace: (smiling) "What happened to one year?"

Richard: "You'll decide. I can woo you for an entire year, but to me, you are already my girlfriend."

They went in and the movie started.

Grace: (excitedly) “Oh, my goodness. Life in a year. I’ve always wanted to watch this movie, but I just couldn’t get the chance.”

Richard: “Well, thank goodness I have given you the chance, right?”

The movie continued and everyone was quiet and intrigued by the movie. There were tearful moments and certain moments left them overjoyed. Whenever she shed a tear, he would gently wipe it off her cheek. Once the movie was done, she had cried enough.

Grace: “I’m so mad at you right now.”

Richard: “Why? What did I do?”

Grace: “You didn’t warn me that I’d be crying throughout the entire movie.”

Richard: "I'm sorry. I just wanted to watch it with you. It is a great and romantic, however very realistic movie. Not every movie has a happy ending, just like life, unfortunately."

Grace: "Still, it's a lot of crying for our very first date."

Richard: "Come, I know just what will make you feel better."

He took her hand in his yet again and went to Spur with her. They had an awesome meal and then dessert. From there onwards, they went to Bounce, and had fun for the rest of the day. It was the best fun Grace had ever had in a forever. Afterwards, they were eating ice cream and relaxing on one of the benches just outside the mall.

Richard: "So, did you have fun?"

Grace: "Fun? I had the best time of my life. I just wish you had told me beforehand about Bouncing. I could have worn a jean instead. Plus, we went there after eating. You should count your lucky stars that I didn't throw up."

Richard: (laughing) “Even if you had, I wouldn’t have had a problem.”

Grace: (laughing) “You’re just saying that.”

Richard: “I am serious, Grace. I mean, I know what people are saying about me and you even giving me a chance, goes to show that you are willing to look past that. It really means a lot to me.”

Grace: “You did tell me not to worry about people and what they think, right?”

Richard: “That’s true, which is why I would like to ask you this. I’ve been dying to ask you, but now this is the perfect time.”

Grace: “Okay, I’m all ears.”

Richard: "I know, you asked me to woo you for an entire year, of which I am willing to do, but doing that without knowing for sure what you are to me will kill me. Will you be my girlfriend?"

Grace: (surprised) "Oh, uhm, I thought that people are supposed to date for quite some time before being an actual couple."

Richard: "There's no time set on anything in this life. For all you know, I could die after tomorrow, or even after a year. Please, give me a chance, and I'll make your year so memorable, you won't ever forget. Just like the movie, life can be unpredictable, but I promise to treat you with the respect you deserve, I promise to give you the love you deserve and treat you just like the goddess you are."

Well, Grace truly didn't expect that, but she had nothing to lose. It would have been the very first time she had a boyfriend, so what better way to accept the proposal and have a memorable year?

Grace: “Yes, I’ll be your girlfriend, Richard.”

Richard smiled with so much excitement and gave her a gentle kiss on the lips. She had never ever kissed a boy before, so she was so nervous, that she was trembling. She broke the kiss nervously.

Grace: (nervous) “I’m sorry, but...”

Richard: “I’m sorry, it was just the heat of the moment. I didn’t mean to move so fast.”

Grace: “No, it’s not that at all

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it’s just that – I’ve never kissed a boy before. So, in other words, I don’t know if I’m actually doing the right thing or not.”

Richard: (chuckling) “Follow my lead, love. I’ll teach you.”

She agreed nervously, and decided to let him lead. Their lips touched yet again. Grace had never felt anything so sensual, so lovely, all the while Richard had kissed quite a dozen girls, but had never felt anything as magical and real as that. Their souls connected, which happens quite often for teenagers. Yes, the first love is always the best, hence the first heartbreak cuts the deepest. They broke the kiss when Grace felt all those butterflies in her stomach.

Grace: (blushing) “Oh, we most probably shouldn’t have done that in public. What will people tell my mother?”

Richard: “People should learn to mind their own business, love. Come closer, I’d like to take a picture with my girlfriend.”

They took a few pictures together and he sent them all to Grace on WhatsApp. They headed home together, all smiles and head over heels with one another. It was truly one of the best days in Grace’s life. Richard brought her home safely and greeted Valencia goodbye. Once he got home, they were on the phone for hours, talking about everything and anything. New love brings out the best in people, most of the time. It wasn’t very long until Richard updated his status on Facebook to in a

Relationship and tagged Grace. They were a real couple, and people were quite shocked. Some were impressed, and some quite envious, but at the end of the day, Grace Tlou had captured Richard Modise's heart, a heart which many girls failed to capture. Once Thandi noticed how attached her son was getting, she was getting concerned – and was his father. They wanted Valencia and Grace to go have dinner with them, but they had to prepare for Hope's wedding, which required a lot of attention.

The dress fittings, venue and catering still had to be finalized, and they could barely fit in any meetings with friends or acquaintances. It was going to be a big affair, and with all eyes on the Tlou family, right after the man of the house decided to leave Valencia for another woman, they had to ensure that people had something good to talk about. She hardly saw Richard, but when she did, they would kiss and hold hands and bond the usual way. Before they knew it, the December holidays were over, and Hope's wedding date had finally arrived. She had asked him to be her date, though she was going to be the Maid of Honour. He was obviously delighted to be part of the wedding, and since he was going to be a guest, the Modise's were invited as well – out of politeness. Of course, Thandi wasn't thrilled about the idea, but she wanted

to go just to have something to talk about. Grace was in the bedroom helping her sister get dressed for the big affair.

Grace: “Oh, Hope, you look so beautiful. And this dress is the best I’ve ever seen. I can’t wait to have my wedding too, one day.”

Hope: “Hmm, I suppose your future husband will be Richard, right?”

Grace: “Is it a bad thing that I am actually hoping for that?”

Hope: (sigh) “Look, Grace. Most of the time people don’t end up with the ones they date in high school. It’s just a fact. I mean, you guys will literally see each other every day this year and then what will happen next year when he goes to Varsity? He most probably won’t be studying here in the North West judging by his parents’ annoying character. That will mean he will be exposed to new things and new people. I’m not saying that your relationship won’t work, but I’m just asking you to keep room for disappointment. You’re still young and

you are still going to experience a lot of heartache before you get married.”

Grace: “Why do you speak as if you have experience with this?”

Hope: (chuckling) “You honestly think that John is my first husband?”

Grace: (shocked) “But you never went out with boys or anything like that when you were younger. I mean, you were quite an introvert, just like me.”

Hope: “There’s a lot you need to learn, my dear sister. Where do you think I learnt to drink? I had friends, remember? What do you think I got up to when I told Mama I’m going to sleep over at Maggie’s? You must be smart about it. You’re simply a teenager. All I am asking of you is to just have fun and let life take its course. You don’t have to pressurize yourself by thinking that you and Richard will get married. If it happens, then so be it, should it be God’s will.”

She was absolutely right, but for someone like Grace, it was quite hard to imagine herself with anyone else besides Richard. They had only been dating for over a month, and already she was envisioning a future with him. It was just one of those things. The wedding had begun and it was rather beautiful. She was participating and doing her duty as the maid of honour, all the while Richard was on standby to assist with anything she might have needed. Once the ceremony was done, she could enjoy her time with Richard. The speeches were made, the food was great and the drinks were flowing. The décor was absolutely marvelous along with the bridal attire. There was nothing to possibly fault them on, but you know jealous people will always have something to say no matter what. Thandi and Robert Modise were so disrespectful and inconsiderate of people's time, that they arrived just when they were all having the main meal. Of course, they were dressed to impress and wanted to make a statement – at someone else's wedding. Richard was highly embarrassed, and Valencia was irritated to the core, but she chose not to make a scene. Of course, Hope and Grace's father did not even bother to make it to the wedding, to at least witness his first born getting married, but the show went on without him.

Thandi: “Oh, Valencia. We’re so sorry we’re late. We had some business to take care of. You know how it is when you’re running the entire supply chain of Christiana.”

She spoke so highly of herself as if she was a farmer, yet she and her husband only owned over 7 tuck shops in the neighbourhood. She looked down on people so much as if they were the Kardashians of Christiana.

Mama: (faint smile) “Hmm, of course, one cannot comprehend how much of a busy woman you are.”

Thandi: “Of course. I mean, since well we have been begging to meet with you for dinner and you’ve been refusing. We might as well have a meeting right here.”

Mama: “This is not the time to discuss or raise your concerns. It is my daughter’s wedding. Surely you understand.”

Thandi: “Yes, we do, however, we figured we’d do it now. I mean, who knows what excuse you’ll come up with after the next invitation?”

Robert: “Look, Valencia. What Thandi means is that perhaps we should discuss the children. I mean, look at this from the angle of a sane parent. My son will be doing Matric this year. Do you honestly think that this thing of theirs is as good an idea?”

Of course, they just wouldn’t back off despite Valencia telling them that it was just not the right place for that discussion.

Mama: (chuckling) “Look, I understand that you feel your golden boy needs more time for his books and all, but you Thandi got pregnant at 15, if I’m not mistaken.”

Thandi: (irritated) “Which is why I don’t want him to make the same mistake as I did.”

Mama: “Well, that is not my problem. Surely you should know that they are both in love with one another and the more you

dispute their relationship will be the more you push him towards what you want him to refrain from. Take a good look at those kids, Thandi, please, take a good look. They are so in love, that should you decide to intervene for your own personal reasons, they might choose to elope and do what you don't want them to do. Is that what you want?"

Thandi: "That would be the cause of your daughter. She will have enticed him."

Mama: "My daughter is pure, I can assure you of that. Even if she wasn't, no one is perfect and it surely wouldn't make her less of a woman. I honestly started giving you both the benefit of the doubt, and I actually thought you wanted to get to know me as the mother of your son's girlfriend, but clearly I was mistaken. A leopard never changes its spots, now does it?"

Robert: "We're just looking out for the interests of our son – "

Mama: "And I'm looking out for the interests of my daughter. If you have a problem, deal with it, but I am not going to break up a relationship of two innocent kids because you don't like the

kind of family Grace comes from. Oh, and from now on, don't bother inviting me over for dinner because I'll flatly decline in your face. As for Grace, your son will be inviting her over every now and then. Should she even lay a complaint of any ill-treatment from either of you, you will see the Valencia you are all gossiping about."

With that said, she walked away. She chose to enjoy her daughter's wedding, while the Modise's felt so out of place and seeing their son so happy with Grace, made them even more bitter.

Thandi: (clearing throat) "Son, we're leaving."

Richard: "But you just got here."

Thandi: "Yes, well, are you coming?"

Richard: "No, I'm still having fun with Grace. I'll see you at home."

Thandi: "But it will be dark by the time this thing ends."

She was so condescending.

Richard: "Well, this wedding will end at whatever time and I'll still know the way home. Don't worry, I'll be safe."

Robert: "We don't want you to get mugged or anything, Richard."

Richard: "Well, then John will drop me off or you guys can come back and fetch me. I'll be fine."

He wasn't budging and that annoyed them even further. They left with very displeased hearts, but Richard didn't mind. Grace could feel the hostility from his parents since they didn't bother to greet nor smile at her. It started bothering her that day; what if it had continued? She thought to herself. That would have meant that she would never be accepted into their family. She would always be regarded as someone that didn't fit into their family, and she started thinking of all the possible

scenarios that could play out in their relationship. Yes, they were young and immature, but sometimes children need to go through certain things to find out what they actually like. That is the only way for children to become mature and navigate their way through life. If you shield a child from anything and everything, someone else out there will teach them and the consequences thereof are even more dire than when a parent gives them the freedom to explore. There is a limit to everything, but allow children to find themselves.

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

Months went by and Grace and Richard were so in love, it was just too adorable. Negative comments were shut down when people realized that they had been dating for almost a year. His parents never accepted it, but chose to keep to themselves whenever she would visit Richard's family home. They would always read a book together, watch Netflix and movies and talk and kiss here and there. They hadn't gone all the way as of yet and Richard didn't seem to mind, although the thought of Richard going to University had started bothering Grace considering that she still had one more year of high school. She didn't want to bother him with her feelings of deep concern before the Matric dance, so she decided to wait until it was over. Of course, Richard was the head boy and Grace was his date for the dance. Being as chivalrous as he was, he got a tailor to make both their outfits. She had just written her last exam paper, a day after he was officially done with school, and so she had to walk to his house straight after school to finalize the last minute details of their outfits. Of course, she found Thandi there. For someone who claimed to be a business woman, she was always home. Richard being the

only child, it didn't make sense to Grace as to why Thandi was always home.

Grace: (nervously) "Dumela Mme Modise (Good day, Mrs. Modise)."

Her hostility never got any better. She always gave Grace that dirty look, but not once did Grace complain about it to her boyfriend. It was simply going to create an even further rift between them.

Thandi: "Hello, Grace."

Grace: "Is Richard home? He asked me to come by for the dress fittings."

Thandi: "Oh, that. Yes, he is home. Before you go, how about a little chat?"

Grace became nervous. Thandi barely said a word to her whenever they were in each other's presence, yet there she was asking for a "chat" out of nowhere.

Grace: "Ke mametse, Mme (I'm listening, Ma)."

Thandi: "You do know that Richard will be gone soon, right?"

Grace: (nodding) "Yes, Ma. I am fully aware of that. He will be visiting during the holidays, though."

Thandi: (frowning) "Visiting? Sesi weh (hey, sis), he is going to Cape Town to join the army. He will hardly be visiting at all."

That put such a damper in Grace's mood. Richard hadn't told her anything about joining the army. She just heard him say that he couldn't wait to go study and that he promised he would visit as often as he could. She was disappointed; why on earth would he have kept such a big secret from her? Why did she have to hear it from Thandi out of all people? Thandi who was obviously doing it deliberately to rub it in Grace's face.

Grace: (teary) "I see."

Thandi: "Oh, you didn't know? Oh, man. Me and my big mouth."

Of course, she didn't know. She just had to rub salt into the wound.

Thandi: "But perhaps this is the perfect opportunity to say goodbye, right? I mean, you are still young. You can get any man you desire."

Richard was quite worried why Grace hadn't come by as yet when she had texted him that she was on the way, ten minutes prior. He walked into the office and saw his mother, along with Grace who was wiping a faint tear of her face.

Richard: "Hey, Mama. Oh, there you are. I was wondering where you were."

Grace: "Hmm, I just got here."

Richard: (frowning) "Are you okay? Were you crying?"

Grace: (shaking head) "No, it's just something in my eye."

Richard looked at his mother who seemed a little suspicious.

Richard: "Okay, come with me."

He wrapped his arm around her waist as they walked together. Grace's heart was torn, for the very first time she had been with Richard. She had such a good day and her exam paper was effortlessly written, only for Thandi to reveal her true colours. She honestly thought that Thandi would warm up to her, but nearly a year later, she still shared the same sentiments as to when they had started dating. His father still wasn't warming to the idea either, but he was hardly around to be rude towards her. Richard and Grace walked into his bedroom and there was a woman in there. She wasn't the usual seamstress Grace was used to. She looked young, much,

much younger than the seamstress Grace was introduced to. There were so many rooms in the house, though, so Grace was wondering why that particular girl had to do fittings in Richard's bedroom of all places. His bed looked a little messy, which was quite unusual for Richard. He was a neat freak and one would hardly come across anything out of the ordinary in his bedroom. The minute they walked into the room, Richard made Grace sit on the couch right across the bedroom door.

Richard: "Raesibe, please give us a few minutes alone."

That Raesibe gave Grace a funny look. Wasn't she supposed to be the seamstress? She looked a little too comfortable.

Raesibe: (frowning) "But we have to get the fittings done before tomorrow."

Richard: "Exactly, before tomorrow. That means you still have the entire day to finish up. Besides, it is only a final fitting. Leave."

Richard was quite firm and a little rude towards her. The way he looked at her seemed offish for Grace. And the fact that she didn't really want to leave, was quite surprising. She clicked her tongue and threw her measurement tape onto the bed and walked out. She banged the door on her way out. Something must have pissed her off, but it was too dramatic of a reaction. Richard knelt down right before Grace and held both her hands.

Richard: "What is it, love? Why were you crying?"

Grace: (voice breaking) "I wasn't crying. As I said, something was stuck in my eye."

Richard: "Grace, I know you. You were crying. What is it? Did you have a bad day? What did my mother say to you?"

Grace: (teary) "She told me you're joining the army."

Richard: "Oh."

That reaction sealed it. He hadn't told her and his mother had done the job for him – quite pathetically, actually.

Grace: "Why didn't you tell me?"

Richard: "I hadn't made up my mind yet up until last night. I was going to tell you right after the dance."

Grace: "When are you leaving?"

Richard: "On the 15th of December."

That was two weeks away.

Grace: (crying) "When will you be back? Will you even visit?"

Richard: "I'll be training for the first year, so I can only come back after six months. I promise you, nothing will change the way I feel about you. We will keep contact every day and

besides, you'll be so busy with your school work, that you will hardly have time for me."

It sounded as if he was already saying goodbye. He was so excited about the entire thing, that she just didn't want to burst his bubble, although it hurt badly.

Grace: "I see."

Richard: "Don't be so sad. I promise you, nothing will change."

Grace: (nodding) "Who's that girl?"

Richard: "Oh, that's Raesibe. She is Mme Zandi's daughter. She couldn't make it today, so she sent her daughter instead."

Grace: "Oh, I see. Isn't it weird that you guys are in the bedroom of all places?"

Richard: (chuckling) “Why does it seem like you’re a little jealous?”

Grace: “I’m not. I just don’t understand why you guys would be doing fittings in the bedroom of all places.”

Richard: “Don’t worry, baby. She’s old, I would never cheat on you with someone that old.”

Well, he should have just said that he wouldn’t have cheated on her with anyone for that matter. That issue still didn’t sit very well with Grace. Her mother always told her to follow her gut and that if there was smoke, there was most definitely fire.

Grace: “Okay. Why is your bed so messy? You never leave your bed like this.”

Richard: “Bathong (goodness), Grace. What’s with the 20 questions? I was sleeping up until Raesibe came.”

He was getting a little edgy, which seemed odd for Grace. She just chose to keep quiet and let him continue.

Richard: "I didn't mean to snap at you like that. I'm just a little stressed about this entire army thing."

A few minutes earlier, he seemed excited. So, what on earth could have been stressing him then?

Grace: "It's okay. Can we finish the fittings? I need to get home."

Richard: (frowning) "I thought we were going to spend the rest of the day together?"

Grace: "Yes, but I just remembered that my mom asked me to do a few things for her."

She was lying. She just wanted to get away from him so that she could think.

Richard: "Okay, I'll take you home right after she's done."

She nodded and Richard went out of the bedroom to go call Raesibe, who seemed a little further away from the bedroom. Grace looked around and saw nothing else that seemed suspicious. Raesibe came back with Richard, five minutes later. She seemed quite weird around Grace.

Raesibe: "Hi, I'm Raesibe. I suppose your boyfriend told you about me."

It was as if she was marking her territory or something.

Grace: "Yes, he did. You're filling in for your mother, right?"

Grace always knew how to be polite while standing her ground.

Raesibe: "Yes. Let's get started now, shall we?"

Grace got up and removed her school bag from her back.

Raesibe: "I will need you to remove your clothes, please."

Richard had seen her half naked quite a few times, but never fully naked. It bothered her at first, but she got used to him. He didn't look at her with shame or gave any negative vibes and he never made bad comments about her weight. He was very fine with her size, in fact, he loved her body. Raesibe got a glimpse of Richard smiling as he stared at his girlfriend. She hated that. She despised it in fact. "What on earth does he see in her?" she thought to herself. "She's obviously fat and just not his type." Raesibe thought of the oldest trick in the book while she was checking the dress – to humiliate the girlfriend. If she was mean to her and tried to break her spirit, she would start feeling insecure.

Raesibe: "Hmm, this dress is a little too tight. Have you gained weight perhaps?"

Grace: (frowning) "No. The dress seems fine to me."

Richard: “Yes, it is perfectly fine. In fact, turn around baby so I can take a good look at you.”

Grace turned around and did a little spin for Richard. He was so excited that he walked towards her, took her hands in his and started dancing.

Richard: (smiling) “You look so beautiful. I swear, you are going to look amazing tomorrow.”

She smiled as he gave her a kiss.

Raesibe: (annoyed) “Well, I still think you have gained a bit of weight.”

Richard: (snappy) “Who asked you? In fact, it is the first time you ever even see Grace. I don’t think your mother would be happy about the way you treat your clients.”

Grace was confused; that escalated rather quickly.

Grace: "Babe, it's okay. I doubt she meant any harm."

Richard: "I don't care. How dare you come into my house and talk trash to my girlfriend like that?"

Raesibe: "I'm sorry, I was just offering my comments."

Richard: "Fuck your comments, nobody asked you. Get the fuck out."

Grace was very confused. Raesibe took her bags and walked out crying. Something just wasn't right between those two.

Grace: "Was that necessary, Richard?"

Richard: "Yes, didn't you see how she was trying to make you feel bad about yourself? She doesn't even know you."

Grace: "I didn't notice that."

Richard was really irritated by Raesibe, which made Grace wonder as to why. She was only there for fittings, wasn't she?

Grace: "Okay, let me get out of this dress so that I can get going then."

Richard: "Let me help you out of it."

Grace: "I can do it."

Richard: (softly) "I know, but let me help you out of it. Please."

He was whispering from behind as he gently planted soft kisses on the back of her neck. His actions sent goosebumps all over her body, making her tilt her neck a little bit. Her head landed right on Richard's chest. He slowly unzipped the back of her dress and slowly removed the dress from her shoulders. It fell down to her feet, and her skin was exposed. Richard slowly moved his hand on her hands all the way down to her

abdomen, embracing her soft, buttermilk skin. By then he allowed his hands to play around with all parts of her body. His hands slowly went up and caressed her breasts, whilst still cupped in her bra. Her breathing became heavier, arousing Richard. While his one hand was slowly playing with her one breast, the other travelled slowly down to her vagina. He rubbed his hand gently on top of her underwear, making Grace wet. She moaned, for the first time in her life. She quickly turned around and regained herself.

Grace: (slowly) "Richard... I... I don't think I'm ready."

Richard: "I know, I'm just exploring your body. I promise you, I won't do anything you don't want me to do, okay?"

She nodded slowly as he gently placed her on his messy bed. He got on top of her and they started kissing passionately. Her toes curled as she allowed her hands to embrace his back. His lips travelled to her neck, making her moan even further. He was doing things to her 17 year old body, that she never knew could happen in real life. She felt herself getting wet down there, which aroused her even more. He found himself unclipping her bra, with her perky

breasts exposed for the very first time. They were quite big; bigger than he had ever seen. He slowly sucked her nipples, making Grace moan louder. At that point, nothing and no one else mattered to them. He kissed the middle of her stomach, all the way down to her abdomen. He licked the outline of her lower abdomen, just above her vagina, making her legs stretch wider voluntarily. He slowly took off her underwear, and she stopped him briefly. He looked up at her while she was staring down at him.

Richard: "Do you trust me?"

Grace nodded.

Richard: "Let go, I won't do anything you don't want me to okay?"

She nodded. Those words are gangster; the oldest trick in the book used by boys to get what they want from a girl. Once her underwear was off, it was the victory lap. He spread her legs, making Grace close her eyes in embarrassment. That part

wasn't really meant for anyone to stare at, but he stared at her vagina with such pleasure and amusement.

Richard: "Baby, you have the most beautiful pussy I've ever seen."

Grace found herself hiding her face in embarrassment. Richard slowly flicked his tongue on her clit, forcing her body to make involuntary movements, while she moaned in pleasure. The more he did that, the further her body was twitching. He then placed his entire tongue on her clitoris, sucking and licking it repeatedly. Grace was experiencing a different kind of pleasure she had ever encountered in her life. As he went faster and deeper in her vagina, she could feel a warm surge overtake her body, as she let go and gushed all over his face. After her body was twitching for a few seconds, she looked down and saw him wipe his face and smile at her. She was embarrassed, and chose to close her eyes yet again. Richard went up to her face and removed her hands from her face.

Richard: "Don't be embarrassed, baby. You just had your first orgasm."

Grace: (shyly) "I had no idea one could do that without it actually going in."

Richard: "Well, there's plenty of ways to make a woman reach an orgasm."

He lay right next to her in a spooning position.

Grace: "I'm sorry for not being able to have sex with you."

Richard: "Don't be sorry, you're not ready. We'll do it when you're ready."

Grace: "What if you meet someone else out there, someone better who can actually have sex with you?"

Richard: "That will never happen. I love you and that is all that matters."

That was the oldest trick in the dating book. Richard had given Grace a taste of sex and the good that comes with it. No one ever told them that there are other things that happen during sex apart from the penis just entering the vagina. He made her wonder what it would have been like had they gone all the way. He made her wonder that perhaps if she had sex with him, then he wouldn't cheat on her while in the army, whereas the truth is that men cheat, most of the time, for no reason at all. Little did she even know what he had gotten up to on that bed earlier that day.

After about an hour of cuddling, he helped her get dressed and walked her home. She felt as if she had just sinned, her body even felt different right after the entire situation. Once she entered the house, her mother was in the lounge, watching tv.

Grace: "Dumela (hello), Mama. I'm going to take a bath and I'll be with you in a moment."

Mama: "Alright."

She quickly went to the bathroom to take a bath as she said, and that was already suspicious to her mother. Once she was done, she went to offer her mother something to eat.

Mama: "Sit down for a moment."

She sat down and couldn't even face her mother.

Mama: "Did you just have sex?"

Valencia just went straight to the point. Grace was highly embarrassed, and looked down.

Grace: (shaking head) "No, Mama."

Mama: "Okay then. If you did, I hope you're using condoms. I don't want you ruining your future."

She just got up and went to the kitchen to make some food. That was most probably the most awkward conversation

she had ever had with her mother. She was planning on having a good night's rest that evening, wondering what sex was actually like. Before bed, she decided to text her best friend, Jenifer.

Grace: "Friend, what's up?"

Jenifer: "Nothing much, wena (you)?"

Grace: "Just chilling in bed. You won't guess what happened."

Jenifer: "Do tell."

Grace: "I had gone for the final fitting of my dress for tomorrow, when Richard decided to suck me down there. Some fluid came out of me and he said that I had my first orgasm. Friend, I had no idea that could happen, but it was the best feeling in the world."

Jenifer: "Eh (oh), so he just muffed you without asking for anything in return?"

Grace: "Yes."

Jenifer: "Wow, either Richard is a real dude or he is just slowly waiting for you to initiate."

Grace: "What do you mean?"

Jenifer: "Look, you know I love you and you're my friend, but I have to be honest with you. Word is that Raesibe is busy with your man."

That was quite a shocker for Grace. Her heart stopped for a few seconds.

Grace: "What do you mean?"

Jenifer: "I just heard from someone. You know news travels fast around here. But, he is just probably doing that to blow off some steam since you guys aren't sexually active."

Grace: “Wow, so he’s cheating on me?”

Jenifer: “I think so. We won’t know until you actually confront him, you know.”

Then it hit Grace, the messy bed, Raesibe’s outbursts, her attitude towards Grace and Richard’s annoyance towards her. Could he have had sex with her on that particular day? She just had a million thoughts going through her mind. The entire conversation with Jenifer put a damper in her mood. She thought of texting or calling Richard and confronting him, but doing that over the phone would have done no good. He was going to deny, deny and deny some more until she finally gave in. She drifted off to sleep with a heavy heart.

The following morning came and she must have overslept because she was woken by her mother calling her.

Mama: (shouting) “Grace weh! Wake up!”

Grace: “Eish (oh), what time is it?”

Mama: “It is time to wake up. Your boyfriend is already here. You’re running late.”

She checked the time and it was already 9am. Grace normally woke up at 7 when she didn’t have school. She quickly jumped out of bed and wanted to go the bathroom when her mother stopped her.

Mama: “O ya kae (where are you going)?”

Grace: “I’m going to take a bath.”

Mama: (shaking head) “Too late, sesi (sis). Brush your teeth, wash your face and change. You can bathe later on.”

Grace: “Aowa (no), Mama, ke nkgele batho all day (and be smelly around people all day)?”

Mama: "You should have thought of that before going to bed late. Go on, he's waiting."

She rushed to the bathroom and brushed her teeth and washed her face. She didn't have time to wash all other important parts, which irritated her, but she had already promised to be Richard's date, so she couldn't back out then. The entire conversation with Jenifer was playing in her mind. She got changed and met him outside. He smelled so good and looked as clean as usual. He leaned in to kiss her, but she quickly moved her face and let him kiss her cheek. He frowned in amusement.

Richard: "And then? Did I do something wrong?"

Grace: "No, I just feel a bit uncomfortable since I didn't take a bath."

Richard: (chuckling) "Come on, I don't mind. You can do that later. Let's go then."

He had gotten his license that year since he turned 18 and he received his first car as a birthday present from his parents, a brand new VW Citi Golf, so moving around was not a problem for him. He opened the door for her as always and she got in. They drove off and started at the hair salon. He was getting a fresh haircut, while she was getting her dreadlocks styled to her desire. It took the stylist about two hours to do her hair and even after Richard was done with his hair cut, he waited for her right there. Once they were done, she thought she was going to go home, but he took her out to eat at the mall, where they spent a few hours.

Richard: "Are you okay? You seem a bit off."

Grace: (sigh) "It's nothing really."

Richard: "Grace, come on. I don't want you to be sad on a day like this."

Grace: "It's just that – people are talking."

Richard: "What are they saying?"

Grace: "They are saying that you and Raesibe have something going on."

Richard: (frowning) "And you believe them?"

Grace: (shrugging) "I don't know."

Richard: "Grace, come on. Do you honestly think that I'd want to embarrass you by completely disrespecting you like that? I mean Raesibe is a member of our community. How do you think people would look at you if they found out that I was cheating on you with her? I could never do that to you."

Grace had her doubts, and looking at him, he seemed really genuine, but something within her was telling her that he was lying.

Grace: "Then why did she act the way she did yesterday? And the bed? Why was it so messy? You never leave your bed like that no matter how late you get up."

Richard: (sigh) "She wants me, Grace, but I have told her countless times that I don't want her. Why else do you think that she was acting the way she was yesterday? Why would she want to tell you about your weight? It's because she's jealous, baby. And my bed, honestly, I had literally just woken up when she pitched up. I was a little hungover. I swear, I'm not cheating on you. Why would I cheat on a flower like you?"

She was convinced he was telling the truth, despite her gut feeling telling her otherwise.

Grace: "Okay."

Richard: "Please, don't entertain people. All they want is to ruin what we have. That's all there is to it."

Grace had her doubts, but she decided to let it all go, as a young lady in love. Of course, it is never easy to catch a man cheating on his first try. Who knew if it even was Richard's first time cheating on Grace? They enjoyed the rest of the day together, until they went to his house. He was so blessed, he had his own ensuite bathroom.

Grace: "I am so glad we are here. I really need to take a bath or a shower or something."

Richard: "Do you mind if we take one together?"

She wasn't sure how to respond to that request. She had never done that before.

Grace: "Uhm, well, I don't know. I have never done that before."

Richard: "It's just a bath, baby. Come. It will be nice."

She just went with it despite her reservations. He filled the bath tub with water and took off his clothes right in front of her. That was the first time she got to see him naked. She had never seen a penis ever before. There is just something about a woman's purity; once you go all the way, you're done. She was a little hesitant and kept looking away.

Richard: (smiling) "You don't have to keep staring at it, you know."

Grace: (nervously) "It is quite hard not to."

Richard: "Look at me."

She looked at him and he slowly went towards her. He took off her clothes once again, making her feel shy.

Richard: "See? I'm not staring at your bits even though they are too gorgeous to ignore."

She laughed briefly as he made her feel at ease. They got into the bath tub together and she got in between his legs. She never thought that she could fit in a bath tub with another human being before. It actually did feel very nice. He rubbed her back and gently massaged her and kissed her every now and then.

Richard: "I love you so much, Grace. I know, we're both young and you think that I'll most probably change my mind as time goes by, but I won't. you are my heart's keeper."

Grace: (smiling) "I love you too."

It felt like magic and they were having a good time. They finally got out of the tub and it was time to get dressed. His mother even got a make up artist for her, well, after Richard asked her to get one. Once they were fully dressed, they headed down and Thandi had set up a photo booth just for them. Valencia was there along with Hope and John to see them off and also take pictures together. Valencia couldn't care less how Thandi felt, but her daughter was there and she was also the star of the evening. She was so excited to see her daughter dressed so beautifully and she was happy. They took a few pictures together, some with her mother and some with Richard's

parents. Of course, it was a bit awkward, but at least black people could hide their feelings for pictures on any given day. Once they were done, they left in a hired Rolls Royce. They were off to the dance and everything seemed perfect. Richard was seated along with his friends and since Grace knew them all, it wasn't hard to blend in. She also knew some of their girlfriends, and she didn't really have a problem with them. While the evening went by, she was a little pressed, since Richard's friends had brought some alcohol and would occasionally pour some tots into their drinks without the teachers noticing. Grace was also one of them who had a little bit, but she wasn't a drinker.

Grace: "I'm a little pressed. Ke say ya ntlwaneng (I'm going to the toilet)."

Richard: "Okay, babe."

She went there about her business and right after she flushed and was about to leave her cubicle, she overheard two girls saying something which ruined her night completely.

Girl 1: "Hey, did you see how beautiful Grace looks?"

Girl 2: "Yes, honestly, I didn't think he would bring her after the entire scandal with Raesibe."

Girl 1: "I would totally kill Thomas if I found him doing that to me."

Girl 2: "That's just it. I doubt she knows. Richard must either love her or be really good at hiding things, you know."

Girl 1: "Oh, well. I guess that's how guys operate. It is not our place to tell her."

She recognized the voices and what hurt her was that it seemed as if everyone knew about that apparent scandal. So, she quickly walked out only to find it was two of Richard's friend's girlfriends; the very same girls who were sitting with her at the table. They were quite shocked to see her.

Girl 1: "Oh, Grace, how long have you been in there?"

Grace: (teary) “What scandal are you talking about?”

Girl 1: “Oh, it’s nothing – “

Grace: (shouting) “What scandal?!”

Girl 2: “Look, maybe you should ask Richard yourself.”

Girl 1: “Yes, that’s probably best.”

Grace: “Well, it seems as if the entire world knows except me. So, are you going to show me or should I go out there and make a scene?”

Girl 2: “Show her.”

Girl 1 took out her phone and showed Grace a rather disturbing video. She saw Richard being caught with Raesibe, having sex

in his car – the very same car that she was riding in that day. She couldn't believe her eyes. It felt as if her heart was being shred to pieces. She thought of her gut feeling, of all the signs she saw the previous day and chose to ignore. It felt as if her head was spinning so much, that she started crying hysterically, making it harder for her to catch a breath.

Girl 1: "Oh, my God! I knew this was a bad idea! Are you okay?"

Girl 2: "Get some help."

Grace fell onto the floor, crying while gasping for air at the same time. Her chest felt tight and her throat restricted. It seemed as if she was getting dizzy while her vision was fading all at the same time. Grace had just experienced her very first panic attack, caused by a boy. She knew it was going to go all down hill from there, but the heart is something else; once you don't force it to let go – it simply won't.

6

“Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.”

Right after the entire toilet incident, Grace received help from one of the female teachers. All the while Richard was anxious, and he just couldn't wait outside of the female toilet to see if she was okay. He went straight in and found her right on the floor. The teacher had managed to calm her down by then.

Richard: (frantic) “Grace, are you okay?”

Grace didn't want to speak. Looking at him made her relive the entire video all over again. Instead of words coming out of her mouth, tears ran down her face. She just looked at him with so much rage and disappointment.

Teacher: “She just had a panic attack. Something must have upset her. You should take her home.”

Richard: "Yes, good idea. Come on."

He helped her up but she just felt so numb. She only allowed him to touch her so that people wouldn't judge her any more than they already did. She had never felt so humiliated before. The people whom she would sit with whenever they had a get together stared her right in the eye each time and lied to her, knowing very well that he was doing what he was with Raesibe. No one bothered to tell her the truth, that is what hurt her the most. She thought of all the gossipmongers of Christiana. So, everyone knew except her? It wasn't a rumour; everyone most probably knew about the video and chose to laugh behind her back instead. Once they were outside, he tried to get her to go to the car, but she refused to get in.

Richard: "What's wrong?"

Grace: (crying) "You lied to me!"

Richard: "What are you talking about?"

Grace: "Raesibe."

Richard: "I told you, babe, nothing is happening between us. I swear."

Grace: "Oh? Do you also swear that the video is a lie?"

Richard was shook. He had gotten away with it for so long, that he honestly thought she wouldn't find out.

Richard: "Okay, get in the car so that I can explain."

Grace: "Oh, now you want to explain?"

Richard: "Please."

Grace: "I had to find out from your friends' girlfriends, Richard! How could you? Imagine what she is probably saying about me now! She was in your bedroom and you most probably had sex with her just yesterday!"

Richard: "Please, baby. You're making a scene."

Grace: "Fuck that! I don't care!"

Richard: "Okay, I lied to you. It was a moment of weakness and I had no idea I was even being filmed. I swear to you, it only happened once."

Grace: "That's exactly what my father told my mother before being caught for the 100th time, you know."

Richard: (teary) "I'm so sorry. I should have never lied to you and most importantly, I should have never cheated on you. Please, forgive me, Grace. I promise to do better."

Grace: "You're leaving. You are most probably going to do the same thing in Cape Town, where I won't even see you."

Richard: "No, I won't. Please, believe me."

Grace: "Please, take me home. I'm tired."

She got in the car, while he rushed to her side. He tried touching her but she refused.

Richard: "I was hoping that we could spend the night together. I mean, your mother thinks that you'll be at my house tonight."

Grace: "I've changed my mind. I want to go home."

Richard: "She'll get suspicious."

Grace: "So? Face your demons."

Richard knew that he stood no chance convincing her to stay the night at his place. He told the driver to drop her off at home, but he was terrified as hell. He knew that if her mother found out about what he did, then she would have told Grace to end it right there and then. In the state Grace was in, she

was most probably going to tell her mother what happened, without a doubt.

Richard: "Baby, please, just at least hear me out."

Once the car stopped at her gate, she got out without warning. He followed her rushing, but she was walking so fast. She simply knocked on the door so loudly, leaving her mother startled. Once she opened, Grace rushed into the house in tears and headed straight to her bedroom, leaving her mother beyond confused.

Mama: "What happened? I thought you guys were going to have an after party and head straight to your house."

Richard: "Eish (oh), Mamazala (Ma), she's upset. She said she wanted to go home."

He couldn't bring himself up to telling her the real truth.

Mama: "Okay, drive safely."

She closed the door without even asking him anything further. She went straight to Grace's bedroom and found her extremely upset and crying.

Mama: "Grace, what is wrong?"

It was at that moment that she just wanted to be hugged by her mother; to be told that everything was going to be alright. A mother has her own way of soothing the situation. She just threw herself at her mother and cried.

Grace: (crying) "He cheated on me, Mama. He cheated on me and everyone else except me knew."

Her mother was broken seeing her child like that. Her worst fear had occurred. She didn't want her daughter going through that at such a young age.

Mama: "It's alright, Grace. Let it all out."

Grace: “How could he do this to me, Mama? I mean I know he has needs and all, but Raesibe out of all people?”

Mama: “Boys are stupid, my baby. That’s just it – they are foolish beyond measure. They just do stupid things at times without any reason.”

Grace: “Is it because I’m fat, Mama?”

Mama: “No, my baby. You’re absolutely perfect. He just did a stupid thing and it happens. You just have to allow yourself to heal and move on. You will find someone else – someone worthy of your love. You’re still young.”

Grace: “I wish I listened to you. I should never have dated him.”

Mama: “It’s alright, Grace. We all make mistakes. If I hadn’t allowed you to then you would have done it anyway behind my back. You experienced and learnt and got your heart broken. Let it be, my baby. Accept it and allow yourself to move on.”

Grace: "It hurts, Mama. It hurts so badly."

Mama: (teary) "I know, my baby. I know."

It was at that point her mother regretted allowing her to date Richard. A mother could take pain any day and any kind of pain, but let it befall her children – that is something else. Richard had done her daughter dirty and she would never forgive him – even if Grace had chosen to. It is one thing to cheat on your partner, but let the family find out, they'll never forgive you. Grace cried until she couldn't cry any more. Her mother made her a glass of warm milk to ease her tears and she finally managed to sleep after hours of crying. Grace was broken that a boy, a mere boy had done that to her child. Grace's phone kept ringing constantly while she was asleep, until Valencia decided to answer it. She wasn't going to, but seeing that it was Richard calling non-stop, she decided to give him a piece of her mind.

Richard: "Oh, baby, thank goodness you answered. I'm so sorry, please just hear me out."

Mama: "This is Grace's mother."

Richard: (surprised) "Oh, Mme, hi. Is Grace there? May I please speak to her?"

Mama: "You have really outdone yourself, boy. I gave you the benefit of the doubt, allowed you to walk into my house, allowed you to have my daughter in your house and all you did was cheat on her! Why couldn't you at least do it far away or in private? Did you really have to have your little video being splashed around the entire Christiana? Did you even think about my daughter and what people were going to do to her?"

Richard: "It was not my intention, Ma."

Mama: "Raesibe is 21, Richard! She has friends older than her who will tarnish her name given the chance. You really fucked up this time. I never want to see you in here ever again and if I even hear that you came near her wherever, I swear, I will come after you."

Richard: "Please, Mama. Give me a chance."

Mama: "You've had your chance. You're still young, allow my daughter to be the child she is. Go to Cape Town and I hope you never come back."

She hung up and switched off her daughter's phone. Her heart was bleeding for her daughter, thinking that history was indeed repeating itself. She went to her own bedroom to sleep, although it was hard to fall asleep.

Six months later...

Grace was finally a matriculant, and had just finished writing her June exams. She found it so hard to get over Richard, and even though her heart was aching, she managed to pick herself up and look past what everyone was saying about her. Richard had tried all attempts to get her back – even on social media, until she blocked him. Of course the Modise's were relieved that their son had broken up with her, while Grace's mother was relieved that she was still a virgin. Richard called and texted as much as he could, despite Grace not answering his

calls. He tried that for a good three months, until he got the message. He stopped sending messages for a few months, until one fateful day when he returned from the army without her knowing about it. She wasn't dating anyone, and she was okay with it. As usual, the news of Richard's scandal blew over and everyone forgot about what he had done to Grace. She was happier than ever and more focused than anything else. While she was walking home with Jenifer one day, right after her last June exam paper, she saw a familiar Citi Golf stop right beside them. She took a closer look right after the driver rolled the window down and it was Richard. He looked so different, more masculine with more beard and an even bigger body.

Richard: (smiling) "Hi, ladies."

Jenifer: "Ah, ah, ah, look who it is, Grace. Christiana's infamous fuck boy has returned."

Grace said nothing. She hadn't seen him in months and seeing him again that day brought back all sorts of emotions. While they were walking, he drove alongside them really slowly.

Richard: "Nice to see you too, Jenifer."

Jenifer: "Likewise, asshole."

Richard: "How are you doing, Grace? It's been a while."

She kept quiet and just kept on walking.

Richard: "You look good."

Jenifer: "Bathong (goodness), Richard. Can't you see she doesn't want to talk to you?"

Richard: "Let her speak for herself."

She still kept quiet and kept on walking. They were eating ice cream by then.

Richard: "I see you still like ice cream."

She was still quiet, while Jenifer was deeply annoyed.

Richard: "I'll be around for two weeks. I'll see you around, Toni Braxton."

He had to go there. He drove off slowly, leaving Grace really confused. He looked really fine and even more handsome than he was when he left. She had no idea why she felt all those butterflies when indeed, she was over him, or so she thought.

Jenifer: "Goodness, that guy is annoying. How dare he think he can just waltz back here and you'd be putty in his hands."

Grace was quiet the entire way, while Jenifer couldn't stop bashing him. Once she was home, she found her mother had come back early. Much to her dismay, she was sent to the shop.

Mama: "Grace, please go buy us some bread."

She wasn't in the mood to walk out, but her mother really wanted to have some tea with bread.

Grace: "Okay, let me quickly change."

Mama: "Aowa (no), right now, please. I am starving."

Grace: "Okay."

She took the money and went out. She was still in her uniform, and by then, she had grown into a fine, young lady. She was still busty, but her tummy had become smaller and her shape was more refined now. She was what most identified as a BBW. Her dreadlocks were quite long by then and she had dyed them red, for a change. Things were looking up for her mother as she had finished paying off all her debt and had managed to finally buy a car. She went to the nearest shop, it being the Modise Tuck shop. She was unbothered going there after months of recovery. The memories she had there slowly faded away. Once she was done buying bread, she was annoyed when she found Richard right at the till, next to the cashier.

Richard: "We meet again, Ms. Tlou."

Grace was annoyed. Her smile faded instantly. She paid, but he held onto her money, as an attempt to get her to speak to him.

Richard: "Are you really not going to say anything?"

Grace: "Ke kopa madi a me (May I please have my money)."

Richard: "You will once you agree to speak to me."

Grace: "You can explain to my mother why you have her change."

She took her bread and stormed out, with Richard running after her, still dressed in his army uniform. I suppose he wanted to show people he was doing really well.

Richard: "Wait, Grace! Please, wait!"

Grace: “You have quite a nerve, Richard, you know! Things were just fine and then you decide to pitch up here as if nothing happened! Why the fuck can’t you just leave me alone?”

Richard: “I just wanted to talk to you, that’s all.”

Grace: “You lost that right long ago. Now, give me my change or face my mother.”

He gave her the change back and she wasn’t bothered by how saddened he was. She walked away angrily and let him be. She gave her mother the bread and she noticed how agitated she was, but she chose not to tell him. Her day was further ruined by Richard. While she was watching tv

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a stream of WhatsApp messages came through from an unsaved number.

“Hi, I know you don’t want to talk to me, but please just give me a chance to make everything up to you.”

She checked his profile picture but there was no picture, although the name gave it all away, “Richard Modise”. She was so annoyed. The last time she checked she had blocked his number, but clearly he changed his number. She ignored it and didn’t block him then, yet the messages kept coming through. She didn’t respond to him.

Mama: “I heard Richard is back.”

Grace: “Hmm. I heard so too.”

Mama: “I hope he isn’t trying to bother you.”

Grace: “No, Mama. I want nothing to do with him.”

Mama: “Alright then.”

She continued to ignore all Richard's efforts, until a few days later while she was at church. The pastor announced rather saddening news that Mr. Robert Mosue had tragically passed away from a car accident the night before. She felt so horrible for not responding any of his messages. She had archived him and never bothered to open his messages. When she checked the last message he sent, she wanted to cry. "I know, you want nothing to do with me, but I could use a shoulder to cry on right now." She hadn't saved his number, but after saving it, she could see his status messages; so many pictures and videos of his father and messages of regret. He must have noticed that she viewed his statuses, when he uploaded a rather old photo of him and Grace, the very first picture they had taken together on their first date, with quite a catchy caption. "I keep losing good things in my life. Ever since I lost this lady, nothing makes sense in my life. I just want to die." She quickly went to his chat and noticed he was online and decided to text him words of comfort.

Grace: "Hey, I'm so sorry for your loss. May God comfort you during this difficult time. If you ever need someone to talk to, I'm here."

He of course didn't waste any time to respond.

Richard: "Hey, thanks for your text. It honestly means the world to me. If you don't mind, may I call you?"

That was the biggest mistake Grace had made, allowing him to worm his way back into her life when she was so vulnerable. She let him call and they started talking over the phone daily ever since. Even after the funeral, they had an after tears and Richard didn't want to leave her side. Township after tears always end late at night and Thandi Modise was too heartbroken to even stress about Richard at that point. Right after 6pm, Grace decided that it was time to go, but Richard begged her not to.

Richard: "Please, stay a little while longer."

Grace: "It's getting late and it is quite cold. I don't want to drink too much. My mother would have a fit."

Richard: "We can chill in my room. Just for a little while. I promise, I won't even touch you."

Grace: "I don't know."

Richard: "Just one hour. Please."

She decided to go with him, against her better judgment. They were in his room before she knew it and he had brought even more alcohol for them to drink. He switched on the heater, and it was still too cold at that point.

Richard: "You can get in the blankets if you feel cold."

She did that, while Richard started talking about his father. Halfway through the conversation, he found himself right next to her, on the bed and under the covers.

Richard: "You know, I really miss you, Grace. I haven't found anyone who makes me feel the way you do."

Grace: "Come on, Richard. It's just the alcohol talking. Besides, you've probably gotten a dozen girls in Cape Town."

Richard: "No, I'm serious. Look me straight in the eye and tell me you don't miss me."

By then, his face was so close to hers, his warm breath was tainting her lips, making those buried feelings come alive again.

Grace: (softly) "Richard, come on. What we had is over."

Richard: "Tell me you don't miss me."

Grace: (panting) "I don't miss you..."

Their lips were planted on one another yet again and as long as it had been since they were together, it didn't feel foreign at all. Their bodies caressed one another and their souls connected yet again. Once naked, Richard performed his infamous tongue trick on her vagina yet again and she was putty in his hands. A mixture of alcohol and unresolved feelings led to Grace's first

sexual encounter. Just like that, she lost her virginity. Right after the encounter, while Richard was cuddling with her, she was left feeling petrified, and a tinge of regret was starting to consume her, slowly.

Richard: "Are you okay?"

Grace: (teary) "I shouldn't have done this. This was a mistake."

Richard: "I'm sorry, Grace. I didn't mean to make you feel like that. I don't regret it at all. It was bound to happen and it was something special. Our love never disappeared."

Grace: (teary) "You don't understand. We didn't even use a condom."

Richard: "Shit. I'm so sorry, we weren't thinking. Look, I'll get you a morning after tomorrow morning."

Grace: "Please, take me home."

Richard: "Eish, I'm not allowed to leave the house after 6pm."

Grace: "Fine, then I'll just walk."

Richard: "It's almost 10pm, Grace. Come on."

Grace: "No! You come on, Richard! You just had sex with me! You took my virginity! We didn't even use a condom."

She was a mess, crying hysterically. Only then did Richard realize how much he fucked up. He calmed her down and hugged her tight.

Richard: "I'm sorry. Please, calm down. We'll sort it out together, okay?"

Grace nodded.

Richard: "Let me get dressed and then I'll take you home, but please, stop crying. People will think I violated you."

He did have a point, although Grace felt as if she had lost a big part of her, to make matters worse she lost it to Richard, her cheating ex. He was most probably cheating on one of his Cape Town girlfriends. She was just not happy about the entire thing. Once they were both dressed, he walked her home. It wasn't that far away, and she didn't want to get into the car, as people were going to notice that far more than seeing them walking together.

Grace: "Thanks for walking me home."

Richard: "I'll call you."

She went into the house and her mother was already sleeping by then. She got into the bath tub immediately, trying so hard not to cry. She wasn't even sure any more as to why she was crying; for her virginity being gone or the fact that they did it without a condom. After her bath, she got countless missed

calls and messages from Richard. She didn't feel like answering his calls, but seeing her online, he texted her.

Richard: "Are you okay? I'm sorry, I should have never let us do that. Now I feel like shit."

Grace: "I'm fine. Talk tomorrow."

That was the end of their conversation. The following morning came and without fail, Richard went to the chemist and bought her the pills as promised. He texted her around 9am.

Richard: "Hey, are you up?"

Grace: "Yes."

Richard: "Can you come out? I have the pills for you."

Grace: "Okay."

She went out and found her mother already making them breakfast.

Grace: "Mama, I'm heading to the shop. Is there anything else you need?"

Mama: "No, my darling. I'm fine."

She walked out and had to walk a bit of a distance until where Richard had been hiding his car, far from the people. She got in the car and he looked incredibly nervous.

Richard: "Hi."

Grace: "Hi."

Richard: "Can I hug you?"

Grace: (shaking head) “No. No offence, but I’m just going through some stuff right now.”

Richard: “It’s cool, I understand. Here are the pills.”

Grace: “How do I take them?”

Richard: “You take both at the same time within 72 hours. I read the leaflet.”

She nodded and took them with the bottle of water he offered her.

Grace: “Thanks, I have to go back before my mother starts getting suspicious.”

Richard: “Can we meet up later to talk?”

Grace: “Okay, I’ll let you know.”

She went back and her mother noticed she didn't have anything in her hands.

Mama: "Didn't you say you were going to the shop?"

Grace: "Ah, they didn't have what I needed. Grandpa is out of stock."

Mama: "Oh, alright."

She went about her day, considering that it was the day before third term was about to start. She was trying to think about everything, but what good was it going to do to her crying over her virginity? She was quite willing to sleep with him, but she felt as if her body had betrayed her heart. Later that evening, just before bed, Richard called her and she answered.

Richard: "Hey."

Grace: "Hi."

Richard: "Can we talk?"

Grace: "Sure."

Richard: "I'm sorry. I should have known better. We were both intoxicated and I was just vulnerable. I took advantage of the situation. I am really sorry."

Grace: "It's okay. We both are to blame."

Richard: "Are you mad at me?"

Grace: "No."

Richard: "Does this mean that you and I are back together?"

Grace: "No, I don't know. You most probably have to go back."

Richard: "No, I doubt I'll be going back there."

Grace: "Why?"

Richard: "Mama is not coping with the entire situation and besides, I need to keep the businesses afloat."

Grace: "Oh, I see. Well, I have school tomorrow, so."

Richard: "Can I fetch you after school?"

Grace: "I'll think about it."

Richard: "Okay. Sleep tight."

Grace: "Bye."

And so, for the next few weeks, their relationship had gone back on track and picked up its pace. They slowly got back together and people were starting to notice. Grace's mother had heard the rumours, but she waited for Grace to tell her first. She wasn't very thrilled about the idea, but what else could she have done? Grace was slowly forgiving Richard and they were sleeping together a lot more often. Three months later, she started noticing something really off with Richard. She was so busy with her Prelim Exams, that she didn't notice anything odd about herself. Richard had become a bit distant, and started partying a lot more often. He hardly had time for her and it all started when he inherited his father's money. He had parties day in and day out, and Grace did not like that at all. All the while she was experiencing problems of her own. She started eating less and was forever tired, her clothes were starting to be too tight. As much as she failed to notice, her mother did. So, one day right after school, her mother found her sleeping and woke her up.

Mama: "Wake up."

Grace: "What is it? What time is it?"

Valencia threw a pregnancy test kit on the bed.

Mama: "Go take it. I'll be right here waiting."

Grace: (shocked) "Aowa (no), Mama. I'm not pregnant."

Mama: "If you're not, then you shouldn't be worried about peeing on a stick, now should you?"

Grace was petrified, she couldn't even remember when last she had her period. She did take those pills, as far as she recalled.

Mama: "I'm waiting."

Grace headed to the bathroom and urinated on the stick. Sadly for her, it didn't take long for both lines to appear. Once she saw two, dark lines, she started crying. How could she have been so stupid? They had been using condoms ever since the first mishap. She was taking too long in the bathroom, so her mother went after her. She knocked once and entered and

found a devastated Grace. The look on her face proved her right.

Mama: (angrily) “You’d better get dressed and go fetch that boy. Tell him I want to see him right this instance before I do something I might regret for the rest of my life!”

She left her crying in that bathroom and she knew that her mother wasn’t joking. She had to get dressed and go find Richard. She was so devastated, that she was crying the entire way to his house. Upon arrival, she found no one outside. She knocked a few times on the kitchen door, but no one answered. She took the risk and entered the house, and still there was no sign of his mother or of Richard. Upon reaching his bedroom door, she heard some noises – sex noises. Her heart was palpitating so fast, she just couldn’t believe it. Once she opened the door, she found him on top of some girl, leaving her even more devastated. She froze for a few seconds, while Richard couldn’t believe that he had been caught.

Richard: “Shit, baby. Please, let me explain. It is not what you think.”

She didn't even want to stay and listen to his nonsense any further, so she just walked out of there. He quickly put his pants on and rushed after her.

Richard: "Grace, please wait. I'm sorry."

Grace: (shouting) "You're always sorry! Don't you get tired of being sorry?!"

Richard: "Please, baby, you're making a scene. Let's go into the house and talk."

Grace: (shouting) "I'm pregnant!"

Richard stared at her in so much shock.

Grace: "And it's over! Don't ever fucking call me again."

Richard was left standing there in so much shock, while Grace was panicking along the way, thinking of what to tell her

mother. Her fear for her mother was nothing compared to the devastation she felt at that point. She just stormed in, with tears streaming down her face.

Grace: "He won't be coming. He's busy. Don't worry about him anymore, it's over between us."

The rollercoaster had just begun, a rollercoaster she could have avoided had she not slept with him, but so many people are filled with regret just because they couldn't stop themselves from doing something in the spur of the moment. Just a few minutes of her life created a life inside of her and it was too late to cry.

7

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

Grace was so hysterical and shocked, that she didn't even want to talk to anyone or even see anyone. Richard kept calling her until she switched her phone off. Of course, he was very much afraid to face her mother, but tapping into his love for her and facing reality that he was about to become a father, he had to do it. He pulled himself together and raced to her house. It was just after 6pm and Grace's mother was cooking just to ease her stress. Just when he knocked on her door, she became angry all over again.

Richard: “Dumela, Mme (Greetings, Ma).”

Mama: “What do you want?”

Richard: “Eish (Oh), I came to check if Grace is okay.”

Mama: “She doesn’t even want to open the bedroom door. Are you going to tell me what you did to her?”

It was quite obvious that he was the cause of her entire outburst.

Richard: (nervously) “Well, she... eish, she found me... with another girl.”

Valencia became livid, so much that she nearly poured boiling water over him. She thought of the possibility of going to jail had she done that. While she was trying to process what he had just said to her in silence, while staring at the boiling water, she chose to pour cold water into a pot nearby and threw the water at him.

Mama: (angrily) “You just don’t fucking learn, do you, Richard?! Why did you come back?! You just had to break her heart all over again and give her a child while at it!”

Richard: "I'm so sorry, Mme."

Mama: "I'm so angry, I could kill you right now!"

She was throwing spoons and forks at him, while he just stood there, taking it. If that is what he had to do to get her to forgive him, then he was going to do exactly that. Grace heard all the commotion while Valencia was shouting. Of course, Mme Tladi also wanted to find out what was happening.

Grace: "Mama, what is happening?"

Mama: "I'm going to kill this boy with my bare hands tonight!"

Mme Tladi: "Ao (Oh), Valencia. What is going on? Why are you so angry?"

Mama: (shouting) "Boela Motseng wa gago, Mosadi kwena (Go back to your house, woman)! Pele ke go bolaya le wena (Before I also kill you as well)! O rata ditaba (You like people's business)!"

She ran out of there as if she wasn't the old woman she was.

Mama: "Wena (you), Grace! Put a doek on or something and meet me in the car!"

Grace just hurried to her bedroom like a mad person while Valencia was still scolding Richard.

Mama: (shouting) "You! Get in your car! Once Grace joins me in mine, we will follow you to your house."

Richard: (panicky) "But, my mother – "

Mama: (shouting) "Hey, wena (you)! I couldn't care less what your mother thinks or says!"

Grace came from her bedroom running.

Mama: "A re ye (let's go)."

She wasted no time and she was dead serious. Grace was so afraid, while Richard was in full panic mode. He had no idea what to do or say, and he knew not to say anything further since she was most probably going to kill him. The bruises on his face and neck caused by all the spoons that hit him were starting to show. Richard walked hastily to his car, while Grace got into her mother's car. Valencia was so enraged, she didn't even want to say anything to Grace. Grace hadn't seen her mother so angry in quite some time. Her mother was driving like a maniac, just behind Richard who was forced to speed up because she kept hooting behind him. Every time she was close to bumping him, she hooted and cursed, making him pick up the pace. His house was not so far away, but it felt like eternity for Grace. Once they arrived, Richard tried stalling by opening the gate, but Valencia parked right outside the gate and got out swiftly along with the worried Grace by her side. While Richard was trying to open the gate, she stopped him right in his tracks.

Mama: (angrily) "And then? O etsa eng (What are you doing)?"

Richard: (trembling) “Ke leka go bula gate, Mme (I’m trying to open the gate, Ma). I would like to park the car.”

Mama: “You can do that in your own given time. Lock it and take us into the house.”

Richard: (shaky) “My... My mother might not be home.”

Mama: “I don’t give a damn! If you want to make it to tomorrow, you’d better ensure she’s here within the next half an hour. Now, let’s go!”

For a moment there, it had slipped Valencia’s mind that it wasn’t her house, but she wasn’t bothered by that fact at all. She stormed into the house with Grace subtly following her to the lounge. They sat on one of the couches while Richard looked so worried.

Mama: “O emetse eng (what are you waiting for)?”

Richard: “Oh, yes. Let me try to call her. Would you like something to drink in the mean time?”

Grace: (nervously) “Yes – “

Mama: (interrupting) “We’re not saying long. Make the call.”

Richard went a bit further away from them to make the call to his mother. It took Richard’s third attempt for her to answer the phone.

Thandi: “Richard, what is it? I’m busy.”

She sounded so out of breath for a second. What on earth was she busy with? Her husband was laid to rest three months before then. She was hardly home ever since his burial – despite the family’s strict instructions that she had to be home by 6pm on a daily basis and she wasn’t allowed to sleep out until her mourning period was over. A year felt like forever for Thandi Modise.

Richard: (shaky) “Uh, Mama. There is someone here... to see you. It’s urgent.”

Thandi: “Ag, I’m busy right now. Take a message or get them to call mem.”

Richard: “No, you don’t understand – “

While Richard was trying to convince his mother to come home as a matter of urgency, Valencia grabbed the phone from her and started yelling at her.

Mama: (shouting) “Hey, wena (you), Thandi! Akere wena o iketsa betere go feta batho bohle mo Christiana (you act as if you’re better than everyone here in Christiana)?! You’d better get your thin ass here as soon as possible, or else I will kill your son for getting my daughter pregnant!”

She didn’t even give Thandi any time to absorb the news she had just heard nor to respond. She hung up instead and threw

the phone at Richard and sat back down. Richard looked at her with so much fear.

Mama: "Sit."

He sat down as instructed and he was even too afraid to ask to be excused to the rest room – in his own house! Only then did he realize how much he fucked up. The tv wasn't on, so it was just them and the incredibly loud silence amongst them present in that house. Richard could barely even look Valencia in the eye, while Grace dared not to even say anything. It was such a painful half an hour for both Grace and Richard, while Valencia was anxiously waiting to finally give the mighty Thandi Modise a piece of her mind. The moment Thandi threw that kitchen door shut, Valencia's anger arose yet again.

Thandi: "And then?! Why am I being summoned to my own house like I'm some criminal?!"

She didn't even greet Valencia nor Grace and that just showed the little regard she had for other people.

Richard: (nervously) “Mama, I can explain.”

Mama: “Don’t you worry your pretty little face about all this. I won’t waste any of your time. I just came to say my piece and then I’ll leave you be.”

Thandi: “Well then, get right on it.”

Mama: “This little filthy roach you call your son decided to impregnate my daughter! She was a virgin when she slept with him and she’s still in matric!”

Thandi: “Well, if you think that I believe that shit you’re spewing me then you must really be high. Besides, don’t expect a single cent from us. We don’t even know if that bastard is actually a Modise.”

Mama: “Oh, you don’t have to worry about anything like that. You see, I know people like you and I knew that you were going to give me your little pathetic speech. So, I wanted to do this in person – with both your son and my daughter

present. This child right here is a Tlou and he or she will be raised as such.”

She was pointing at Grace’s belly by then.

Mama: “I will walk out of this door and you will never see me nor my daughter set foot in this Godforsaken house ever again. If I so as to see either of you coming to my house, I will not hesitate to pour boiling water over you. I swear, I will blind you and give you a little taste of hell. For this child of mine, I don’t mind going to prison!”

Thandi: “Okay then, is that all?”

Mama: “You will regret this moment and swallow your words, Thandi Modise. Don’t think that we don’t know about your new boyfriend.”

Thandi was so shocked that Valencia would even know of such, and she was just too flabbergasted to say anything.

Mama: "A re ye (let's go), Grace."

They simply walked out leaving Thandi gobsmacked right there in the middle of the lounge. Richard was panicking; he had been cut out of his unborn child's life and his mother didn't seem bothered, well, by then she wasn't.

Richard: "What are we going to do, Mama?"

Thandi: "Come on, you seriously don't believe her, do you?"

Richard: "I do. She was a virgin just before I slept with her."

Thandi: "That still doesn't mean it's yours."

Richard: "Please, Mama. You have to help me."

Thandi: "Fine, I'll see what I can do. I'll call your uncles."

Richard: "Thank you."

The day after, Grace was forced to go to school and then her mother took her straight to the doctor afterwards, where a rather terrifying discovery was made.

Doctor: "Well, I'm glad you finally came for a check up, Grace, although you should have come sooner."

Grace: "I had no idea. I was still getting my period every month without fail."

Doctor: "Most women spot during pregnancy and mistake it for a period."

Mama: "Is everything alright, doctor?"

Doctor: "Well, everything is fine. She just needs to take it easy and be hydrated at all times and also, get enough sleep. I know, you're busy with exams, but you need to come in for regular checkups. Usually, a woman goes for checkups once a

month until she approaches her 8th month of pregnancy, but in your case, considering your weight, your age, gestation of the babies as well, you will have to come in twice a month. I'm concerned you might get gestational diabetes, which can be quite detrimental to your health and to that of the babies."

There was that word again, "babies". It freaked Grace out who had zoned out until she heard that part.

Grace: "I'm sorry, Doctor. Did you just say babies?"

Doctor: "Yes, you are expecting twins. You're 13 weeks pregnant. There they are on the scan."

Grace's life had gone from bad to worse in just two days. She felt like dying right on that bed. Her mother was very disappointed in her, but not enough to kill her. She saw what the news had done to her daughter and had she continued to punish her for her actions, it was going to affect her in all aspects of her life, and most probably deter her studies. She decided to be supportive towards Grace and do whatever she could to assist her in every way. Grace was depressed for a

good two weeks, and it was hard to juggle studying and pregnancy, but Valencia was there for her. Richard had been trying to get in touch with Grace, but she ended up blocking all his calls and she had blocked him everywhere on social media. Slowly but surely, she was starting to accept the situation. Her mother had gotten in touch with a therapist, who was helping Grace get back on track with the new situation in her life. She didn't want to have an abortion, of which her mother would have supported should she have chosen to do so.

Grace was finally done with her Prelim exams, and had one week of holidays before she had to go back to school. So far, Mme Tladi still had no idea as to why Valencia had gone rogue that evening, but she was so nosy, the news wasn't going to stay buried for long. Grace was not fat, but she was big enough for her stomach not to start showing. By then, she was 4 months pregnant and she was already adjusting to the fact that she was going to be a single mother. Her sister and her husband had agreed that they would take care of the babies, while Grace would be studying at University the coming year. She was minding her own business and watching tv, when she heard her mother start yet another commotion outside her yard.

Mama: (shouting) “Ntsweleng ka motse (Leave my house)!”

Uncle 1: “Mme (Ma), ka hlompo (with all due respect), we just want to come in and resolve this issue as adults.”

Mama: “I have nothing to say to you! I told Thandi that we are done! These children will be raised by us and as far as I’m concerned your family is dead to us!”

Grace just stood by the door. She knew what was good for her.

Uncle 2: “Okay, we understand you’re still angry, but we also have the right as the paternal family. We want to do things right, hence we would like to discuss matters of paying damages.”

Mama: “Yey, yey, yey! Clearly you are not hearing me! I said we want nothing from you! You own nothing and no one! Those children will be raised by my family!”

Uncle 1: Please, Mme (Ma) – “

Mama: (shouting) “Grace, ntlele tjampi mowe (bring my sjambok)!”

They could see that she meant business and wasn't afraid to take them on.

Uncle 1: “Okay, we'll be on our way. There is no need for violence, but please, do reconsider our offer.”

Mama: “Tsamayang (Leave), man!”

They walked to their car while she was still trying to catch her breath from all the anger. Meanwhile, Mme Tladi was standing right at the gate and had heard just what she was dying to know.

Mme Tladi: “Valencia, is everything alright?”

Mama: “Fokof (fuck off), le wena, man!”

Mme Tladi went her way, but it didn't take long for the entire town to find out that Grace had not one but two buns baking in her oven. By the time she had gone back to school, fellow school mates were trying to make things harder for her by ridiculing her every chance she got. Valencia became so angry and despite Grace telling the Principal, nothing was done about it. Grace came back home one day and just burst into tears.

Mama: “Keng (what is it)? Are you feeling any pain?”

Grace: (crying) “No, Mama. There girls in my class and some in lower grades. They make fun of me – and even Jenifer has tried to fight them off, but they just won't stop. I told the Principal, but she didn't do anything about it.”

That sent Valencia through the roof.

Mama: “Okay, let me lock. Get in the car and let's go.”

Grace: "Where are we going?"

Mama: "I'm going to have a little talk with this Principal of yours."

Grace: "She said she'd be in a meeting with the SGB."

Mama: "Even better."

Grace had no idea what her mother was up to, but it was honestly coming from a good place. No mother would want anyone, more especially a fellow woman to make her children feel like dirt for the choices they made. Yes, Grace made a mistake, but it was not anyone's mistake to ridicule or judge. No one had the right to make fun of her, whereas so many of their own parents had them in their teen years. Their parents hid it by enforcing marriage upon them. Valencia was once again speeding like a mad woman. By the time she had arrived at the school, the security guard didn't want to let her in.

Mama: “If you don’t let me in

I swear, I will drive right through this gate and run over you as well! Choose wisely before you answer, now.”

Security: “Eish (Oh), Mme Tlou le wena, you’ll get me in trouble.”

Mama: “Open the fucking gate!”

She was livid, so the security guard opened it and she drove in with high speed. She got out in a split second, with Grace following her. She walked in without even talking to reception. Despite them asking her to wait in the foyer, she ignored them and barged right into the Principal’s office. Oh, yes, it was such a good moment for her because she found the Principal having a meeting with a few of the SGB members, which consisted of some parents of the learners, some of them had learners in Grace’s class.

Principal: “I’m sorry, Mrs. Tlou, but I am in the middle of a meeting. Can I help you?”

Mama: "I came here to address a very serious matter, which you clearly ignored when my daughter came to you."

The Principal was clearly a bitter woman who had complete disregard for everyone.

The Principal: "Well, if you really want to speak to me, you should have made an appointment. Surely you know that as a teacher yourself. Oh, I don't know why I keep referring you as Mrs. You are divorced, aren't you?"

She shouldn't have done that. She hit a nerve so badly, that Valencia started spitting. She threw her back on the Principal's table and didn't stop.

Mama: (chuckling) "So says the woman who's husband is sleeping with the widowed mother, the mother of the boy who impregnated my son!"

The SGB members were in shock, but she didn't stop there. The Principal realized that Valencia had more to say, but it was too late to apologize.

Principal: (shocked) "Uh, please. Let me excuse the members so we can talk in private."

Mama: "Why?! Why now?! A few minutes ago you had that bitchy smirk on your fat fuck face and you were telling me how divorced I am and how I needed to make an appointment! Please, do share with me, Mary; as the Principal of this school, is it not your duty to ensure that children refrain from bullying?! Is my daughter the first pupil in this school to be pregnant?! If I am not mistaken, you yourself fell pregnant at 14! Doesn't the Bible say; "And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." That is John 8 verse 7 by the way."

She was so angry, that she looked around at each and every one of the SGB members, and they looked down. They knew that shit was about to go down.

Mama: “Grace, are the parents of the learners who are bullying you present here?”

Grace nodded with shame looking down.

Mama: “Point them out.”

Grace pointed at two of them, one being male, Mr. Shabangu and one female, Mrs. Matlala.

Mama: (chuckling) “Le iketsa batho ka ngwanake, la tseba (you act like you’re better at my daughter’s expense, you know). Mr. Shabangu, you just came fresh from Durban to this school and already your dick has made a home in a few of the girls’ legs. You impregnated the head girl last year and suddenly she had to leave town. Or is it Mary, the school’s principal who did you that favour? Is that why you’re still not arrested?”

He couldn’t even answer her as he looked down. Some members clearly didn’t know.

Mama: “And you, Mme (Mrs) Matlala, don’t get me started on the funds that keep disappearing at this school. Mary will throw you under the bus. You are the idiot that keeps authorizing all the payments. You are all fools here if you think I won’t come back here should my Grace come back home crying. I will say this once, and only once; get your ugly daughters and sons to stay the fuck away from my child. If I so as to hear a complaint from her about any of them, or your teachers or even you, Mary, I swear to God, I will reveal everything I know about you! We will both land in prison and we will even share the same fucking cell! Let me not come back here or else, you will see who I really am!”

With that said, she grabbed her bag and one could literally cut through the room’s tension with a bread knife. The secretary found herself right there and she must have heard everything that was being said. Once they were out in the parking lot, she looked at Grace and decided to give her the very first lesson about motherhood.

Mama: “Let that be a lesson to you, Grace; a mother protects her children at all costs. You will soon learn that when you also

give birth. Let no mother fucker ever come between you and your children. And just like that, Grace slowly learnt that she would have to grow a thick skin. She was soon to be a mother and it wasn't going to be easy, more especially being a single mother in a town where the father lived as well. By December, Grace was officially done with her exams and she had started showing. People knew exactly what Valencia was capable of, so they dared not even try to ridicule her daughter. Grace had accepted her situation, and she was fine with it. The therapy helped immensely, and she managed to forget about Richard for a while, until he found her walking with plastic bags in her hands on her way home. He parked his car on the side of the road and rushed towards her. She was deeply annoyed, and he had no idea that pregnancy hormones were that hectic.

Richard: "Let me help you with that."

Grace: (frowning) "Did you hear me ask you to help me?"

Richard: "Grace, please. You're the mother of my children. Allow me to help you."

Grace threw the plastics onto the ground and walked ahead of him. He picked them up hastily and ran behind her. He was still fit and still looked good, in fact he looked better than he did few months prior when he tried to ask for her forgiveness.

Richard: "So, how has it been going? You look... different."

Grace: (frowning) "What exactly are you trying to say?"

Richard: "What I mean is, you're glowing."

Grace: "Hmm."

Richard: "Look, Grace, I know you don't want me back, and I completely respect your decision. But please, can you just consider making me a part of the babies' lives? I really want to assist you and be a part of their lives. I got my life back on track. I am running my father's businesses and I am not with different women any more."

Grace: (chuckling) “You honestly think that I’d allow you to raise my children with another woman? Go have children with someone else. We don’t need you or your money.”

Richard: “Children need their mother, Grace. Just think about it, please.”

By then, they had finally made it to Grace’s house. Her mother wasn’t home yet, so it was safe for Richard to keep talking.

Grace: “Fine, I’ll think about it.”

He was smiling in relief.

Grace: “Don’t get your hopes up. This doesn’t mean that you have any chance of getting back together with me.”

Richard: “Okay, noted.”

Grace: “Oh, and please, tell your uncles to stop sending letters to my mother. We’re not interested. I’m not damaged here. I don’t want your money and as we have told them countless times, these babies belong to my family.”

Richard: (nodding) “I fully respect that. In fact, it was all my mother’s idea. I never wanted to make you feel bad, Grace. From now on, I will do what you want me to do. You call the shots.”

Grace grabbed her plastic bags from Richard who seemed so relieved. Valencia was in her car and she stopped right in front of them. Her smile immediately diminished when she saw Richard having such a nice chat with Grace.

Grace: “Leave before you get killed.”

Richard waved at her and she simply returned that wave with her middle finger. He walked away so fast, it was as if he wasn’t even there. She opened the gate for her and walked into the house.

Mama: (frowning) “Tonki ela be e batla eng (what did that donkey want)?”

Grace: “He asked me to take him back. Don’t worry, I refused.”

Mama: “You’d better be telling me the truth, Grace. That boy is no good for you.”

Grace: “I am being honest, Mama. I know, he’s not good for me at all.”

She found herself lying to her mother without reason. She was at her most vulnerable stage. Her mother was there for her in all aspects, but of course, every pregnant woman yearns to be loved and to be with the father of her child. In this case, Richard got the loophole he had been longing for. Slowly, he wormed his way into her life. He started sending her good morning messages and from there he would drop her favourite snacks and food almost on a daily basis. He couldn’t do that when Valencia was around, of course. By January, she was nearly 8 months pregnant and Richard was talking to her over the phone on a daily basis. At times she would share her fears

with him, and he was there to support her over the phone. Valencia had to go back to work, so she was left home alone on most days. Grace had been accepted at three Universities already and she was just waiting to give birth. On one fateful day in January, she was home alone and waiting for her sister to arrive. She had agreed to come and stay with her for a while since her due date was approaching. She refused to allow her mother to take leave and insisted that she was alright and fit enough to stay on her own. By then, she had gained a lot of weight and her stomach was quite big. It was getting even more difficult for her to walk around. She wasn't bothered much by what everyone was saying about her, instead she was excited to welcome her daughters into the world. Yes, she was expecting two girls, and Richard was also warming up to the idea of being a father at 20. She had just taken a bath, but she felt quite a lot of discomfort in her stomach, from the previous night. Richard decided to text her that morning, as usual.

Richard: "Good morning, Sunshine."

Grace: "Hi."

Richard: "Are you okay? You don't sound like you're fine."

Grace: "I'm fine. I'm just not feeling too good."

Richard instantly called her and she answered.

Richard: "Hey, what's wrong?"

Grace: "I'm just feeling a bit weird, like, I have some pain in my lower abdomen. It comes and goes."

Richard: "I read up that it could be Braxton hicks. You are almost near the end of your pregnancy, so the body is preparing you for birth."

Grace: (chuckling) "Wow, someone has been reading up."

Richard: "Yes, I want to be prepared for the arrival of my daughters just as much as you are."

Little did Grace mean what Richard actually meant by that statement. By the time she realized what he meant exactly, it was already too late.

Grace: "Yes, well, I have just finished taking a bath. I just want to lie down for a while."

Richard: "Okay, keep your phone close to you. Call me if you feel any different or you're not getting better, okay?"

Grace: "Okay. I will do that."

She hung up and just put on a maxi dress. It was already too hot for her to even function, so she attributed her state at that point to the heat. She tried dozing off, and as much as it was hard sleeping for a pregnant woman, the pain got worse. Instead of it coming and going after a while, the pain would grace her with its presence every 10 minutes. By then, she was soaking wet from all the sweat and she couldn't take it any more. She got hold of her phone and tried calling her mother, but after five missed calls it rang unanswered. She

called Hope and she too had not left her house yet. It would have at least taken her about an hour to get to Grace.

Hope: "I'm so worried. Let me call the ambulance."

Grace: "No, let me call Richard instead. The ambulance might take forever."

Hope: "Eish (oh), Mama won't like that."

Grace: "I don't have a choice, now do I, Hope? I'm in so much pain."

Hope: "Okay, call him and keep me updated. I'm on my way."

She hung up and called Richard who answered on the first ring. Luckily, he was at the shop just around the corner, nearby her house.

Richard: "Hey."

Grace: (wincing in pain) “Hey, can you please come get me? The pain has gotten a lot worse and I need to get to the hospital.”

Richard: (frantically) “I’m at the store just around the corner. I’ll be right there.”

He needn’t even be told much, but he drove there and arrived in two minutes tops. Once he rushed in, Grace’s state was rather worrying.

Richard: (worried) “Grace, how long have you been in pain?”

Grace: “I don’t know, maybe an hour or two. Maybe three.”

Richard: “And you didn’t call me?”

Grace: “Are you going to help me up or not?!”

Richard: "Sorry. Lean on me."

The moment he got her off the bed, water gushed right out of her, which was a serious cause for concern. They both looked at one another and never had Richard seen Grace so petrified before.

Grace: (scared) "Richard, did my water just break?"

Richard: (nodding nervously) "Yes, but I'm here now. You'll be fine – all three of you."

Grace: (nodding) "Get my hospital bag, please. It's in the cupboard."

He did as told and helped her out. It seemed as if the water breaking was the one thing her body needed to activate it all. The pain no longer came in long intervals. She would get pain every 3-5 minutes. Whenever she got the pain, she would scream in pain.

Richard: (panicking) “You’re in active labor, Grace. You’re having contractions. I need you to breathe whenever you feel pain, okay? No matter what, don’t push.”

Grace: (screaming) “Oh, my God! This hurts so much!”

Richard: “I know.”

Grace: “What do you mean you know?! Are you capable of giving birth?!”

Richard: “I mean I don’t know. Look, we’ll be fine. We’re almost there.”

While she was screaming out in pain, he stopped at a robot every single time he saw the yellow light, irritating Grace.

Grace: (shouting) “Are you fucking kidding me?!”

Richard: “What?”

Grace: "You're stopping at every traffic light?! Really?"

Richard: "The robot closed on me."

Grace: "Only because you're driving like a bloody caterpillar! Switch your hazards on and drive!"

Richard: "But, the traffic here – "

Grace: (shouting) "Fuck Traffic! If they want to arrest you – let them follow you to hospital!"

Richard: "Uh, let me try driving faster."

Grace: "If you don't do what I just said, I'll open the door and throw myself out of this car!"

Richard did as he was told. The cars managed to give him space to drive through and with every hoot he was afraid to give them, Grace gladly did it for him. It took them quite some time to get to the hospital, but once they made it, he drove straight to the Emergency area. The medical assistants were ready to get her out of the car and once she was lifted from the seat, they noticed a horrific discovery.

Nurse: "She's bleeding. We need an ER stat!"

Richard was sent straight to panic mode and he forgot to move the car out of the way. He followed them immediately.

Nurse: "Who's your doctor, dear?"

Grace: "Dr. Naidoo."

Nurse: "Paige Dr. Naidoo! Don't you worry, you're in safe hands."

“When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.”

By the time Richard’s mind had gone back to sanity, Grace was being prepped for surgery. He couldn’t think straight; he was worried about the three of them yes, but he had to keep in mind that his mother’s plans weren’t supposed to go to waste. Grace’s phone was in his hands and kept ringing unanswered. It was only about ten minutes later that he actually heard it ringing. It was Hope calling and he knew better than not to answer, so he did.

Hope: “Oh, thank God, Grace! We’ve been calling you and you haven’t been answering. Where on earth are you because we’re home and you didn’t even lock the door?”

Richard: (nervously) “Uh, hi. This is Richard.”

Hope: (surprised) “Richard? Where’s hope?”

He could hear Valencia in the background.

Mama: (annoyed) "Oh, lord. Bathomile (they have started)."

Richard: "We're at the hospital. Grace tried to get hold of her mom but she wasn't reachable and you were far away, so she called me instead."

Hope: (scared) "Hospital? Is she okay? Are the babies okay?"

Richard: "They... She's currently in surgery. She was in labor when I went to see her at home. By the time we got here, she was bleeding."

The entire story sent both of them in such a panicked state.

Hope: "We're on our way. Stay put."

They hung up, leaving Richard to do what he hadn't done in a very long time – pray. Many people wonder why bad things happen and mostly to good people, but it is because God still wants to show us that we should never lose faith in Him. He still has so many miracles to show us, but He can only do that if we keep having faith in Him. God doesn't deliberately give children cancer. Yes, He did promise that children would bear the sins of the father, but not in all instances. One day, we'll all understand that the flesh and the spirit work differently, and that a world filled with time restrictions will tempt you – the world of the flesh. The spiritual world is a beautiful place, but it also has its own ways and yes, some still get punished as spirit, but that is a story for another day. Richard stayed there in the waiting room, anxiously. He had completely forgot about everyone else around him. He simply got down on both his knees and started praying.

Richard: (praying) “Ntate Modimo (Father God), our loving God, our merciful God, I know, I haven't been a very good boy this year. In fact, I don't recall ever being good to You. The last time I called upon You was when I was forced to as a child. As I grew older, I just didn't even bother of which I was very naïve until now. I am faced with a heavy situation; a situation of life and death and a situation that will force me to betray the one I

love. Believe me, oh, Lord, You wouldn't understand. I ask for your divine protection. No matter what, I pray that Grace and those babies make it out alive in there. I ask that you please protect those babies – they are truly my last chance. Yes, I love them and I still love Grace so much, but circumstances have forced me to do something that I know I will regret one day. All I ask of You is to understand my situation. You are forgiving, Lord. Peter did betray you, Lord, but did you not forgive Him? I ask of You to bear with me. I promise, I will become a better person after this. Amen.”

Little did Richard know that God much like people, also gives us a long rope to hang ourselves. He gives plenty of chances

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don't get Him wrong, but He is one person you just cannot bargain with. Just when your life is going well, He comes back and demands that you face your demons. Trials and tribulations are such a big part of life, but one should remember that every action has a consequence – even if it means that you'll face it 2 decades later. While he was deep in thought after praying, with tears running down his face, tears of sorrow and of deep regret even before the actual sin was committed, Hope and Valencia walked in hysterically. He had a

choice to walk away that day and choose a different path, but his mind was already made up once he started praying to God.

Valencia: "Where is she? Where is my baby?"

Richard: "They're still busy with her. She's in theatre as we speak."

He wiped away his tears without even being afraid that day. He was the only person who knew what his plans were on that particular day.

Valencia: "I don't have a good feeling about this day, Hope, I truly don't."

Hope: "Mama, all will be well. I think we should thank Richard for all his efforts, you know. If it wasn't for him, who knows where Grace would be as we speak?"

Valencia: "It's not that. Something within me is not right. I just don't know what it is. I can't pin point it."

Hope: "Let's pray about it."

They prayed together with Richard holding hands with them. They always say that traitors live amongst us and some have birthed us. After countless hours, the doctor finally made it out of theatre.

Dr. Naidoo: "You must be Grace's family?"

The three of them got up hastily, with anxious hearts.

Dr. Naidoo: (smiling) "God is with you guys. She is doing just fine and so are the babies."

Valencia and Hope were rejoicing, while a tinge of regret started filling Richard's heart slowly.

Mama: "Can we see her? Can we see them?"

Dr. Naidoo: “Sure, the nurse will direct you. Just give them a few minutes to get her all set. In the mean time, you can go see the babies. They’re currently in the NICU, but family is allowed.”

Hope: “Thank you so much, Doctor.”

He nodded and left them standing there.

Hope: “I think Richard should come with us.”

Richard: “I’d love to, but only two people are allowed at a time. You two go, I’ll be with you just now.”

They agreed and went into the NICU. They suited up just before seeing the babies. Once they were both suited up, they got to see the babies with the tags, “Baby Tlou 1” and “Baby Tlou 2”. Valencia was so overwhelmed with joy and pride, while Hope was filled with happiness and relief that the babies came out alright and so did Grace.

Mama: (ululating softly) “Oh, bana ba ngwanake (my baby’s babies). You two are so beautiful and you are God’s greatest gift to us. You have brought me so much joy, joy I never thought I could ever feel again.”

While she was busy praying and thanking God and the ancestors for such a beautiful gift, Hope kept taking pictures of them.

Mama: (overjoyed) “I’ll name you Samarah, which is Hebrew for guardian or protected by God. May you fill our lives with divine protection. You are loved, dear Samarah.”

She looked at the Baby number 2.

Mama: “I’ll name you Amarah. In Islam, it means eternal. May you both fill my heart and life with eternal love. I love you both so much and you don’t even know it yet.”

Hope and Valencia took pictures of and with the babies, so overjoyed, and little did they know that it was going to be the

very first and the very last time they'd see them ever again. While they were inside, Richard was just outside the ward, contemplating his choices. An unrecognized woman was right next to him, dressed in really dark clothes and sunglasses hiding her eyes.

Woman: "Are you ready?"

Richard: "They're still in there, besides it's still dark and I'm still rethinking it all."

Woman: "Are you kidding me? There's nothing to rethink here. We both decided it is the right thing to do. Do you want to live your life on the side lines knowing that another man is going to raise your kids?"

Richard: "She might just take me back."

Woman: "Nonsense, she's not worthy to be called your wife. You stick to the plan. I'll see you later."

Little did Richard know that God isn't one to be played with. While the Tlou family was rejoicing over the new gifts upon the family, the Modise family was planning on taking that little tad of joy away from them. Little did they know that none of them ever became the same again from that day onwards. When you play God with other people's lives, you tamper with fate and the results are so dire that you won't see it at first, but once you decide that you have changed without consulting with God and finally repenting, you will reap the rewards – and they are not pretty.

8

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Valencia and Hope were so excited for the new additions to the family, but most importantly, they were quite grateful that Richard was there to take Grace to the hospital in time. Just as they were about to go outside the NICU to thank him, he was nowhere to be found. It was odd, since he had offered them to go in first to see the babies, but then they figured he most probably went out to get something for the babies.

Valencia: “Let’s go check in on Grace. Richard will come back from wherever he is.”

Hope: (nodding) “Yes, that is not a bad idea. She must be so tired and overwhelmed.”

Valencia: “I can only imagine. My poor baby.”

They went straight to her ward which was just down the corridor, and found her half asleep. The anaesthesia hadn't fully worn off yet.

Valencia: (smiling) "Grace, wake up. Your sister and I are here."

Grace: (woozy) "Mama... is that you?"

Valencia: (chuckling) "Yes, baby, it's me. How are you feeling?"

Grace: "I am in so much pain. I can barely move."

Valencia: "C-sections are painful, my baby, but they are so worth it."

Grace: "How are they? Are they okay?"

Hope: (smiling) "See for yourself."

She took out her phone and showed her the pictures of the newborn babies.

Grace: "They are so tiny."

Hope: "Yes, and they have your beautiful nose."

Valencia: "Thank goodness, I couldn't imagine them having Richard's big nose."

The three of them chuckled briefly.

Hope: "Mama already named them. This one right here is Samarah, and this one is Amarah."

Grace: (teary) "I love those names. Thank you so much, Mama. I honestly don't know what I'd do without you two."

Hope: "That's what family is for."

Grace: "I'm honestly grateful for you, Hope. If you hadn't pitched in to take care of them, where would I be right now?"

Valencia: "You just focus on getting better. Those two aren't going to feed themselves, you know."

Grace: "You're right, but I would really love to see them."

Valencia: "Let me ask the Doctor if you can be taken to their ward. I'll be right back."

While Valencia went out to seek Grace's doctor, havoc was about to erupt in the NICU. The fire alarm suddenly went off, and everyone in the Maternity Ward could hear it as well.

Hope: "Let me go see what's happening. I'm sure it is nothing serious. You stay put, okay?"

Grace nodded whilst Hope rushed out. Upon exiting Grace's ward, she was stunned to see Nurses and doctors along with security rushing up and down all over the corridors.

Hope: (worried) "What's going on?! Can someone please tell me what's going on?"

No one responded to her plea, instead, they were all doing what they were told to do. She found one of the Nurses rushing in and out of Maternity rooms, shouting numbers to another one at the Nurse's bay. It looked like she was counting if all of them were still in their rooms.

Nurse: (shouting) "Bed 2, 3 and 4 are safe!"

Hope: "Sister, please tell me what's going on."

Nurse: "Twin babies have gone missing from the NICU. The hospital is on lockdown until any further notice. I hope that this doesn't reach the news otherwise we might just get sued."

Well, Hope was rather irked at the fact that being sued was the only problem the Nurse had regarding that situation. But then, the word “twins” really startled her.

Hope: “I’m sorry, did you just say twins?”

Nurse: “Yes.”

Hope: “Do you know whose twins they are?”

Nurse: (shaking head) “No, all I know is that they were born today. Excuse me, I need to do my rounds quickly.”

She rushed to the next room, while Hope just had a very sudden and bad feeling. She rushed to the NICU and upon arrival, one of the security guards stopped her.

Security: “I’m sorry, Ma’am. I’m afraid you can’t go in there.”

Hope: “Don’t you tell me that rubbish! My sister’s twins might be missing!”

Security: “I’m afraid, you can’t go in there.”

Hope managed to shove that guard out the way, as tiny as she was and once she went in and the guard was running after her, she found the shock of her life right before her eyes. The bed that once had those two lively and beautiful new born babies was empty. It was as if they weren’t there just a few minutes prior.

Security: “Ma’am, you can’t be in here right now.”

His voice fell on deaf ears, while Hope’s heart became instantly shattered. She put her two hands on their tiny beds which still felt warm. Which meant that they were taken not so long ago. Tears fell down her eyes and with every tear that she let out, her heart was being ripped apart. “How would she break the news to Grace?” she thought to herself. That was the most tragic thing to ever happen to them. Not even their father leaving them was that painful.

Security: "Ma'am, you really can't be in here."

Hope: (snappy) "Ke utlwile (I heard you), dammit!"

She stormed out of there and went to look for her mother with the hopes of enlisting help before it was too late. She went down the lift and found her mother shouting at the hospital management.

Valencia: (shouting) "I demand an explanation! In fact

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you'd better not hope that I sue your asses! We're paying here and all you can tell me is that you're working on it?!"

Hope: "Mama, what's happening?"

Valencia: (teary) "These fools are telling me that they're doing all they can to locate my grandchildren. I demand that you

question every nurse that was on duty from the moment my babies were born! In fact, I demand to see your CCTV footage!”

The management looked really worried. It was not a good sign.

Manager: “We’ve just been informed that the cameras haven’t been working all morning.”

That was enough to send Valencia in a state of complete madness. She was shouting at those managers and blamed them for the incompetence that was present that day. It shouldn’t have happened in the first place. Now as a result of that, a young mother never even got to hold her babies. Someone will have had to break the news to her that in less than 24 hours she had given birth, her babies were stolen. She never even got to hold her precious babies. Hope decided to go straight to Grace’s ward to break the news to her, while Valencia was on a fighting streak. Hope found Grace severely panicked.

Grace: (worried) “Hope, what’s happening? Where are my babies? I hear that twin babies were stolen from the NICU. Are they mine?”

That last question was enough for Hope to start crying. She could never lie to Grace.

Hope: (teary) “I’m sorry, sis. The hospital says they’re doing everything they can to locate them.”

On that particular day, something within Grace died. She felt as if her entire world was snatched away from her before she even got the chance to explore it. She went numb, she couldn’t speak, but her tears did the talking for her instead. Hope kept consoling her with endless tears flowing down her eyes as well.

Hope: “I promise you, they will find the babies.”

No one had any idea just how bad their day was about to get. It was bad enough that the babies were taken, but as to who had taken them was about to be the biggest blow to them.

Grace: (softly) "Where's Richard?"

The one person no one who had brought Grace to the hospital, the babies' father, was nowhere to be seen amongst all that panic. No one in their faintest mind even thought of him.

Hope: (flabbergasted) "Oh, no! It can't be!"

Grace: "What?"

Hope couldn't even finish her sentence yet and so, she quickly dialled her mother.

Valencia: "What is it? Have they been found?"

Hope: "No, nothing yet. But, I think... I think I might know who took them."

Valencia: "Who?"

Hope: "Richard."

Valencia: "I also had the same feeling hence I drove straight to his house."

Hope: "And?"

Valencia: "I'm just around the corner, hang on a second. Don't hang up."

Hope had her on speaker by that time while Grace was listening anxiously. Once Valencia stopped the car, she was torn to see what was before her.

Valencia: "Oh, my God. I can't believe this."

Hope: "What is it?"

Valencia: “Those two fuckers sold the house. It has a “Sold” sign on it.”

Right there and then, all three of them knew that there was a 99% chance that they’d never find those babies ever again, but didn’t want to admit it – not to one another and most definitely not to themselves.

A few months later...

Grace was discharged three days later and already by then she had lost so much weight. She couldn’t eat nor sleep and all she could think of was her babies. By the time she had to go start University, she was co-dependent on sleeping pills and alcohol. She tried her best to focus on her studies, and despite her mother and sister advising her to take a gap year, she still went ahead to study. After failing the entire first Semester due to stress and lack of sleep and focus, she dropped out. Her mother had hired a Private Investigator, along with her sister and after months of paying huge amounts of money, they decided to just leave it in God’s hands. The only thing that really gave them proof that it was Richard and Thandi who

indeed took the babies, was the CCTV footage which was recovered by the Private Investigator, after being deleted from the hospital server. One Nurse who was working in the NICU that day also went missing and they hadn't found her since. The case became cold after a while and it was just downhill from there for Grace. The town never became the same again, and neither did that hospital. Fewer people were comfortable with giving birth there, as they were really unhappy with the negligence of the staff. Nonetheless, the Tlou family was in the process of suing the hospital for their negligence, but it was never enough to get the babies back. The only memory they had left of them was a few pictures of them being a few hours old. Living deemed to be painful for Grace, waking up every single day and being reminded of Richard's deceit and betrayal was hard on her. It was even harder for Valencia to witness her daughter slowly slipping away like that. It ate away at her up until her untimely death.

People seem to forget about the power of a spirit. When you live in the flesh, you are controlled by many things, of which temptation is one of them. Once you become a spirit, you see things a lot more differently, hence a lot of us cannot cope with what ancestors desire and demand from us. Valencia didn't

mean to die, but she just couldn't cope with seeing her daughter in that state. Losing the babies consumed them, which caused her to die a horrible death, and to die with a very torn heart. An angry ancestor, is a dangerous ancestor; it doesn't matter what your connection is to them. Slowly but surely, Richard was going to meet his match. As they say; the Lord's punishment comes after a long wait. When spirit gives you a long rope to hang yourself, you will be forced into a corner, eventually.

“And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.”

Ten years later...

A lot can happen in a year, imagine what could happen in ten. While back in Christiana, the past ten years had been rather tumultuous, Richard and Thandi had been living quite a nice life. After they sold the house and vanished into thin air, they managed to get themselves along with the twins settled in a very posh neighbourhood called Ferndale, situated in Randburg. After claiming all the millions Robert Moloï had left Thandi and her son Richard, it still wasn't enough for her, so she managed to get Principal Mary to loot money from the school's accounts and that was how she managed to run away. She managed to create a Trust fund and buy shares using Samarah and Amarah's names, which was not easy for anyone to locate since they had moved to a completely new town.

They built a name for themselves very easily since money always talks, and in turn, Thandi raised the twins briefly until Richard got married to their stepmother, Beatrice, while Richard was a businessman who was always travelling. Of course he ensured that he never set foot in or anywhere near Christiana for any reason whatsoever. Beatrice met Richard while he was on a business trip at age 21 just when the twins were about to turn 2. She had raised them since and they thought of her as their mother.

She was great at first until she automatically changed when she fell pregnant, when all hopes and possibilities of having her own children occurred. Her happiness was short-lived when she had a miscarriage and hadn't been able to conceive ever since. With Richard always being gone, it didn't make things better at all. Thandi adored her grandchildren, although she didn't have much time for them since she was quite a party girl, but whenever she was around they were free to be children and to express themselves, but once she was gone, Beatrice was back to being the horrible stepmother. The twins were very close and lived a comfortable life, much to Beatrice's resentment. They were nearing their teens and started to see that her treatment towards them wasn't very motherly. Amarah was very outspoken, and the complete

opposite to Samarah, who was quite softspoken and barely spoke her mind. Amarah fought all her battles ever since they were in kindergarten. It was the December holidays, of which they were so glad since their school, Radley Private School was very strict and they would work all year round. They enjoyed it so much, but no child could refuse December holidays. They had a special shuttle that would take them to and from school.

Amarah: “Yoh (oh), Sammy, I’m so glad that school is finally over. I can’t wait to relax.”

Samarah: (laughing) “You’re acting as if Mama would make us relax. You know very well that we’re going to be spring cleaning this entire December. If there’s nothing else to spring clean, she’ll most definitely create it.”

Amarah: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, ag, that one. Sometimes I ask myself if she’s actually our mother, you know.”

Samarah: “Come on, Amarah. You can’t go around saying things like that. Of course she’s our mother.”

Amarah: “Just think about it. We don’t have pictures of us together with her when we were babies. They supposedly “burnt down” along with our old house as Daddy told us. And where have you seen daughters not even looking like their mother? We’re chubby while she’s a stick. And, let’s not forget how dark she is.”

Samarah: “Wa hlanya wena (you’re crazy). Besides, I’m not light either.”

Amarah: “That’s different – you’re coffee coloured. There’s a big difference between your melanin skin and her charcoal colour. You took dad’s skin tone. I’m telling you, she’s not our mother that one. Even Koko (granny) Thandi becomes dodgy when I ask her.”

Samarah: “That’s because you make her uncomfortable. Who asks such questions?”

Amarah: “One day, you’ll remember my words when I’m gone, Sammy. I’m telling you.”

Samarah: “Stop talking like that. You always say things like that as if you’re going to die.”

Amarah: “I don’t know, but I feel like I’m not meant to live a long life, you know. Do you ever get that feeling?”

Samarah: “No, wa gafa (you’re mad), let’s go.”

Amarah: (shrugging) “Okay then. But should I die an unnatural death, it would be Mama’s fault.”

Samarah: “Stop saying things like that. She’s waiting for us. We’ve been gone for so long. She’s most probably going to scold us.”

Amarah: “I don’t care.”

Unfortunately, only Richard could see that Amarah had taken his maternal grandmother’s personality, while Samarah was the spitting image of her mother, except for the mere fact that she was darker than Amarah. He couldn’t even talk about it to

anyone, since he and his mother had sworn to never talk about her ever again. As far as they were concerned, Grace was dead. While the twins walked in, they found their stepmother waiting on them rather annoyed.

Beatrice: (frowning) "You two surely took your time."

Samarah: "Sorry, Mama. We just walked a little slower than usual."

Amarah: "Ke di holidays (it's the holidays), man. Give us a break."

Beatrice: (angrily) "Wa reng (what did you just say), wena mpya (you dog)?"

Amarah: "Bathong (Goodness), Mama. Any mother would be so happy to see her own children every day now. Tell me, are you even our mother?"

Beatrice got up angrily from her chair, but Amarah was unfazed as usual.

Beatrice: (shouting) “How dare you ask me that?! I clothe and feed you and you ask me that bullshit?!”

Amarah: (shouting) “But I just asked a simple question. Why do you always have to shout at us?!”

Beatrice: “Wa bona wena (you see you)! You’re so disrespectful! You should know your place like Samarah! I should have given you more hidings as a child!”

Beatrice was about to lay her hand on Amarah, when she still shouted back. She wasn’t afraid of her at all.

Amarah: (shouting) “I dare you! In fact, I double dare you to do that and I’ll tell our dad how you treat us. Keep going and I’ll tell Koko (grandma) Thandi! You will be out of here in no time!”

Beatrice knew that Amarah would do it, unlike Samarah. She was very loud and Richard didn't like take any nonsense when it came to his children. He had his faults, but he loved them dearly.

Beatrice: (breathing heavily) "Go clean your room and get out of my sight!"

Samarah rushed to their bedroom while Amarah gave Beatrice one last dirty look. They shared a bedroom, that's how close they were. Once they were in their room, Samarah started crying and Amarah comforted her.

Amarah: "O llela eng (why are you crying)?"

Samarah: (crying) "I don't know. You need to stop antagonizing her."

Amarah: "Sammy, you need to stop being so soft. One day, when I'm gone, you'll remember my words."

Samarah: (shouting) “Stop saying that! Why are you being like this?”

Amarah: “As I told you, I don’t believe I’m supposed to live a long life, so I would like to prepare you for as long as I can. Stop being so soft, there won’t always be someone to hold your hand.”

Samarah was rather upset that Amarah kept saying things like that. She was so emotional ever since her outburst with her mother, but after they cleaned their already clean room, they decided to watch a movie on their tv together in bed.

Amarah: “I feel like popcorn. Do you want some?”

Samarah: “What about Mama?”

Amarah: “Ska wara ka oo (don’t worry about that one).”

As she was about to walk out of their bedroom, someone knocked twice and then opened. It was their dad. He always

did that and they always knew that two knocks meant it was him. Of course, they were elated to see their father after two weeks of only seeing him behind the cell phone screen. They ran towards him and hugged him. He had grown into a very handsome man and quite loved by the ladies as well, which really bothered Beatrice. He was still a neat freak, unlike Beatrice, who was a bit untidy. The house remained clean because she would over work those poor children when given the chance. Beatrice couldn't cook really well and Richard knew it but he loved her because he needed a mother for his twin daughters. He was under the impression that all was well. He loved her so much that he ate her food without complaining, even though he knew that she had cooked complete shit.

Amarah: "Oh, Papa (daddy). We missed you so much."

Richard: "I missed you two girls like crazy. Tell me, why is your face so puffy Sammy? Have you been crying?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, daddy."

Amarah: "Ah, wa go fora o (she's lying to you). She was crying."

Richard: (frowning) "Why? What happened?"

Samarah: "It's nothing."

Amarah: "Wa yaka (you're lying). Are you going to tell him or should I?"

Samarah: "Stop it."

Richard: (frowning) "Tell me what?"

Amarah: "Mama shouted at us and she nearly even beat me up. All because I asked her a simple question."

Richard: (angrily) "What? What did you ask her?"

Amarah: “I just asked her if she is in fact our mother because she treats us worse than an actual mother should. She got mad at me and nearly beat me up.”

Richard: (angrily) “Okay, I’ll sort it out. You guys can come down for dinner in five minutes, okay?”

They both nodded in agreement with their father and he walked out. Within a few seconds they could hear him shouting at Beatrice, while Amarah was laughing – leaving Samarah in a state of wonder.

Samarah: “Why did you do that?”

Amarah: “Someone needs to put her in her place, Sammy. We can’t possibly live such a shitty life at the hands of our real mother.”

Samarah: “You seriously have to stop saying such things.”

Amarah: "Oho, you don't believe me. I keep telling you of the woman who appears in my dreams. You think I'm playing."

Samarah: "I don't want to hear that. Now you just made our lives a living hell."

Amarah: "Oh, I dare her to try."

Richard: (shouting) "Girls, dinner is ready!"

Amarah: "See? I solved our little problem with our evil so called mother."

They both went down while Samarah's heart was palpitating abnormally. She had a really bad feeling, most probably because she was always afraid, unlike Amarah, who had a new found confidence in her step. She deliberately looked at Beatrice, who seemed like she was crying due to her red eyes, but Amarah was overjoyed that she was the one crying for a change. They sat on their chairs, as each of them had their own specific seats around the table.

Richard: "Let's pray."

Richard held out both his hands as his daughters sat on both his side, while Beatrice always sat right across Richard, one chair away from both the twins. They were used to it and as they grew older, they preferred it that way. So, she never got to hold their hands while they were blessing a meal. While Richard was praying, Amarah was always sneaky and she'd open one eye to watch Beatrice. Samarah could never understand why Amarah was so adamant that Beatrice wasn't their biological mother, until she overheard Thandi say something like that over the phone. Thandi ensured her that she misheard it, but children rarely lie and they never forget. Amarah could see Beatrice look at her with so much hatred

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but she was a child and a naughty and spiteful one at that. She poked her tongue out to Beatrice and gave a devious smile, aggravating Beatrice even more.

Richard: "Amen."

Amarah: "Amen, daddy. I loved that prayer so much. I so wish people could learn to be kinder, you know."

Richard: "No matter what, I raised you to be kind."

Amarah: "Always, daddy."

Richard had become a good father, but living with children taken from their mother was quite hypocritical. He was trying to live his best life, but at whose expense? They had a lovely meal with their father, while Beatrice was unbothered and remained quiet throughout the entire dinner. The girls chatted away with their father and even watched some tv with him. They slept late, since it wasn't a school night. He tucked them in and gave them both good night kisses.

Richard: "Daddy loves you, girls. Goodnight."

He closed the door and Amarah and Samarah had their usual night talk before bed time.

Amarah: "Sammy, promise me something."

Samarah: "What."

Amarah: "Promise me that you'll grow into a much stronger person."

Samarah: "I promise, but you'll be right by my side. Besides, I'm not weak, I'm just soft."

Amarah: "I know, but just promise me."

Samarah: "If you're going to tell me any more death stories, then I won't listen to you."

Amarah: "Come on, man. I love you, you know that."

Samarah: "I love you too. Now, let's sleep. I'm exhausted."

As they were sleeping, about two hours later, the door flung open. Amarah was a very light sleeper, while Samarah was a heavy one, but that night, they both got the fright of their lives. They jumped up and were shocked to see a livid Beatrice switching their bedroom light on.

Beatrice: (angry) “You little shit. You really think you can get rid of me like that?”

Samarah: (frightened) “Mama, why are you so angry?”

Beatrice: (shouting) “I’m not your mother, you little bitch!”

Amarah: “See? I told you.”

Beatrice: “You told her? You think you’re clever, don’t you? Yes, I am not your mother. I never was and I will never be. Your shitty mother died while giving birth to sorry excuses like you two!”

Samarah was in tears and so afraid, while Amarah just kept going.

Amarah: “You’re a liar. She’s not dead – she’s very much alive.”

Beatrice: “Oh, shame. Did your granny tell you to believe that so that your life could be a little better? The day I have my own children, I swear, I will get you two thrown into boarding school so that I never get to see you ever again!”

Amarah: “I’d love to see you try because you’ll never have your own children!”

Beatrice was fuming so much, that anger got the best of her. She rushed swiftly towards Amarah and started slapping her. Samarah was so shocked, she couldn’t move nor even say a word, while her sister still had some fighting spirit within her.

Amarah: (shouting) “Daddy! Papa! She’s killing me!”

All this while Samarah remained frozen in shock. Beatrice became so angry that her slaps weren't shutting Amarah up, so she banged her head against the floor about six times. She wasn't even counting. Just when Amarah's screams had gone silent, she got up and took it as if she had learnt her lesson. Beatrice got up and didn't even notice all the blood on her hands, while a few blood spats were on her face. She looked at the terrified Samarah and gave her a warning she'd never forget.

Beatrice: "Let this be a lesson to you as well. You should never cross me like your sister has tonight."

She stormed out without even switching the light off. Samarah sat on her bed in such a severe state of shock, staring at her sister's lifeless body. When she saw the immense amount of blood flowing out of her head onto the floor, she rushed towards her.

Samarah: (panicked) "Amarah! Amarah, wake up! Wake up, please."

She turned her over, and saw her swollen face covered with blood while she was being soaked with more blood flowing out of her head. She was so shocked, she couldn't do anything else but cry. She just looked at her sister slowly fading away. That entire scene ate at her, as she was lying on the blood-soaked carpet alongside her sister's bleeding body. She had been staring at it the entire night, with her body right in her arms. It was only then that Beatrice had gone straight to their room to check on them, to see if perhaps they would tell on her little abusive rant the previous night. She didn't think that she had actually murdered her step daughter, despite seeing all the blood on her hands and clothes before going back to bed. Once she opened the door, she was flabbergasted when she saw all the blood that went all the way to the bedroom door.

Beatrice: (shocked) "Oh, my God! Samarah! What did you do?!"

Samarah couldn't even speak, her tears had dried up and she just stared at Beatrice. She realized that Samarah might have had it in her to tell her father what her stepmother had done. Beatrice rushed towards Amarah and realized that she had no pulse. She was as cold as ice, while Samarah had her arms wrapped around her.

Beatrice: "You'd better not tell your father or anyone about what happened, do you hear me? Or else you will be shipped away or end up just like her."

She stared at Samarah, who just gave Beatrice an emotionless stare. She rushed back to her bedroom and called out for help to the neighbours. By then, Richard was not home. He had gone out early for a business meeting. All the while Samarah was just on the floor with her sister's body, until the people from the morgue came. Imagine that. A ten year old sitting on the floor alongside her sister's bleeding body for over 12 hours. That was enough to change her entire persona. When the morgue people came, she refused to let go of her. She was screaming and shouting until Beatrice forcefully removed her. She cried out in pain one last time as she saw her sister being put in that black body bag. By then, even her father wasn't notified. Beatrice was advised to take Samarah to the hospital, which was something she didn't even think of on her own. Only an hour later after the morgue people had taken Amarah's body, did she take her to the hospital. Samarah could hear nothing and no one around her. Her brain couldn't even function normally.

Beatrice: "Please help, doctor. My daughter is in shock. Her ten year old sister has just committed suicide."

Samarah was taken to the nearest Emergency ward and was taken care of. She couldn't respond to anyone, although she wanted to. She just had her sister's image in her head, more especially whenever she looked at Beatrice. She was given a sedative, only to be woken up hours later that evening, by her crying father holding her hand.

Richard: (crying) "Oh, my baby. You're awake. How are you feeling?"

Samarah couldn't speak, instead, all she could do was cry. It was hard for them to get information out of her, because she just couldn't talk. It was as if she had gone mute. Beatrice had to ensure that her little secret was safe, so she went into the ward as soon as she could hear Richard speaking to her.

Richard: "Do you need anything? I'm so sorry for what happened to your sister. And I promise you, I will do anything in my power to ensure that you are okay. I promise."

Samarah still couldn't speak, and Beatrice was dying to know her fate, so she came up with a quick plan.

Beatrice: "Richard, the police are here. They want to ask Sammy a few questions. Why don't you go sort them out while I stay here with her?"

Richard: (angrily) "My daughter has just died and they want to ask Sammy questions?! I'll be right back, baby girl."

The moment he closed that door, Beatrice's true colours were revealed, once again.

Beatrice: "You'd better listen to me, you little bitch. I swear, if you tell your father what really happened, I will send you to an early grave as well."

Samarah was still speechless, she just stared at Beatrice without saying a word. Beatrice thought that she was putting on an act, which was the reason why she just couldn't be

settled. She really thought that it was going to be the end of her. The entire time, she was around Samarah as much as she could be. When Thandi heard the news she was devastated, and when Richard insisted on getting an autopsy after seeing his daughter's swollen body without Beatrice knowing, it raised a serious concern for him. He started asking questions as to why the paramedics weren't called first before the morgue? Why Beatrice insisted on Amarah being declared dead without medical professionals doing it? He was so hurt to learn that she had suffered severe head trauma, which cracked her skull and led to instant bleeding and death. He didn't take it very well, and neither did Samarah. Even throughout the entire funeral, she still wasn't speaking. The entire time, Beatrice remained restless and on her feet the entire time. Right after the funeral, Samarah was in her bedroom alone. That was the perfect time for Beatrice to find out if she was acting or not. She was about to walk in and question the child, but Richard didn't want her alone with Samarah, so they went in together.

Richard: "Hey, baby. I know you must be going through a lot and us fussing over you just doesn't make it any easier."

Beatrice: "Yes, baby. Just know that we love you."

Richard just side-eyed her and she kept quiet.

Richard: "I need you to tell me what you can remember, please. What happened to Amarah?"

Samarah: "I don't know."

She managed to speak for the first time in a week.

Richard: "You really don't remember?"

Samarah: "Remember what?"

Richard: "You don't recall how Amarah died?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No."

Even after she had been taken to a psychologist for assessment, it was revealed that she had suffered severe shock and would possibly suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder later in life. Her brain had blocked out everything that happened that night which was traumatic, so she remembered nothing. So, in turn, there was no actual proof that Beatrice was the one who had committed that heinous crime. After realizing that indeed Samarah could remember nothing about that night, Beatrice went back to her old self. She could sleep again at night and convinced herself that it was indeed an accident. But then it was once said in Matthew 10 verse 28; “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

10

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

7 years later...

While it had been seven years since Amarah had passed on, her death had taken a serious toll on Samarah’s father and her grandmother Thandi. It took immense therapy to try and get her right, but she remembered nothing about that evening, even after hypno therapy, she still couldn’t remember anything. Richard had gone from pillar to post, from one traditional healer to another, visiting different churches just to get closure, but he kept getting the same answer. His daughter’s death damaged him more than anything he had ever endured in his life. His marriage with his wife suffered and Thandi seeing what had happened to Amarah, she didn’t want it to happen to Samarah. She had taken Samarah in to live with her ever since she turned 11, and she had been staying with her grandmother ever since. Richard was a full time businessman by then, and he was hardly home, making life even more miserable for Beatrice. By then, Samarah had blossomed into a

very beautiful 17 year old. She looked just like her mother, although she had taken her father's melanin complexion and dimples. Oddly, she also chose to venture into dreadlocks and the older she grew, the more she reminded them both of Grace. It was March holidays, and Thandi wanted to take her for an outing at the mall. Her father also came home to visit, and decided to pop in to check on the both of them.

Thandi: "Sammy, hurry up, will you? Your dad will be here any minute now. He is taking us out."

Samarah: "Okay, Koko (granny). I'll be right there."

She never understood why she was quite bigger than most girls, but she didn't have a problem with it. Her grandmother ensured that she felt comfortable at all times. She loved dresses, much like her mother, but whenever there was civvies at school, she didn't wear one as she felt quite out of place. She had one good friend, though, Lydia, who was her only friend, rather. She loved her to bits and she filled that void that was left by Amarah. They were so close people usually thought they were sisters. After trying on ample dresses, oddly, she chose one particular dress she bought the previous

year when she went Christmas shopping with her grandmother; a white dress with straps and red polka dots. She never understood her obsession with polka dots, but it just went to show that we inherit more than just looks and genes from our parents. She let her dreadlocks loose and took her hand bag with.

Thandi: "Oh, thank goodness. I was about to come drag you out of that room."

Samarah: "Sorry, Koko (granny)."

She gave her grandmother her usual smile. She was very soft, much, much softer than Amarah was. She didn't like noise or noisy places and noise always made her feel uncomfortable. Her therapist did tell her father that fights would trigger her, so they needed to be careful around her. She was an introvert; she loved reading a lot and enjoyed outings like movies, eating out and picnics.

Samarah: "So, where are we going?"

Thandi: "I was thinking Randburg Mall. You look so beautiful. I love that dress. Is it the one I bought for you last year on Christmas?"

Samarah: "Yes, it's nice, isn't it?"

Thandi: "It suits you so perfectly well."

Thandi just had a flashback of Grace in her own polka dress once upon a time, many years ago. She knew what she had done was wrong, but ultimately, greed doesn't pay. Richard walked in right on time.

Richard: (smiling) "How are my two most favourite ladies in the whole wide world doing?"

Thandi: "Hello, my son. We're doing just fine, how are you?"

Richard: "I'm great now that I am seeing you two."

He gave them hugs and kisses. No matter how busy Richard was then, he ensured to spend as much time with his daughter as possible. He did travel quite a lot, but his first stop when back was always at his mother's house. Beatrice saw him briefly, and that made her even more bitter. She never got to fall pregnant ever again as Amarah had told her just before she died. He looked at his daughter and admired the beautiful girl she had become. It was just a painful thing to watch, seeing that she resembled Grace so much. The Polka dots obsession made things really hard for him. He was starting to grow a heart, so it seemed. Regret and guilt had slowly become his daily bread.

Samarah: "Papa (dad), why are you looking at me like that?"

Richard: (chuckling) "No reason, my love. I am just admiring the beautiful woman you're turning into."

Samarah: (blushing) "You can be so dramatic at times. Can we go now? I have been waiting for this outing."

Richard: "Of course, let's go."

They all went out of the house while Thandi locked up.

Samarah: "I just have one question."

Richard: "Yes?"

Samarah: "Who gets the front seat?"

Thandi and Richard both laughed. Samarah was quite shy but she had a great sense of humor.

Richard: "Okay, I'll tell you what, how about you get the front seat just for today?"

Samarah: (excitedly) "May I, Koko (granny)?"

Thandi: "Of course, my baby. You may."

They got into her father's car and drove off. Randburg Square was the best mall to visit, and it wasn't that far from Ferndale. It was their usual family drive filled with lots of banter and laughter, but the thoughts and fear would always play at the back of their minds with each day that she grew older. They started off at one of her favourite restaurants where they ordered some food. They ate and talked about almost anything and everything, and even had some space for dessert that day.

Samarah: "I'll be right back, I'm going to the ladies room."

Thandi: "Okay, my darling."

It seemed to be the perfect opportunity for the both of them to start hashing out any new developments.

Thandi: "So, how's it going?"

Richard: (shaking head) “Not so good. Business seems to be booming, but something just feels off. I’m losing more money than I am actually making.”

Thandi: “Maybe we should have a ceremony, you know, an ancestral ceremony. Besides, we have never really introduced the twins to them. Perhaps that is why Amarah died.”

Richard: (angrily) “She died because Beatrice killed her!”

Thandi: “It’s no use speculating because we have no proof.”

Richard: “I know she did it.”

Thandi: “Don’t worry about that, every dog has its day.”

Richard: “What about us, Ma? I mean, we did what we did to Grace. It eats me up every single day. I wish I could tell Sammy the truth. The truth about everything.”

Thandi: “Don’t you dare! Do you want to lose her? You have fought so hard to have her and now you want to throw it all away?”

Richard: “I honestly feel like the ancestors are punishing me, Mama.”

Thandi: “That’s why we have to set the record straight with the ritual.”

Richard: “But, your family won’t even be there.”

Thandi: “My brothers know we did what we had to do. I’ll give them a call. We’ll be fine.”

Little did they know that history was about to repeat itself in a more brutal way than what Richard had done to Grace. Samarah was almost a woman, well, as most men saw her then. She was fit enough to date – given a man were to spot her there. She came back from the restroom and they enjoyed their dessert before heading out to the shops for some

shopping. They went into one of the clothing shops and picked up a few items all spoils from her father. She wandered in one of the aisles, while Richard went to make a few business calls, and while Thandi was being Thandi

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she was shopping in the lingerie section. While Samarah was trying to get the best fitting clothes from the rack, she stumbled across the most beautiful guy she had ever seen.

Man: "Sawubona, Ntombi (Hello, beautiful)."

Samarah took one look at him and knew that he was the man of her dreams. She wasn't really interested in boys and most boys her age only wanted girls who were thinner or had hour glass shaped bodies. She was perfect in that guy's eyes.

Samarah: (nervously) "Excuse me?"

Man: (chuckling) "Oh, ngiyaxolisa (I'm so sorry). I assumed you know how to speak iSiZulu."

Samarah: (shaking head) “I only pick up on it. I can’t really respond much to save my life.”

They both laughed.

Man: “Awusemuhle (you’re so beautiful). One of these days, I’ll make you my wife, and I’ll be able to call you, MaDladla (Mrs. Dladla).”

She blushed. She had never been showered by compliments like that – ever.

Samarah: “Oh, please. Who wants to have such a big woman?”

Man: “In my culture, men don’t go for thin woman who look like they’ve been starved. A big woman represents strength. You are the most beautiful creature I’ve ever seen. Ungubani (what is your name)?”

Samarah: “Oh, my name is Samarah, but you can call me Sammy.”

Man: (frowning) “Aibo (Goodness), that is not a black name, is it?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, it’s Hebrew.”

Man: “Nonetheless, it’s a beautiful name. My name is Langa, Langa Dladla, but you can call me your future husband.”

She couldn’t help but blush and laugh all at the same time. He was quite light, handsome and tall. His body was that of a fit man who seemed to enjoy working out. He was dressed appropriately, but one could tell that he wasn’t rich. He had a neatly trimmed beard and no hair on his head. He didn’t seem much older than her, but Thandi could hear Samarah’s giggles all the way from her aisle and she rushed over to see what she was up to. She didn’t like what she saw.

Thandi: (frowning) “Sammy, is everything alright? Who’s this?”

She gave him a filthy look, the same filthy look she had given Grace years ago when her son fell for her. Langa extended his hand for a handshake, but she didn't receive it.

Langa: "Oh, ngiyaxolisa (forgive me), Ma. My name is Langa Dladla."

Thandi: "And you're old. Can't you see that she's only 17?"

Langa: "Oh, hayi (no), bengizixoxela naye nje (I was only talking to her). I didn't mean any harm."

Thandi: (annoyed) "Sammy, let's go."

Samarah: "But Koko (granny), I haven't bought anything yet."

Thandi: (shouting) "Now!"

She left everything she had taken from that rack, and greeting Langa goodbye with a smile.

Samarah: (smiling) “Goodbye.”

Langa: “See you soon, Ntombenhle (beautiful).”

Langa had no idea where she even stayed, but he knew that he was going to see her again – one way or another. Samarah also had no idea where he was actually from or what he was even doing for a living, but she was chuffed by such a gorgeous man showing interest in her. She couldn’t stop blushing even though her grandmother was reprimanding her about talking to boys she didn’t even know.

Thandi: (angrily) “Have I not warned you about boys, Sammy?! They want one thing and one thing only!”

Samarah: (smiling) “But Koko (granny) didn’t you say that you met grandpa when you were just 14?”

Thandi: (shouting) “That’s exactly why I don’t want you messing around with boys!”

Samarah: "You're just being dramatic. Can't a boy just show interest in me for once? Or am I not worthy of attention?"

Thandi: "That's not what I meant."

Samarah: "I'll be waiting in the parking lot. Please tell daddy that I'm tired of shopping for nothing."

Thandi realized then that she was in deep shit. Her grand daughter was in love with a boy she had just met. She remembered that look; she experienced it with her husband and she saw it with Richard and Grace, and now, it was happening to Samarah. "That boy didn't even look like he was from a good family", she thought to herself. She knew that the more she argued with Samarah about him, the more she would push her away, just like what happened between Richard and Grace. Things were slowly falling apart and she just didn't even realize it. That time, Thandi was looking for Richard who was nowhere to be seen, while Samarah deliberately headed to the parking lot with hopes of seeing Langa again. He didn't take her numbers, so how else was she going to meet him again? Meanwhile, Langa was head over heels, he had seen the

woman of his dreams; she had the perfect skin, the most beautiful dimples he had ever seen and what he called “An African Body”. He didn’t even know she was 17 and he didn’t even mind at all. He had parked his taxi right outside the mall when he was walking swiftly whistling in joy. He found his brother, Vusi, waiting for him just outside his taxi.

Vusi: “Hey ndoda (man). Where were you? Did you even bring what I asked you to bring?”

Langa: “Eish (Oh), sorry, mfo (bro). Ngikhohliwe (I forgot).”

Vusi: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, weh (hey), Langa. I send you to do one thing and you just couldn’t do it?”

Langa: “Hawu (goodness), Vusi. You sent me to buy pads for your girlfriend. Why ungazenzeli entlek (don’t you do it yourself)?”

Vusi: “Oho, wait until you find a woman. I don’t even know what kind of woman would be interested in someone like you.”

Langa: “Too late, bafo (brother). I’ve just met the woman of my dreams, the one I’m going to marry, MaDladla (Mrs. Dladla).”

Vusi: (laughing) “You must be joking. She must be ugly to even be interested in someone like you.”

Langa: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, you’ll see her. There’s nothing ugly about her.”

Vusi: (laughing) “Oho, stop talking nonsense. Let’s go to the shop together so that I can buy those things for Vee. She’ll skin me alive if I return empty handed.”

They locked the taxi and headed back into the mall on foot. While Vusi was laughing at Langa non-stop, he saw Samarah yet again, standing right outside the parking lot leaned against her father’s Lexus.

Langa: “Bafo (bro), there she is.”

He pointed at her and Vusi was too shocked to even believe his brother. He was so shocked, that he laughed again.

Vusi: (laughing) “No fucking way, bro. She’s standing right next to a Lexus, which means she’s from a rich family. A girl like that will never look your way, man.”

Langa: “Usho kanjalo (is that so)? I’ll show you.”

While Vusi was laughing he slowly walked towards the mall entrance and once he saw Samarah smiling back at Langa, he knew that she was smitten with his brother. Little did she know the kind of family they were from. It wasn’t going to work. They were smiling briefly and she gave him her number; she had the latest iPhone in her hand, while he was walking around with a phone that had no camera even. He walked back to Vusi with so much pride and a smirk on his face.

Vusi: “That’s the one, Bafo (brother)? That’s the woman you want to marry?”

Langa: (smiling) “The one and only. Samarah Moloji. She’s beautiful, isn’t she?”

Vusi: “She’s a gem, but you know girls like that, bafo (brother). They never go for guys like us. Plus, she’s not even from our tribe. uMa (Mom) will never allow it.”

Langa: “I don’t care. I’m telling you that I’m going to marry her.”

Vusi: “You can’t even afford University fees, bafo (bro). This is the reason why we drive taxis for a living. Face it, you’re too poor for her.”

Langa: “You are just jealous, asihambe (let’s go).”

A lot of people go around speaking about generational curses, but they don’t really know where they stem from. What happened to Grace, was about to happen to her own daughter, but with the aim to hurt Samarah, but with the aim to hurt the ones who had wronged her and her entire family. Bloodlines

are powerful and some ancestors are more powerful than others, while some punish a lot more and harder than others. We should always be careful whom we have children with, because the consequences are so dire that the sins and choices of the parents befall the children. Hebrews 13 verse 8 says; "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Ezekiel 18 verse 20 says; "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." Richard was soon to learn the power of this verse.

11

“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge’?”

Samarah was so head over heels, while standing in that parking lot alone, awaiting her angry grandmother and her father. After about 15 minutes of waiting, they finally found her standing right alongside the car. She wasn't even bothered by the fact that she had been waiting for so long. New love does that to people. Her father was rather upset about finding her waiting alone, in the parking lot of the mall and she was on her phone.

Richard: (angrily) “Sammy! What were you thinking standing here alone with a phone in your hands like that?! It's so careless of you!”

Samarah: “I'm sorry. I was just waiting for you two.”

Thandi: “You could have waited with me inside the mall, but no, you just wanted to see that boy. In fact, he’s not even a boy – he’s a man!”

Samarah: “Aowa, Koko (no, granny).”

Richard: “I don’t want to talk about such here. Let’s get in the car and leave.”

Samarah went to the back seat instead of the front seat she had been dying for, which left both her father and grandmother puzzled.

Richard: “And then?”

Samarah: “The sun is scorching hot. I’d like to sit in the back for this ride.”

Thandi and Richard both looked at one another. They knew that wasn’t good. The ride back home was awfully quiet. Richard had plans to go see his wife just as a courtesy

call, but Thandi ensured that she alarmed him. Once he parked the car, Samarah headed straight to her bedroom.

Thandi: “Wa bona (You see)? We can’t delay the ceremony. It’s been long overdue.”

Richard: “Mama, she’s just a teen. We’ve all been there. She’s bound to have a boyfriend anyway.”

Thandi: (chuckling) “If only you had seen that boy. He’s not our kind of people and he seems older than her.”

Richard: (sigh) “Mama, come on.”

Thandi: “I’m serious. I’m going to call my brothers right away.”

Richard: “Fine, do what you must do.”

Thandi: “Before you leave, just go talk to her.”

Richard: “And say what? Ban her from dating? That will only drive a wedge between us.”

Thandi: “Just make her see reason then. Tell her to focus on her studies instead or something.”

Richard: (sigh) “Fine.”

Richard headed to Samarah’s bedroom and knocked twice before opening the door. He had been doing that ever since they were babies. Samarah was on her phone with headphones in her ears, smiling ear to ear. Once she noticed it was her father who had walked in, she removed her earphones and stopped whatever it is she was doing. She always had immense respect for her father, and she wasn’t about to start disrespecting him then.

Richard: (smiling) “May I sit?”

Richard was not a bad father at all, oh, no, he just made terrible choices that completely changed the fate of his children – and their mother.

Samarah: (nodding) “Of course, Daddy.”

He sat on the edge of the bed.

Richard: “How are you, really? It’s been so long since we have actually had a good chat, you know?”

Samarah: “Dad, we talk every day over the phone.”

Richard: “I know, it’s not the same, though.”

Samarah: “I am happy, really. I don’t have issues if that’s what you’re asking. Koko is treating me really well and I don’t want to go back to stay with Mama, if that’s what you’re really asking me.”

Richard: “No, that’s not what I’m asking you at all. I’d never force you to do something you don’t want to do. I mean, more especially after Amarah died in that house, you know.”

Samarah: (shrugging) “I don’t remember that, you know that.”

Richard: “I know. I wasn’t trying to force you to remember. I’m just saying that I want you to know that I love you and I only want the best for you.”

Samarah: “I know, Papa (daddy).”

Richard: “And if you ever need to talk, know that I’m always available. No amount of business can overshadow your existence and importance.”

Samarah: “I know, daddy. I love you too.”

Richard gave her a tight hug before leaving. He left while his mother was still on the phone and went to his house. Upon arrival, he found his wife drinking wine and watching tv. She

had lost so much weight and one could barely even recognize her. Richard's love for her deteriorated massively ever since Amarah's death.

Richard: "Knock knock, I'm home."

Beatrice's face lit up once she heard his voice. She ran up to him and gave him a hug and once she was about to kiss him, he moved his lips away.

Beatrice: "What's wrong? Aren't you happy to see me?"

Richard: "Yes, I am. Why wouldn't I be?"

Beatrice: "You don't seem happy. I mean, you don't want to kiss me."

Richard: "It's just been a long day."

Beatrice: "Want to talk about it?"

Richard: "No. I need a shower. I'll be right back."

Richard was so cold towards his wife, which angered her even more. As soon as he was in the shower, she went up to the bedroom and noticed that he had left his phone on his bedside. She never had access to his phone, but the last time he had a password on it, she recalled it was the twins' birthday. She tried it and indeed she had access. Something within her gut told her that Richard was cheating on her. He hardly called her and whenever he was home he wouldn't come straight to her house. They hardly were intimate and she couldn't even remember the last time he had told her that he loved her. A woman's intuition will never betray her. Beatrice indeed found messages and both incoming and outgoing calls from another woman. They were consistent; from SMS's to WhatsApp messages. He had even told that particular woman that he was going to divorce Beatrice for her, and that he was certain enough she had killed Amarah. She was broken, of which no one would have understood had they known what she did. She was shaking as she was crying in utter disbelief. It is amazing how much pain affects you when you're the recipient. She decided to save the numbers on her phone and put the phone down before she walked back downstairs. She

started thinking of a plan in silence, without anyone knowing, but in turn, had she been a little kind to those children, she might have had a good husband in return and perhaps just one child of her own. Her heart was too bitter to open up any blessings. When Richard came back down he didn't make things any easier.

Richard: "So, what's for dinner?"

Beatrice was trying so hard not to cry when she noticed he only took a shower in preparation to leave again, since he was smelling so nice.

Beatrice: "I haven't cooked yet."

Richard: "Oh, so you thought we were going to have wine for dinner?"

He shook his head and headed for the kitchen.

Beatrice: "Where are you going?"

Richard: "Business meeting. Don't wait up."

Little did he know that Beatrice was one step ahead of him. She already knew that there was no business meeting he was going to, but a meeting with his mistress. The famous saying; "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" is still applicable even today. Beatrice only thought of herself in that case, and of no one else. She had no idea what impact her actions had, but only thought of her endurance. Richard had a choice after he was told by over 5 Sangomas what had happened to his daughter; he had a choice to either leave or stay and he stayed. As to why, nobody knew – not even himself. But in actual fact, he stayed because he just couldn't face the world alone; face his demons and actions. He just needed someone by his side though he didn't love her any more. Beatrice didn't want to accept that – she refused. She walked out of her mother's house feeling like she had bagged a millionaire when she got married and was bragging to everyone, so going back home in her bags was not an option. It was either that – or become a widow, and life had shown her on many occasions that losing a person was better than any humiliation. Just like that, Richard walked out on his heartbroken wife and didn't even notice. It didn't take Langa

very long to contact Samarah. She was expecting to see an incoming WhatsApp message or find him on Facebook. She had been searching Langa Dladla, up to no avail. After hours of fantasizing about him, he called her. She saw an unrecognized number coming through and she answered it.

Samarah: "Hello?"

Langa: "Ntombenhle (Beautiful), kunjani (how are you)?"

Her body immediately responded with a million butterflies.

Samarah: "I'm well, thanks. How are you?"

Langa: "Awu ngizizwa ngingcono kabi (I feel so much better) now that I'm talking to you. uFike kahle ekhaya (did you arrive home safely)?"

Samarah: "Yes, I did. And you?"

Langa: “Hayi (No), I’m alright.”

She gathered that Langa wasn’t much of an English speaker. He spoke the basics and only spoke Zulu in most instances, but that wasn’t a bother to her. His voice and allure were so deep that she just couldn’t stop thinking about.

Langa: “Eish (Oh), Nkosazana (Princess), I was thinking if maybe I could take you out tomorrow?”

Samarah: “I’ll have to ask my father or grandmother. I mean, they don’t like me taking taxis to the mall.”

Langa: “I could come fetch you.”

Samarah: (frowning) “You have a car?”

Langa: “Something like that.”

Samarah: “Forgive me for asking, but how old are you?”

Langa: (chuckling) “Oh, hayi (no), I’m 20, Nkosazana (Princess).”

Samarah: “Oh, I’m 17. This is going to be a problem – not for me, but for my family.”

Langa: “Oh, I don’t mind meeting them myself, just so they know you’ll be safe.”

Samarah: “Let me speak to them first then I’ll get back to you.”

That was enough to send Langa on cloud 9.

Langa: (excitedly) “Kulungile lokhu (That’s fine). I can’t wait to see you again, weh Samarah.”

Samarah: (shyly) “Me too. Bye for now.”

Langa: “Bye bye.”

As soon as they hung up the phone, Samarah's heart was jumping for joy. She never expected to feel like that about a boy – ever. She decided to call Lydia right away and tell her the good news.

Lydia: "My Bff."

Samarah: "Lydia, you won't believe what just happened."

Lydia: "What? Did you find him on Facebook?"

Samarah: "No, he called me."

Lydia: "And? What did he say?"

Samarah: "He says he'd like to take me out tomorrow."

Lydia: “Eh, isn’t that a bit too soon? I mean you don’t know the guy and you don’t even know where he’s from. How old is he even? What does he study?”

Samarah: “I haven’t gone that far yet, but he’s 20.”

Lydia: “Okay, that’s not too bad, but I have a feeling your parents won’t like this guy. In fact, what if he’s a serial killer? I mean he doesn’t even have a Facebook account.”

Samarah: “Lydia, you can be so dramatic.”

Lydia: “I’m serious, Sammy. I mean, have you forgotten what happened to Florence last year?”

Florence was a fellow school mate of theirs who was kidnapped and raped by a guy she herself met on Facebook.

Samarah: “I know that, but this is different. I met him at the mall and he seems really nice.”

Lydia: “If you say so, but I’d like to be there – at least watch you from a distance. And knowing your grandmother, she won’t let you go without her. As for daddy Rich, he will never even approve of this.”

She had a point; Richard was terrified of allowing her to date as yet, but on the other hand, if he refused it she would have ended up just like Grace, if not worse.

Samarah: “Which is why I want to talk to the both of them right now. I want to ask them for permission.”

Lydia: “You do that and get back to me ASAP. I still don’t understand which rock he is living under. I mean who on earth does not have a social media profile in this day and age?”

Samarah didn’t like the tinge of negativity Lydia was spreading on her parade.

Samarah: "People are different, Lydia. Maybe he just doesn't like social media."

Lydia: "Or maybe he doesn't have a clue on how it works or something. But let me not be negative. I haven't met the guy and I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. I'll see you soon."

Samarah: "Bye for now."

She hung up and headed straight to her grandmother, whom she found sitting in the lounge, deep in thought with a glass of wine in her hand.

Samarah: "Koko (Granny), are you fine?"

Thandi: "Oh, Sammy. Yes, I'm okay. I just spoke to your uncles. They'll be coming to help us with the ceremony in two days' time."

Samarah: "What ceremony?"

Thandi: "Oh, I forgot to tell you. We'll be doing a ceremony for you, something we should have done a very long time ago when you and Amarah were born."

Samarah: "Oh, okay. I was under the impression that we didn't believe in those things."

Thandi: "We do – we have to. Everyone has ancestors, Sammy. Perhaps this is just what we need to ensure that life goes well for you."

Samarah: "Oh, okay then. Anyway, I came to ask you something."

Thandi: "Yes?"

Samarah: (clearing throat) "Langa would like to take me out tomorrow, so can I go?"

Thandi: (frowning) "Who is Langa?"

Samarah: (giggling) "Oh

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he's the boy I met earlier today."

Thandi: (angrily) "The answer is no."

Samarah: "But Koko (granny) – "

Thandi: "I said no! You're too young to be dating boys – worst of all boys like him!"

Samarah: (surprised) "What do you mean boys like him? You don't even know him."

Thandi: "You don't know him either! I mean boys like him who are not from families like ours!"

Samarah was very shocked that her grandmother chose to speak of Langa like that.

Samarah: “Wow, Koko (granny), so just because he might not have as much money as you do, it might mean that he is not good enough for me?”

Thandi: “I didn’t say that.”

Samarah: “You didn’t have to. Your statement is so shallow and I honestly thought that you raised me better than that.”

Thandi: “Sammy, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it like that.”

Samarah: “If you don’t allow me to go on that date, I’ll assume that you’re incredibly selfish.”

With that said, she left her grandmother standing in the middle of the sitting room in wonder. Thandi had her own stress to begin with, as her sins were starting to catch up with her. Samarah was adding to her list of problems, by falling for

the wrong boy – according to her. Richard fell for the wrong girl and history was repeating itself in the most horrible way possible. People like Thandi, who were too self-centered to notice, didn't care about anyone else's feelings but their own. She never once attempted to put her son's happiness before her own. Often times, mothers in law treat their children's partners the same way their mothers in law treated them. Instead of changing the entire narrative that in-laws are always horrible, they just repeat the same mistake. Samarah went to bed rather upset that her grandmother wouldn't grant her permission. When she tried contacting Richard, his phone went straight to voicemail. She had no idea he was not even home, but she took the chance and called Beatrice.

Beatrice: "Hello?"

Samarah: "Hi, Mama, is Papa home?"

Beatrice: "Oh, it's you. No, he's not. I thought he'd be with you."

Samarah: "No."

Beatrice: "Okay, then. Is there anything else?"

Samarah: "No."

Beatrice: "Well, alright then."

Just like that, Beatrice hung up the phone. Despite all Beatrice's efforts to show Samarah she's not interested in being a mother to her, Samarah still couldn't see it. She refused to see that perhaps she wasn't her biological mother. She had gotten used to Beatrice's behaviour and it didn't bother her as much as it used to when she was a lot younger. She decided to say a prayer before bed, something she used to do but not as often as she needed to. Her grandmother Thandi was no church goer, and they didn't pray before eating or just for no reason. Thandi was behaving more like a heathen. The morning came and Samarah was a little depressed. A text message from Langa made her day all worse. "Sawubona Ntombenhle (Hello, beautiful). Ngicela ilocation yakho (please send me your location). Langa."

She didn't respond. How else was she going to tell him that her grandmother didn't want her going on her very first date? It was about 10am that morning. She was usually an early bird, but even the earliest bird could be a little late if it's a little under the weather. Her grandmother was also going through drama of her own – drama she had told no one about, and drama she had been wrestling with in her dreams. She was too afraid to tell Richard because it would just break him. She was given an ultimatum, of which she still hadn't adhered to. When the time comes and you can't negotiate with ancestors, danger lurks. She had hardly slept and woke up with a glass of wine. By the time Richard came, she was halfway through the bottle.

Richard: (happily) "Good morning!"

Thandi: "Yes."

Richard: (frowning) "Mama, drinking so early in the morning?"

Thandi: (frowning) "You out of all people are judging me?"

Richard: "I wasn't judging you. Anyway, where's Samarah?"

Thandi: "In her room."

Richard: "At this time?"

Thandi: "She's probably upset because I wouldn't let her go on that stupid date of hers."

Richard: (frowning) "What date?"

Thandi: (sigh) "That poor boy asked her out on a date. They're supposed to go today."

Richard: (surprised) "Why did you say no?"

Thandi: "What else was I supposed to say? Do you want her to make the same mistake you did?"

Richard: "You know damn well I loved Grace."

Thandi: "You didn't love her enough to stay faithful to her."

Richard: "You know very well you're the reason why I did what I did. Had it not been for you, Grace and I would have probably raised our children together! Amarah would have been alive by now."

Thandi: "Ao (oh)? Is that so? You're blaming me for your choices, son. The truth is – you made those choices by yourself – all of them. You could have chosen not to take the twins away, but you chose to do it."

Richard: "You know what? I don't even want to go into that with you."

Thandi: "If you have suddenly decided to grow a conscience – now's the time to redeem yourself. Go and find Grace and tell her everything – repent! O tlogele go ntena (and stop annoying me)!"

Richard didn't want to argue with his mother, instead, he chose to do what his mother never did with him all those years ago – to give his daughter the benefit of the doubt. He chose to allow her to see things for herself. Perhaps, had he allowed her to go on that date, she would have realized if he wasn't a good man to her. He didn't want to judge anyone based on their financial state or family background. He didn't want to be like his mother, although it was a tad bit too late. He knocked twice on her door and opened. He found her lying in bed with her phone in her hands.

Richard: "Sammy, are you okay?"

Samarah: "Koko must have already told you."

Richard: (chuckling) "Now what's with the sad face?"

Samarah: "Come on, Papa. We both know you always agree with her."

Richard: "Says who?"

That gave Samarah a glimpse of hope as she sat up.

Samarah: "What do you mean?"

Richard: "I mean, you can go on the date."

Samarah sprung right from her bed and gave her father a tight hug.

Samarah: (excitedly) "Thank you, daddy! Thank you so much!"

Richard: "Okay, provided I get to meet him first. I don't want to hear you've been kidnapped or killed."

Samarah: (nodding) "Sure. He will come pick me up. He asked for my location earlier on."

Richard had a feeling he might have been a little older, but him having a car gave him a glimmer of hope; perhaps he wasn't as poor as Thandi had described him.

Richard: "Alright then. I'll be in the lounge."

Samarah sent Langa a location immediately after her father left and he called to thank her and told her he'd be there soon. She was too excited, but she chose to wear a dress yet again, with a light jean jacket. Once she was ready, she added lip gloss as the final touch up on her face, since she was not big on make up at all. Lydia had been texting her all morning to ask her what the status was, but she decided she'd surprise her. She went down to meet her father and grandmother, and of course Thandi was very displeased about the entire thing.

Richard: (smiling) "You look lovely, my baby."

Samarah: "Thanks, dad."

Richard: "What time is he coming?"

They heard a car stopping right outside.

Samarah: "I think that's him."

Richard: "Okay, then. Let's go meet him."

Samarah couldn't wait for him to get inside the yard, so her father and grandmother followed her out. The three of them were quite stunned to see Langa pull up – in a taxi. Samarah wasn't very shocked, she didn't mind at all, while Thandi looked at Richard with the "I told you so" look. Richard already knew by then that he was not the kind of man he wanted his daughter to end up with, but he knew better than to tell her that at that point. Langa looked incredibly handsome, much like the typical Zulu boy. He had a simple Jeans and Tshirt on with those white and black Maskandi sandals. He looked really polite, though. Once they gate was opened, he removed his hat as a sign of respect and walked towards the three of them.

Langa: (clearing throat) "Sawubona (Hello) Mama, Sawubona (Hello) Baba (father). My name is Langa, Langa Dladla."

Judging by his Zulu accent and poor English, they both assumed that he wasn't very educated at all. Thandi reluctantly shook his hand, and Richard gladly shook it.

Richard: "Hello, Langa. It is a pleasure to meet you. If I may ask, where do you come from? We don't have taxi's in this side of the neighbourhood."

Langa: "Oh, hayi (no), ngiphuma eSoweto (I come from Soweto). I live there, but my route is to and from Randburg Mall."

Richard: "Oh, I see. Please, be so kind as to bring my daughter back by 5pm the latest."

Langa: (smiling) "Of course. Nisale kahle (Stay well)."

They greeted both Samarah and Langa goodbye. Langa was even kind enough to open the door for Samarah. Chivalry was still alive after all.

Thandi: “I don’t know if this is the perfect time to say, “I told you so.”

Richard clicked his tongue and went back into the house. Meanwhile, Langa was very much excited to finally get a chance to woo Samarah.

Langa: “Yoh (Oh), Nkosazana (princess), your father seems quite scary.”

Samarah: “He’s just strict. He always has been. Were you afraid?”

Langa: “Qha (no), not at all. I just respect him as my future father-in-law.”

Samarah always blushed whenever he said that. That showed that he was very serious about her.

Samarah: "Please turn around this corner. I'd like us to fetch my best friend. She said she wanted to keep an eye on you, you know. In case you turned out to be a serial killer."

Langa: (laughing) "Oh, hayi (no), it's not a problem. She's just looking out for you, which is absolutely okay."

They got to Lydia's house and stopped right at the gate.

Samarah: "Give me a second, I'll go and fetch her."

Langa: "Qha (No), Nkosazana (Princess). Please, I can never allow you to open your own door while I'm in the car with you."

He rushed to her side and opened the door for her.

Samarah: "Thank you. I won't be long."

Langa nodded and leaned against his car. Whilst waiting for her, he took out his cigarette for a quick smoke. He admired

Samarah and the fact that she had come from quite an established family. He however wondered if he would be good enough for her family. He wasn't blind; so he did notice how Thandi was looking at him. Of course, no father would want to hand over his child to a mere taxi driver. They all knew how dangerous the taxi business was and exactly how much a taxi driver made. He had something burning within him – hope. He had all the confidence in the world despite what his brother Vusi had told him; that they weren't compatible at all. While he was outside, pondering his mind about his newfound situation, Samarah went to fetch Lydia, unbothered by the fact that a taxi driver was right outside her gate.

Lydia: (surprised) “Sammy, I thought you weren't going on the date anymore.”

Samarah: “My dad gave me permission.”

Lydia: “Eh (oh), your grandmother must be pissed.”

Samarah: “Come on, he's waiting for us outside. You're going to delay us. Go change.”

Lydia rushed to her bedroom so that she could peep right out the window. She was quite shocked to find an unknown guy leaning against a taxi.

Lydia: (frowning) “Did he come here with you in a taxi? Where is he?”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Lydia: “I mean I see the driver, but where is he?”

Samarah: “That’s him. He’s the driver.”

Lydia was flabbergasted.

Lydia: “Are you serious?! That is Langa?! The Langa?!”

Samarah: “Wa rasa le wena (you’re making noise). He might just hear you.”

Lydia: “Sorry, but I didn’t expect my best friend to fall for a taxi driver. No offence.”

Samarah: “His job doesn’t define him, Lydia. Don’t be like that.”

Lydia: “Askies (sorry), friend. Let me quickly change. You’re lucky my parents aren’t home, otherwise they’d think that you’re dating a really old guy.”

Samarah: “He doesn’t look that old, does he?”

Lydia: “Any guy driving a taxi looks old to our parents. An Uber might have been better, though.”

Samarah was starting to worry. If her best friend had such reservations about Langa, then it meant that everyone had the same thoughts about him. They finally walked out of the house

with Lydia growing even more weary of him as time went on. Langa was very happy to see Samarah's friend.

Langa: "Sawubona, sisi (hello, sis). I'm Langa."

Lydia: "Hi, I'm Lydia. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Langa opened the door for Lydia and she stepped in. At least the taxi was clean, though, she thought. Samarah was placed in the front, right next to Langa. Lydia took that time to reflect on what was happening before her. Langa seemed really nice, but she had to be honest to herself; he wasn't the kind of man that Samarah should have gone for. "How will they even afford a house together? If she goes to University, will he still be a taxi driver? What kind of family does he even have? What if his family feels that she is from a rich family and they end up mistreating her?" Those were the kind of questions Lydia was asking herself. His poor English really set Lydia off. "Was that really the best she could do? Sure, he's hot – very hot, but looks won't pay the bills". "Did he even finish school, though? Oh, my goodness, I hope he doesn't take her out to KFC or Nando's or something". Only time would tell what kind of man Langa really was. No one really shows anyone their true colours the first time they meet, right?

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Poor Samarah, she had given the first guy she laid eyes on the benefit of the doubt, of which many in the world are guilty of. She saw nothing wrong with him being a little less financially stable, after all, it is the thought that counts, right? He drove them to the mall and opened their doors. That was very nice of him. He walked in between them so that Lydia wouldn't feel out of place. No one looked at them funny, it was all in Lydia's mind. She really didn't think they were compatible at all, but chose to remain mum.

Langa: “Sisi (sis), are going to join us?”

Lydia: “Oh, no. This is your first date. I could never. I'll be around. You guys can call me once it is time to go back home.”

Samarah was actually relieved, because it was her very first date with someone of the opposite sex. She didn't need to feel

uncomfortable whilst Lydia was judging her potential boyfriend throughout the entire date.

Langa: “Kulungile ke (Alright then). We’ll see you later.”

Lydia chose to wait and see which restaurant they were going to. She thought he would have chosen something a little more intimate and sophisticated like Cuppachino’s or something, but as she suspected, he seemed as if he wanted to take her to KFC. “Tjo (oh), aowa (no), Langa, ga o serious (you’re not serious)”, she thought. Langa began scratching his head while they were right outside of KFC.

Samarah: “Is everything alright?”

Langa: “Eish (Oh), Ntombenhle (beautiful), I was planning on taking you to KFC, but I just realized that it might result in me embarrassing myself.”

Samarah: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

Langa: “I mean, you are used to the high life, Nkosazana (princess), and I cannot possibly downgrade your life like that. Which one is your favourite restaurant?”

She didn't want to bankrupt the poor guy. I mean, he was a taxi driver after all, so she thought that he might have used all his checking that day to take her out. That didn't seem fair.

Samarah: “Honestly, KFC is just fine with me. I love it.”

Langa seemed rather relieved that she actually chose KFC. He had budgeted R500 for that day, which was all he had left from his previous day's checking. He had explained to his father that he needed to take out the woman of his dreams, and his father was very understanding, however, he had to make up for it by working the weekend. Samarah however, made the first biggest mistake of her life in that relationship on that day – she settled. Yes, sure, he most probably couldn't have afforded any other restaurant, but had she asked him how much he had hoped to spend, he could have been able to afford something like Spur and even the Cuppachinno's that Lydia was hoping for. R500 was a decent amount for a simple meal and drinks for two people. Samarah led the way and they entered KFC and

ordered their meal with drinks. She settled for a Twister meal, while he chose meat. He was Zulu after all. There was absolutely nothing wrong with KFC, however it wasn't very intimate for them since there were so many people walking in and out and talking over one another, but they made the most of it. Nothing else mattered for Samarah; not fancy dates and fancy clothes or even fancy English in a guy, she just really liked Langa and was mesmerized by his personality.

Langa: (nervously) "Awungitshela (Tell me), ungena siphiliskolo (which school do you attend)?"

Samarah: "Oh, I go to Radley."

He knew that it was quite an expensive school, something his parents would never be able to afford. So, she had come from a rich family and she was quite educated. He wasn't too sure what his parents were going to say about him bringing a girl like that to their home. She had no idea how to speak their language, even.

Langa: "I see. You must have grown up in a very comfortable household. I like that. Tell me about yourself."

Samarah: "I don't quite know where to start, but uh, I grew up right in Ferndale with my mom, father and grandmother. My twin sister passed away when we were just ten years old, so I've been the only child ever since."

That was even worse, he thought. "Mama won't like her". He adored her and wanted to make it work against all odds, but his family was a big concern.

Langa: "I see."

Samarah: "What about you?"

Langa: "Oh, uh, I grew up in Soweto, but my parents are originally from KZN. I have an elder brother Vusi, then there's myself, and my three sisters, then my mother and father of course."

They were complete opposites, she could already tell. He had come from a big family and they seemed rather close, whereas she was the only child.

Samarah: "It must be rather nice growing up in a big family."

Langa: "Oh, it is – when you have the money. My father was a taxi driver, but now with age and being diabetic, he has had to step down and that's when Vusi and I took over and drove the taxis. My mother has been a housewife for as long as I can remember. Now, Vusi and I are the only breadwinners at home, and we do make ends meet, but you know how it is. It is a lot of responsibility on a young man's shoulders. I couldn't even get funding for University, so I had to keep driving taxi's for a living."

Samarah was touched by the fact that he was a hard worker and he had put his family first. That was rather admirable of him.

Samarah: "I admire that, I really do. What did you want to study?"

Langa: “I wanted to study Mechanical Engineering. It’s always been my dream.”

Samarah: (impressed) “Wow, you must be really clever, hey.”

Langa: (chuckling) “I guess you could say so. One day, I’ll show you my matric results.”

She took a breather, so he wasn’t lazy or stupid, but he was driving taxis just to make ends meet and support his family. He truly was a gentleman to put his family first. After their meal, they took a walk around the mall, with Lydia slowly tailing them, as tiring as it was. While walking alongside one another, they were holding hands. Everything done on that day was the first time for Samarah, while Langa had been around quite a bit. They went out and sat somewhere to talk, and after getting to know one another better, they both had formulated the kind of people they were getting involved with. Langa was a typical Zulu, who loved Maskandi and Zulu music. He was outgoing and his version of fun was going out to the nearest bar or club and having a drink. Samarah loved reading and had never tasted a drop of alcohol, but she sure was going to make it

work. Since Langa didn't even have a camera phone, they took pictures with her phone. He was no time waster, so he moved in straight for the kill.

Langa: (clearing throat) "Nkosazana (princess), forgive me if I'm being forward, but I would really like to be honest with you."

Samarah: "I'm listening."

She was so free around him, though she would hardly speak her mind.

Langa: "I am falling for you. I know, it has only been a day since I've known you, but I was raised to go for the kill. I don't like wasting time, nor do I want to get to know you for months before officially asking you out."

Samarah: "What are you saying, Langa?"

Langa: "Ngicela ube intombi yambi (Will you please be my girlfriend)?"

That was music to her ears. He didn't have much, but he was determined to make her feel like a princess each time they saw one another.

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, I'll be your girlfriend."

Langa was smart and he was very happy. He leaned in and kissed her. It was brief and simple, as he knew that she had no experience in any of that. He was determined to take it slow, but not too slow of course.

Langa: "You look so cute when you blush."

Samarah smiled.

Langa: "Asihambe ngikuthengele i Ice cream (let's go so I can buy you some ice cream)."

Samarah was not a fan of KFC before then, but she fell in love with their Kit Kat Sundae from that day onwards. It became her favourite ice cream and he never forgot. Once they were done, they called Lydia, and he drove them home. He was a punctual man, driving taxis will do that to a person. He was never late for anything in his life. He dropped her off exactly at 4:45 pm, just to make a statement and score some extra points. By then, the yard was already loaded with family members from Thandi's side. Robert's family members were not told nor invited. She cut all ties with them the moment he died.

Langa: "Should I come in with you to let your father know that I have brought you home safely?"

Samarah: "There's no need for that. The yard is so full. What will my uncles say?"

Langa: "Angina ndaba nabo (I don't care about them). They need to know that une indoda (you have a man) who cares about your safety and well-being. Please, allow me."

Samarah: "Alright."

Langa took off his hat and placed it in one of his hands. He greeted everyone he saw in that yard. He was genuinely polite and people were so busy, though. Once he was in the house, Richard was pleased to see that he had enough manners to inform him of her safe return home.

Langa: "Eh, Baba (father), sengiyilethe' ekhaya indodakazi yakho (I've brought your daughter home)."

Richard: (firmly) "Thank you, Langa. It is very kind of you to inform me. I hope you two had a pleasant time."

Langa: "Yebo (yes), we did. Ni sale kahle (Keep well). I must go now."

Richard: "Alright then. You should come meet me for lunch some time so that I can get to know you better."

Langa: “Kungaba kuhle lokho, Baba (That would be great, father). Ni sale kahle (Keep well).”

Samarah: “Let me walk him out, daddy. Ka boa (I’ll be back).”

Richard just nodded. That time Thandi was nowhere to be seen, as she was hiding in her bedroom on her fourth bottle that day. Her sins were consuming her. Samarah was blushing all the way to the gate.

Langa: “Hayi (No), stop here, Ntombenhle (beautiful). God knows I’d never be able to forgive myself if you got ran over by a car or something while seeing me off.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Langa, this is a safe neighbourhood.”

Langa: “Even the safest neighbourhood have dangerous people in it. Before I go I’d like to ask, what’s happening? Do you guys have a party or something?”

Samarah: “No, why?”

Langa: “Why is it so full in here?”

Samarah: “Oh, my father is having a ceremony for me tomorrow. He’s officially introducing me to the ancestors.”

That was quite a bit of a red alarm for Langa as they do it as soon as their children are born in his family. It is tradition and any man who doesn’t do it and waits for so many years like Richard did with Samarah, was considered a coward. But he could not fault him on that, especially since he wanted to marry his daughter.

Langa: “Oh, ngiyabona (I see). Kwakuhle (That’s nice). I’ll see you soon and call you later. Keep well.”

Samarah: (smiling) “Bye.”

She waited right at the gate as Langa got into his taxi. Before he drove off, he played a familiar song, “Ngafa by Shwi Nomtekhalala”. Goodness, that was quite a turn off for Lydia,

but she was not the one who was going to be Langa's wife in future. Samarah had no idea why he was so young yet loved Maskandi music so much, but she was willing to adjust. After all, love is all about compromise, right? She went back into the house and one could tell that Richard had been dying to know how it went. He was eagerly waiting for her in the kitchen. He didn't want her to miss him had he been sitting in the lounge. He had a glass of whiskey in his hand, and had poured a glass of orange juice for Samarah, her all-time favourite.

Richard: "Please, sit."

She sat down.

Samarah: "I see you don't forget my favourite."

Richard: (laughing) "I'm your father, how could I ever?"

Samarah: "Thanks, daddy."

Richard: "How was it?"

Samarah: "Oh, daddy

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it was so nice. I had the best time ever. I had no idea I could actually click with a boy like that."

Richard: "Hmm, tell me more about him. Where is he from and what does he do?"

Samarah: "Oh, he's from Soweto, Orlando to be exact. He lives with his brother, three sisters, and his parents. He wanted to study Mechanical Engineering, but due to no funds he had to step up and drive one of his father's taxis. He and his brother both drive taxis to make a living."

Richard: "Hmm, I see."

Samarah: "I know you don't think he is suitable for me."

Richard: "I never said that."

Samarah: “Dad, I know you. I saw the look on your face when you saw that taxi. I know he might not be an ideal candidate in your eyes, but I really like him. Koko (granny) always said she never knew what you saw in Mom, but here you are. All I am asking is that you give him a chance, a fair chance.”

Richard could see himself in Samarah, the 17 year old him. He knew just what it felt like to be in love, and he lived to regret it with each day. If he had a choice, according to him, he would have gone back to be with Grace and raise their twins the right way. He had no heart to tell her that he didn't approve of that boy, but he loved Samarah. He thought perhaps he could right his wrongs by allowing her to be with him.

Richard: “My baby, I never said anything. Don't you get any ideas now. I'm not giving you a free pass to disrespect both your grandmother and I, but I will give you a chance to get to know him.”

Samarah was very excited; so excited that she jumped and gave him a tight hug. Richard had no idea that Samarah was officially someone's girlfriend, but he knew that the chances

were high. He had been there and seeing his daughter go through it was rough on him.

Samarah: “Thank you, Papa! I promise you, you won’t regret it.”

Unfortunately for her, she couldn’t make that kind of promise. She had bitten way more than she could chew off. She went right upstairs to let her grandmother know that she was back. Upon reaching her grandmother’s bedroom door, she was taken aback to find the door was not fully closed. What was even more alarming was the fact that her grandmother was talking to someone. Thandi never left her bedroom door half-closed. She knew it was wrong of her, but the conversation sounded quite intense, as if she was scolding someone. So, she did what most teenagers would have done – she decided to eavesdrop.

Thandi: “I told you time and time again, leave me alone, please. I told you that I’m sorry for what I did to you. Why can’t you accept that you’re dead?”

She kept quiet for a while, it seemed like she was on the phone and her grandmother was listening to the other end of the line, but little did she know. Then Thandi continued to speak again.

Thandi: "Please, Robert, you have haunted me for long enough. I can't take it anymore. You are dead. I did what I did and I can't take back and reverse it, but I did ask for your forgiveness. Leave me in peace."

That didn't sound very right for Samarah, so she knocked twice and entered her grandmother's bedroom, only for Thandi to be so startled that she spilled some red wine on her white bedding. She looked at Samarah and was rather angered that she frightened her like that.

Thandi: (angrily) "Hey, wena (you), Samarah! Don't you know how to knock?! Look what you made me do!"

Samarah looked around and noticed three empty wine bottles and one half empty one on her bedside. Her phone had been on her bedside table the entire time she was speaking. What puzzled Samarah was the rather intense conversation she

had. The question on her mind was, “who was she talking to?” She had no idea who Robert was, as she was never told about her late grandfather. Thandi looked like death itself; her eyes were bloodshot with dark circles all round. One could see her veins popping all over her face and neck. It was a disturbing visual for her granddaughter.

Thandi: (angrily) “I asked you a question, Samarah!”

Samarah stood there in shock, trying to recall the question she was asked, but then, she wasn’t asked any question at all.

Samarah: (nervously) “Koko (granny), you didn’t ask me anything.”

Thandi: (shouting) “Get out! Get out of my room!”

Thandi had never shouted at Samarah – ever, least of all not even like that. She was so stunned, she stood there watching her, in a frozen position. When Thandi noticed that the figure she was seeing in front of her wouldn’t leave, she went ballistic.

Thandi: “Le wena nko o ntlogele (leave me alone, dammit)! Robert! Ke utlwile (I’m tired)! I’ll confess! I’ll confess!”

She kept repeating those two statements; “I’ll confess”, over and over again. Richard could hear the commotion his mother was causing from her bedroom. He came running, and was also startled to see her speaking to an invisible figure. She was shouting relentlessly.

Richard: (shocked) “What happened?”

Samarah: (teary) “I don’t know. I heard her speaking to someone but I realized there was no one. What’s wrong with her, Papa (daddy)?”

Richard: “She’s just tired. She’ll be okay. Go to your room, please.”

Samarah reluctantly went to her room filled with tears in her eyes, while Richard was trying to calm his mother down.

Richard: "Mama, keng ka wena (what's wrong with you)? You've been drinking all day! Come on, get in bed."

Thandi: (hysterical) "I'll confess! I'll confess!"

Richard: "Confess what?"

Thandi: "Your father wants me to confess. Otherwise, he won't leave me alone. I'm tired, Richard! Please, tell him!"

Richard was so confused.

Richard: "Ma, there's no one here."

Thandi: "He's right here."

She kept pointing towards the window, but Richard could see no one.

Richard: "There is no one here. What does he want you to confess?"

Thandi: (weary) "He wants me to tell you what I did. I don't think I can, my son. I don't think I can."

Richard: "Ma, get in bed. I'll bring you some water and pills. Sleep it off. You've had too much to drink."

It seemed as if Thandi just wasn't ready to redeem herself. She had been given countless chances. Had she done it right there and then, perhaps Robert would have forgiven her from the spiritual world. What she didn't know was that the ancestors had already decided her fate. She was not going to have a very good time as a spirit right after her death. The entire night felt way too long for Thandi, while Richard thought nothing of his mother's outburst. Samarah had a very good night's sleep despite being consumed with worry over her grandmother. Langa had called her just before bed to check on

her. She got to vent to him about her and he consoled her like a loving boyfriend. Lydia had decided to keep her piece about Langa all to herself.

She judged him for his background at first, but she just felt something was quite off about him. She felt they wouldn't work out and weren't compatible.

While the Moloji family was undergoing their own share of problems, the Dladla family were being enlightened by Langa's newfound love. He went to do his rounds for a few hours to catch up on some checking for that day. By the time he had gone back home, he had made more than expected. He was so delighted, he was smiling and had a new sort of bump in his step. He found Vusi right outside, having a beer with his father.

Langa: (smiling) "Sawubona Bhuti (Hi, brother). Baba (Father)."

Baba: "Yebo, mfana wami (Yes, my boy). Uhambe njani (how did it go)?"

Vusi: “By the look of things, he had a good date. Please, don’t tell me you took the girl to KFC.”

Langa scratched his head.

Langa: “Eish (oh)...”

Both his father and brother laughed at him so hard.

Vusi: “Uyislima wena (you’re such an idiot). You had R500 on you, Langa, R500! You decided to take her to KFC?!”

Langa: “Come on, Mfo (bro), I had no idea where to go. The truth is, I can’t use all those fancy forks and knives. How on earth was I going to behave around her? She was going to think that I’m rural or something.”

Baba: “Hlala phanzi (sit down) and tell us how it all went.”

Langa told them both everything, from the moment he had gone to fetch her and even gave a fair description of the house. The more he kept going, the more his brother was certain that it wouldn't work out. His father was skeptical, but he had hope in his son.

Vusi: (shaking head) "Ngikutshelile (I told you). I told you that you two wouldn't work out. She comes from a rich family and look at us."

Baba: "So, what do you mean, Vusimuzi? Are you saying that he must not go for a girl of a better background because we're poor? Does he not deserve to go for the girl of his dreams? The one he loves?"

Vusi: "Cha (no), Baba (father). That's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying that perhaps he should have gone for someone of his caliber, you know, someone who'd understand that he won't always have money nor time and that he is a taxi driver. I mean, can you imagine that girl coming to our house? What will she say?"

Baba: “I’m saying he should go for whomever he likes. Life is too short to settle, Vusi. I don’t even want to ask, but it seems as if perhaps you are settling with Nomsa. Langa, my son, she might come from a rich family, but that’s not her money. She will have to get married eventually and you as a man will have to build a home for her. If she loves you, she won’t have a problem with your pockets. That also doesn’t mean that you should drive taxis forever.”

Mr. Dladla was very wise, he had his fair share of problems but he wanted the best for his children. He never wanted to stand in the way of love, unlike his wife. She was a bit of a meddler and had a hand in nearly all of her children’s personal lives. The Dladla family was alright, they were sorted. They were content with their lives and knew that if any of them had found a partner, that partner would have been understanding of their situation; they weren’t rich and they were just below the middle class. They got by but they were happy. They had love and happiness, but their world was about to change – all because of Samarah.

Langa: “Yebo (yes), Baba (father). I asked her to be my girlfriend today.”

Vusi: (surprised) “That’s so soon. A little too soon, don’t you think?”

Langa: “I don’t want to waste any time, Vusi. I want her to be my wife.”

Baba: “You do understand that she is going to be doing matric next year, don’t you?”

Langa: (nodding) “Yebo (yes), Baba (father). I won’t stand in the way of her studies, which is why I am planning on paying lobola for her once she is done with school.”

Vusi couldn’t understand why Langa was so serious about Samarah. According to him, he was biting way more than he could chew. He wasn’t happy about his brother going for someone way out his league, but he chose to be supportive in hopes that it too would end very soon. His father on the other hand gave him his full support. It was about to be a bumpy ride.

The following morning finally came and it was Samarah's ancestral ceremony was just about to start. Richard was strictly instructed that they had to get up and do it before sunrise, so they all got up around 5am. Samarah was instructed that she would bathe later on after the slaughtering of the goat. Thandi had to be woken up more than 5 times. The hangover was just as bad as her nightmares. She even went out in her gown. Once they were outside, they surrounded their ancestral place in the garden. They never had any so it was created for them the day before. Thandi's brothers started. The first uncle took out snuff and started speaking. It was rather difficult for them since Thandi was still using her married surname and not even one member of her husband's family was there.

Uncle 1: "Our dear ancestors, we call upon you as our divine protectors. Firstly, we would like to apologize as we have never done this. It was not our intention to neglect you, so please, we ask that you do not turn your backs on us. Secondly, we are here to introduce your child Samarah Moloji, the son of Richard Moloji. We know, we should have done it a lot sooner, especially us being the elder brothers. We ask for your forgiveness and for your intervention in this child's life. Her

twin sister died years ago and we do hope that she is also watching and working alongside you.”

The second uncle started speaking as well and asked for forgiveness, and then took a sip of the traditional beer that was brewed and spit. When it was time for Richard to speak, something happened. The weather started changing, and the clouds started aligning. It looked as if it was about to rain yet it was quite hot minutes before. The weather forecast never showed anything about rain on that day.

Richard: (clearing throat) “Ba ga Moloji (The Moloji’s), I call upon you. Papa (father), you along with all our ancestors, I ask that you please bring peace unto my daughter’s life. Yes, I haven’t been consistent in culture and in doing all these things, but I ask for divine protection over my child. I introduce her to you. She is Samarah Moloji, my daughter, the sister of Amarah Moloji. Please, let your will be done.”

It was as if he was giving them permission to do what they had come to do. Little did they know that Thandi could see the angry Robert right in front of her in that yard. He was livid. An angry ancestor is an unsettled ancestor. The moment Richard

stopped talking, thunder and lighting started rumbling. Thandi grew increasingly weary just before she was handed the snuff to speak.

Uncle 2: “Bua (talk), Thandi. Pula tlabe ya na (it will rain very soon).”

Thandi: (shakily) “Badimo ba ga Moloji (the Moloji ancestors), ke bega setlogolo same go lena (I bring my grandchild before you). Her name is – “

She didn't even finish her sentence when lighting struck her directly and she fell to the ground instantly. All the other members of the family had gone temporarily blind. They were in such disbelief. By the time they wanted to take a look at Thandi, so much smoke was coming right out of her and she looked cooked nearly to ashes.

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

They say what goes around, comes around. Everyone misuses this saying, but the weight it carries is quite heavy. It was at that point that everything had changed completely. Everyone was frozen for a solid five minutes, while Samarah was about to have her very first panic attack. The last time death had faced her in the face like that, was 7 years ago. She stared at her grandmother’s burnt body, in that sudden, heavy rain and had a flash back of her sister’s bloody body right next to her that night. She started hyperventilating, and Richard noticed something was off with his daughter, when everyone else moved towards the lounge since it was raining – except her.

Richard: “Sammy! Come on! Get in the house!”

Samarah stood there as her hyperventilation became a lot worse, to the point where she felt her body overheat, from her head all the way to her toes. She felt her chest closing up and her throat as well. When she held her chest, her father jumped

and grabbed her and went into the house with her. The hysteric Richard was thinking he was about to lose another child.

Richard: (panicking) "She's struggling to breathe."

Uncle 1: "Call the ambulance, it must be a panic attack. Put her head in between her thighs, and instruct her to breathe slowly. She'll listen to you."

Richard did as told. At first, Samarah felt like she was dying, but after about five minutes, she started calming down. Her racing heartbeat started slowing down and she could breathe normally, although the shock was still there.

Richard: "I'll take her to the hospital, the ambulance will take too long and they have to check out Mama in any case."

Uncle 2: (shaking head) "There's simply nothing to check there. Thandi is gone. We need to call in a Sangoma. Something is not right."

Richard: "Do what you must, but right now, my daughter is my priority. Come on, Sammy, lean on me."

He assisted her and they walked to his car. He placed her in his seat and buckled her up. Off they went but throughout the entire way, not once was Richard concerned about his dead mother. He couldn't risk having another child die. He just couldn't. He had always blamed his mother for everything, of which he also failed to take accountability for his own actions. He never knew how his father really died, all he knew was that he was involved in an accident hence all the double payouts his mother received from all his insurance policies. He always knew his father had money, but when it soon ran out and they had to sell everything and run, he had no idea why. He was about to find out. He wasted no time as they arrived at the hospital and she was taken straight to the ER. Once assessed while he was waiting for her anxiously, the doctor finally came out after about 15 minutes. That was the very same doctor who had assessed her after her sister died.

Richard: (anxiously) "Doctor, is she okay?"

Doctor: "Mr. Moloj, she's fine. She had an anxiety attack, which some call a panic attack. That's mostly when people feel out of breath, their heart will race and they will feel like they're having a heart attack. I assume she has just received some traumatic news?"

Richard: "Oh, her grandmother just died."

Doctor: (nodding) "Hmm, well, you do remember what I told you 7 years ago, right? I did say that her attacks would be induced by trauma or sudden triggers, like fighting or noisy situations. Now that she is older and she still doesn't remember what happened that evening, she is going to have a lot of these attacks whenever she gets triggered. Which is why it is now time to put her on medication, and of course, therapy."

Richard: "How long will she need to get on that medication for?"

Doctor: "It will depend on her psychiatrist. It could be a lifetime, we just don't know for sure."

Richard: (nodding) “I see. In the mean time, what can I do?”

Doctor: “Make sure she stays away from traumatic situations for a while. She shouldn’t be alone for a long period of time, it may force her to rethink the situation and end up overthinking. I can refer you to a psychiatrist. In the mean time, please get these pills I’ve prescribed for her. Her Psychiatrist can change or up her dose if needed.”

Richard: “Thank you, doc. I really appreciate it.”

Doctor: “No problem. Keep well.”

That was the start of Samarah’s journey to healing. She never healed from that scenario and her mind had blocked all the memories of that night, but seeing her dead grandmother on that ground forced that disturbing image to resurface. It was about to be a long haul, but nothing remains undefeated. Mental illness is real and everyone suffers from it to a certain extent. Richard took Samarah home right after getting her pills from the hospital pharmacy. He put the

Psychiatrist's number in his pocket. He wanted to discuss it with Samarah first once she felt better. She didn't say much all the way back home. She had even forgotten her phone in her room since they were busy with the ceremony. Langa was calling like crazy and he was very worried. He contemplated going to her house to check on her, but that would have been inappropriate and deemed as creepy by her father and Samarah's family, so he chose to wait for her response. It was agonizing not knowing if she was okay or not, but he had another solution to his problems. He and his brother weren't into anything fancy, since they were the breadwinners, but his sisters had smartphones. He was too anxious to wait, so he asked his last born sister, Phume, to assist him.

Langa: (shouting) "Weh Phume! Woza la (come here)."

Phume: "Yebo, Bhuti (Yes, brother)?"

Langa: "Awungisize la (help me with something)."

Phume: "Ngani (with what)?"

Langa: “I need you to add this number to your contact list and check if she’s online on WhatsApp.”

Phume: (chuckling) “Hawu (Goodness), Bhuti (Brother). I had no idea you even knew what WhatsApp is.”

Langa: (firmly) “Ngizokushaya wena (I’ll hit you). This is a matter of life and death. Please.”

Phume: “Okay.”

She did as instructed and only her Display Picture was seen and her last seen was the previous evening at 9pm. He sighed in frustration as she told him.

Phume: “Hmm, Bhuti (brother), is she our future sister-in-law? She’s so beautiful. I love her skin. Umthole’phi vele (where did you find her)?”

Langa: “Eish (oh), Phume, you’re asking me so many questions.”

Phume: "Sorry, did she dump you already?"

Langa: "Hayi voetsek wena (oh, piss off)!"

Phume: (laughing) "I'm joking. She's probably busy, man."

Langa: "Let's hope you're right."

Phume: "Tell you what, I'll keep her on my watch. If she updates her status or goes online, I'll tell you, neh (okay)?"

Langa: (nodding) "Sharp. Let me go work. We'll talk later. But please, don't talk to her or say anything to your sisters or uMa (mom). You know how they are."

Phume: "My lips are sealed."

By the time Richard and Samarah had arrived home, they were met with an unexpected guest – a sangoma.

Uncle 1: “Motlogolo (Nephew), we have brought someone to come and assist us. Please, come sit.”

Richard: “I’ll be right back, Malome (uncle). Let me just take Samarah up to her bedroom first.”

Uncle 1: “Alright.”

He took her there and she was still not saying anything. Once he closed the door

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she fell asleep. It must have been the medication she had taken before going home. Richard met with his uncles once again and it was still raining, oddly. Her body was still lying outside, covered in a large cloth. He couldn’t understand why they hadn’t called the paramedics as yet.

Uncle 1: “This is Gogo Mashadi. She is our local Sangoma from back home. Luckily she was around when we called her, otherwise we were going to wait for another day.”

Richard: (nodding) “Okay, we can start.”

Gogo Mashadi took out the necessary tools she needed to work, including her bones and fur skin. She took out the small bag and asked them all to blow in it. Afterwards, she shook it a few times and threw the bones and immediately shook her head after making a few sounds.

Gogo Mashadi: (burping) “Hmm, go shobile (it’s bad).”

Uncle 2: “What do you mean, Gogo?”

Gogo Mashadi: “Hmm, wena moshimane (you boy).”

At that point she was pointing at Richard.

Gogo Mashadi: “Wena le Mmago le dirile eng go galefisa Badimo ga kana (what did your mother do to anger the ancestors like this)?”

Richard was in the spotlight by then since both his uncles were staring at him, awaiting his answer.

Richard: (shaky) “I don’t know what you mean.”

Gogo Mashadi: (shaking head) “I see you still haven’t learnt your lesson. You want to end up like your mother.”

Richard remained mum while his uncles grew impatient.

Uncle 2: “Please, tell us, Gogo.”

Gogo Mashadi: “This boy right here, did something he shouldn’t have. Let me get into it. This boy, Richard Moloji, the son of Robert Moloji, took his own daughters away from his mother. Thokoza!”

Uncle 1: “Thokoza, Gogo.”

Gogo Mashadi: “This boy, Richard, kidnapped those children while they were fresh newborns, along with his mother, Thandi. He didn’t even give the mother a chance to hold them. This in turn angered the mother’s ancestors so much, despite your father, Robert asking them for forgiveness and unity, they refused. They are angry, boy, and you know very well what an angry ancestor means. Your life is not going well right now and you think you have everything under control. You are going to suffer the same fate as your father, but it will only get worse until you face your demons.”

Uncle: “Continue, please, Gogo.”

Gogo Mashadi: “Your children’s maternal grandmother died with a broken heart. She couldn’t handle seeing these children’s mother suffer like this, and she vowed on her death bed that you would suffer, even worse than they did.”

Richard: (sweaty) “P... Please tell me, is their mother still alive?”

Gogo Mashadi: "I am not obliged to tell you that because you still aren't willing to ease your conscience. You yourself will have to find that out."

Uncle 2: "Now what about Thandi? Why did my sister suffer such a horrible death?"

Gogo Mashadi: "Both the Tlou ancestors, which are the children's maternal ancestors and your father's ancestors, son, are very angry at your mother for what she did. Not only did she let you kidnap your own children, but she had your father killed. She hired hitmen to kill him."

Richard was so shocked, he couldn't even speak. Instead, he looked at Gogo Mashadi and sat there like a frozen statue.

Gogo Mashadi: "Your mother had blood on her hands, and she then had the audacity to disrespect your father's family by swearing at them. She never got cleansed after he died and went to sleep with another married man. She has done a lot of bad things."

Uncle 1: “Oh, my sister. Will she be okay now? As a spirit, I mean.”

Gogo Mashadi: “She was struck by that lightning on purpose, by her late husband. He had enough of her. She will not be joining your ancestors, but her husband’s ancestors since she was still carrying the Moloji surname. She will be punished there as a spirit until they feel that she has learnt her lesson on the other side.”

It was just bad news upon bad news.

Gogo Mashadi: “She won’t be allowed to do anything nor assist anyone in the living world. If anything, she won’t even be visiting any of you in dreams. She will be left aside in her own corner until she is released.”

Uncle : (teary) “What can we do? There must be something we can do.”

Gogo Mashadi: “There’s nothing you can do. The wrath of this man is not something to mess with. For now, you need to bury this woman as soon as possible.”

Uncle 1: “What do you mean?”

Gogo Mashadi: “I mean exactly that. You need to bury her by tomorrow, if it were up to me. Otherwise, you will all suffer a ripple effect from this woman’s choices.”

Richard: “I don’t understand this. I mean, dead people can’t control our lives like this.”

Gogo Mashadi started laughing and then her voice changed.

Gogo Mashadi: “Ke nna (It’s me), Robert Moloi yo a buang (who’s talking). Ngwanaka (my son), did you honestly think that your choices would not come back to bite you?”

Richard kept quiet. He was so shocked.

Gogo Mashadi: (shouting) “Ka botsa (I’m asking)! Have I not given you everything in life? Did I not give you love? Did I not teach you to respect everyone in life?!”

Richard: (crying) “You did, Papa (father).”

Gogo Mashadi: (shouting) “Then why do you go around messing with my legacy like this?! Do you have any idea how much shit you’re in?! your life is just a big mess and now you have involved my grand daughters in it.”

Richard: (crying) “Tell me how to fix it, daddy.”

Gogo Mashadi: “I have no words for you. You will suffer the same fate as me. You just can’t keep it in your pants. You don’t want to repent, son. The Tlou’s want nothing to do with us. They even took Amarah. I can’t access her because of you! She can’t access her sister because of your presence in her life!”

Richard: (crying) "Please, tell me how to fix this."

Gogo Mashadi: "You are on your own. You're a man now. You know what you must do."

Just like that, their consultation ended with loopholes, according to Richard. He seemingly had no idea what to do to fix all his past mistakes, but deep down, he knew. He was struggling to accept and wanted to find a way out, some sort of a short cut. Despite his father coming through, he still wanted to find a shortcut through life. Some people in life are just like Richard, they always wait for the shortest way to cut the queue and they'll stretch the road to redemption for as long as possible. Others walk through life without any fear of God. Not everyone believes in God, which is perfectly okay. I always say, believe in something, there's absolutely no way one can just get up in the morning without a firm believe in a higher power. Somewhere along the line, you will need someone to believe in, someone to have hope and faith in, and that someone won't be present in any of your friends and family. Who carries you through each and every day?

Meanwhile Samarah was in bed. She had the most awful morning, which put a damper on her happy mood. While sleeping, that night kept playing in her head, like an ugly, repetitive movie. It had so many loopholes, but she could only remember Beatrice shouting and next thing she woke up with Amarah dead and bleeding out right beside her. She woke up and decided to check her phone. She saw countless missed calls and messages from Langa. She decided that she'd answer him later that evening. She was still woozy from the medication and she was getting a little hungry, meanwhile Langa couldn't cope with the level of non-communication and silence between them. He was used to getting what he wanted, and now, he was perhaps aiming a bit way more than his own league, as his brother said and he just couldn't take it.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

After all the commotion and confusion endured by the members of the Moloji family, everyone was left distraught. While Richard’s uncles had to prepare a funeral, Richard was still caught between a rock and a hard place. Informing fellow people of Christiana about Thandi’s death, would compromise him and his existence. Everyone would know he was still alive and the truth would be out. He couldn’t risk it, so he arranged a small funeral instead; the guests would consist of him, his two uncles and Samarah – no one else. That was to ensure that the secret remained hidden. The funeral indeed occurred the next day, quite early in the morning round about 8am. A priest from the nearby church was asked to conduct the rather short service from home. Thandi was not a church person at all; she had left those days back in Christiana. It was not even an open casket as her body was severely burnt by the previous day’s lightning.

The service was indeed short, and Richard got to say a few words about his mother. Beatrice didn’t even bother to show

up. Thandi never liked her and so, the feeling was rather mutual. Samarah was quiet, but a lot better than the previous day. She hadn't had time to respond to Langa much; all she said to him was that she was fine and dealing with a family crisis and that she would call him when she felt better, all in an SMS. That left Langa restless on the other hand. Thandi was buried briefly as Robert had asked of them. They went home to eat and soon after, the uncles retreated back to Christiana, as if nothing had happened. The truth is that they too were angry at their sister for entangling her life in such a manner. Richard also was going to go down a bad road if he was to continue living a life full of lies. While Samarah was in her bedroom after the funeral, she received an unexpected call from Langa.

Samarah: "Hello?"

Langa: (sighing in relief) "Oh, thank goodness, Nkosazana (Princess). I've been trying to get hold of you for so long."

Samarah: "Oh, I'm sorry. I've just been held up."

Langa: "Do you mind coming out? I'm at the gate."

Samarah: (frowning) “When did you get here?”

Langa: “Not so long ago. I was here this morning and I saw a hearse at the gate. I didn’t want to impose.”

Samarah: “Okay, I’m coming. Give me a few minutes.”

Langa: “Okay.”

Samarah wore her slippers and never bothered to change out of her funeral outfit. When she walked out, indeed Langa was standing right at the gate, with his taxi parked right outside. Thankfully, Richard was asleep in his bedroom. The moment Langa saw his Princess walking towards him, he threw his cigarette on the ground and stomped it. He removed his hat off his head as a sign of respect. Samarah got to see him dressed differently; he was dressed in silk kaki pants with flosheirm shoes. “Flosheirm is expensive”, she thought to herself. But she didn’t dwell on it, though. She felt much more at ease once she saw him. He gave her a much needed tight

hug and she inhaled his cologne. He opened the door for her to get in the front of the taxi while he jumped to his side.

Langa: “Kunjani, Sthandwa sami (how are you, my love)?”

Samarah: (sigh) “I’ve had better days.”

Langa: “Do you want to talk about it?”

Samarah: (sigh) “Only if you have the time.”

Langa: “I wouldn’t have come here if I didn’t have the time. You have all my attention.”

She took a deep sigh and explained everything that happened the previous day, with tears in between. She also let him in on her twin sister’s passing. She told him she couldn’t remember much and that she now had a condition that required medication – anxiety. He didn’t know much about it, but he loved her so much, he was determined to learn more about it.

Langa: “Angiyazi into leyo ke mina, Sthandwa sami (I don’t know that thing, my love), but I’m willing to assist in any way I can. What can I do to make you feel better?”

Samarah: “I’d love some ice cream right now.”

Langa: (chuckling) “Shall we go?”

Samarah: “Eish (oh), my father is in the house.”

Langa: “He’s sleeping as you said. Besides, I’m not stealing you. We’ll just go to a KFC nearby. We’ll be back soon.”

She agreed and off they went. He bought her her favourite Sundae and all was almost well again. They chatted away and she managed to feel at peace and forget about her problems. And so, their relationship slowly blossomed. There was only one week left of the school holidays, and just like that, Langa would come and see Samarah every day without fail, at times just after 6 when his shift ended. After spending roughly

two to three hours with her, he'd go back to do his last round of picking people up and dropping them off in Orlando, before heading straight home. His heart was happy yet again. He was forever smiling and by then, Samarah had had her fair share of practising how to kiss. She had learnt to become affectionate with the opposite sex and everything was blissful. She could talk to Langa about anything, and in turn, he started reading every book she told him about.

They'd discuss the book later that evening just before bed. It was pure bliss for her to see how his English was slowly improving. Each word he didn't understand, he would ask his sister to google it for him on her phone. Richard was on and off, trying to save his business that was on the verge of collapsing, while juggling his mistress on the other hand. Meanwhile Beatrice was slowly planning an attack on him – one that he'd never forget. Most of the time Samarah was left alone in the house. It was safe and there were cameras everywhere. On most days Lydia would come by to visit for a while. It felt quite lonely as the house was too big for one person – a teenager in fact. When one leaves a child alone in the house for days leading to weeks on end, they are opening a door for adult activities. It was nearing winter, which meant that the sunset came earlier than usual and 6pm looked like it

was 8pm. Three weeks into the second term of school and 6 weeks of them dating, she decided it was no longer safe for them to sit in his taxi whenever he had gone to see her. He called her to come out as always, but she had another idea in mind that evening. Samarah opened the gate for him, wide open, leaving Langa stunned.

Langa: (surprised) “Kwenzenjani manje (what is it now)?”

Samarah: “Park your taxi in the yard. It is not safe to leave it outside like that.”

Langa: (shocked) “Cha, cha, cha (no, no, no), Nkosazana (princess). I couldn’t possibly disrespect your father’s house like this.”

Samarah: “Relax, it’s not his house. It was my grandmother’s house which now belongs to me.”

Langa: “Yebo, kodwa (Yes, but), it is still another person’s house. I can’t do that.”

Samarah: "Langa, you're my boyfriend, aren't you?"

Langa: "Yebo (yes) – "

Samarah: "My father knows about you and we're not going to do anything funny. I am just doing this for our safety and comfort. It is cold outside and I'd like us to relax in comfort."

Langa: "Okay, kodwa (but), I'd rather park my taxi outside the gate. That's the least I can do."

Samarah: "Won't they steal it?"

Langa: "Do you see any taxi drivers around here?"

Samarah: (laughing) "Fair point."

She closed the gate and Langa walked in nervously hand in hand with her. He wasn't comfortable with the idea, but he let her be. She wanted that and he would have done anything for her. It was the very first time that he had entered that house freely and he could analyse everything clearer. The house was so big, more than 5 times the size of his own home. How he wished that he would buy such a house for her one day, when they had their own family. While he was in awe of the house, she surprised him with a glass of one of his father's expensive cognac's.

Samarah: "Here you go."

Langa: "Yini le (what's this) iBrandy (Brandy)?"

Samarah: (chuckling) "Cognac to be exact, Langa."

Langa: (shaking head) "No, sthandwa sami (my love). I can't be drinking your father's alcohol."

Samarah: "Okay then. Taste it and I'll bring you beer instead."

Langa: “Cha, ngiyabonga (no, thank you).”

Samarah: “I’ll replace it. I promise.”

While Samarah headed to the kitchen for a beer for Langa, he had a sip of the cognac, and my goodness, it felt like the smoothest drink to ever go down his throat. He sipped it with so much pleasure

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it was totally unbelievable. When Samarah came back to him, she smiled in awe.

Langa: “Yoh (wow)! This is the best drink I’ve ever had! It must be expensive.”

Samarah: “Well, about R1000 a bottle.”

Langa: (shocked) “What kind of a person buys alcohol worth that much? It’s insane.”

Samarah: “One day, when you’re a rich mechanical engineer, you’ll also do the same.”

Langa: “Cha (no), my love. When I’m rich, I’ll make sure that you get the world because you simply deserve it. I’ll never waste money on alcohol like that – no offence.”

Samarah was impressed by Langa’s humble attitude, but little did she know. When you’re not rich it is easy to speak like that, but once you have all that money, your entire lifestyle changes. He assumed that they were going to sit in the lounge, when Samarah led the way up the stairs.

Langa: (shocked) “Manje (and this)?”

Samarah: “Do you want my father to catch you in the lounge instead?”

Langa: “It would be better than having him catch me in your bedroom.”

Samarah: “Actually, you’re a lot safer there. Come.”

Langa was beyond nervous. He really didn’t want to be disrespectful, but Samarah was really urging him to do it. She wanted him near her. He went with it, though he wasn’t comfortable. He knew that once he was on the bed with her, things were going to happen to his body that would have been beyond his control. He went into the bedroom with her and was really dumbfounded to see how big her bedroom was. She had her own tv and her own study table. It was a dream of his to have his own room like that. He had to work his ass off to have even a simple computer in his back room, while she was only 17 and had it all. He was a little envious, asking himself why on earth his father could never have enough money to give him everything like she had? He vowed to himself that day that he would do anything in his power to give her the life she deserved. He was a taxi driver, so if he wanted to marry her he needed to ensure that he didn’t downgrade her lifestyle. It would be rather degrading to her and more especially, to her father. Of course, every woman would do anything for love, but he didn’t want her to live in poverty. And so, once settled on the bed, they had the most intense conversation they’d ever had at that point in their relationship. She lay her head on his

chest and listened to his cheerful heartbeat. Feeling her skin would always bring so much calmness to him.

Langa: “Sthandwa sami (my love), do you know how much I love you?”

Samarah: “I know, and I love you too, Langa.”

Langa: “I’m serious. Why do you love me?”

Samarah: “I love you because you are kind, loving, caring, humble, sweet and because you love me. Why do you love me?”

Langa: “I love you because you’re smart, beautiful, you are the epitome of what a woman should be. I want to make you my wife, but I have my fears.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Fears?”

Langa: “Yes, we both know that I don’t make even half of what your father does. I’m a taxi driver. Which would mean should I marry you, you’d have to come live with me at home, and share my back room with me. You’d most probably have to down grade your entire lifestyle, you won’t be eating croissants for breakfast every now and then. You will be bathing in a moving bathroom instead of having to alternate between a shower and a bath tub. You won’t be going to a spa every now and then. You won’t have seafood whenever you feel like it. Can you handle all that?”

Samarah: “Bathong (Goodness), Langa. Is that what you truly think of me? That I’m a snob?”

Langa: “No, I’m simply stating the facts. I can never give you a soft life, well, at least not as a taxi driver who has to feed his entire family.”

Samarah: “Langa, you already do enough for me. I love you. I don’t mind living with you wherever you go. Even if it meant us living in a shack, I’d most definitely do it. And why are you speaking as if you’ll be a taxi driver forever? By the time we get

married you'll most definitely be an engineer. We'll be fine by then."

Langa: (shaking head) "I told you, Nkosazana (princess). I am serious about you. I don't believe in dating for years on end before getting married. God forbid I get you pregnant before we get married."

Samarah: "What are you saying?"

Langa: "I'm saying that I want to marry you as soon as you finish school. You'll be old enough by then and I'll have saved enough lobola for you."

Samarah was quite surprised by it all.

Samarah: "Won't I be too young for marriage by then? I mean I'll only be 18."

Langa: "Yes, and I'll be 21. Love has no age, Sthandwa sami (my love). I want to make an honest woman out of you. Being

here, in your bed, under your father's room makes me so uncomfortable. I'd be better being with you in my back room."

Samarah: "Then perhaps we should go to your room the next time, then. And please, stop calling this my father's house."

Langa: "I'm a man, my love. You won't understand."

Samarah: "Okay, then. Tell you what, since you have met my family, how about I meet your family?"

Langa: (shocked) "You're willing to do that?"

Samarah: "Of course. I want to show you how much you mean to me."

Langa was not very happy about that. He wasn't too sure where they'd be standing after that meeting.

Langa: "Okay, let me speak to my parents first."

Samarah: "Alright then."

She had gotten so comfortable with him, that she dared to kiss him. She was quite shy around him, but after weeks of dating, she had gotten a little better at everything. She kissed him first, of which he didn't protest. He gave her a sultry and subtle kiss, while embracing her beautiful body. He had never been with a girl that gorgeous before, though she never considered herself as such. His warm touch did magic to her and made her wild. As the kiss progressed, so did the fondling. He found one of his hands underneath her shirt and on her voluptuous breast, while one was in her pants. Her vagina felt so wet and warm, and she enjoyed him touching her like that. His penis responded to the entire activity, but he didn't want their first time to be under someone else's roof. The old Langa would have jumped at the opportunity, but he had started watching some romantic movies and wanted their first time to be special. He wanted to remain memorable in her eyes. He stopped everything, leaving Samarah panting for more.

Samarah: (panting) "Why did you stop?"

Langa: "Because, Sthandwa sami (my love). It is not the perfect timing. You're not ready."

Samarah: "What are you talking about? I am ready."

Langa: "No, you're not. Once you go there, you will never come back from it. Besides, I want it to be special, you know, like in the movies."

Samarah was irritated by it.

Samarah: "Oh."

Langa: "Trust me, you will thank me for this."

Samarah: "If you say so."

Slowly but surely she was turning into a little rebel, all she could think of was Langa, since her father was dealing with his own drama. Richard was starting to slack on keeping an eye on his daughter, and that was the most dangerous thing to do.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

While Langa was mentally preparing himself to tell his parents and siblings that his girlfriend would like to meet them, his mother was already on her own plan. She started noticing a difference in his pattern; how he was coming home late and would be unavailable on most weekends. He drove in and parked his taxi, meanwhile his mother was waiting up for him, which was very unusual. His father was usually the one to stay up late. He had gone to his room to see if they had dished up for him, but there was no food on his study table. It was done on purpose. His mother had told one of his sisters to leave his food in the house. He went after knocking in as he saw the lights were still on. His mother was right in the kitchen, while his father was watching tv. The kitchen and the lounge were not very far from one another, unlike Samarah’s house.

Langa: “Sanibonani (Good evening).”

Baba: “Yebo, mfana wami (yes, my son).”

Mrs. Dladla: "Yes, my son."

Langa: "Why wasn't I dished up for, if I may ask?"

Mrs. Dladla: "It's because I was hoping to speak to you before you went to bed. Sit, I'll warm your food for you."

He sat down and waited for his warm food to be put before him.

Langa: "Ngiyabonga (thank you), Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: "I've been seeing a lot of changes in your behaviour. Do you want to tell me what's going on?"

Langa: "Nothing. Ushokanjani (what do you mean), Ma?"

Mrs. Dladla: (chuckling) “Hehe, you think I don’t know, do you?”

Langa shrugged his shoulders while indulging in his food.

Mrs. Dladla: “Alright then. I know you’re dating that rich girl.”

That was not how he was hoping the conversation between him and his mother would go.

Langa: “Ma – “

Mrs. Dladla (interrupting) “Phume showed me her pictures. Her sisters caught her smiling all to herself and that is how they saw her on her WhatsApp statuses.”

Langa: (clicking tongue) “Those two bayaphapha nje (are just nosy).”

Mrs. Dladla: “What do you think you’re doing, Langa? Already by looking at her I can see that you won’t be able to afford her. I mean, apart from her being quite big, she’s quite dark too. What do you want people to say?”

Langa: (angrily) “Ma, there is nothing wrong with her. I mean, with all due respect, you weren’t skinny when you met dad either.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Langa, I love you, but I don’t think this relationship of yours is going anywhere. Why don’t you find yourself a nice Zulu girl? From back home? Someone who knows our culture and our roots?”

Langa: “I don’t want a Zulu girl. I want Samarah.”

Mrs. Dladla: “See? Even her name is not of African origin. Son, is this because she’s rich? Is she giving you money?”

Langa: (angrily) “That’s quite insulting of you, Ma. What do you take me for?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Askies (I’m sorry). I’m just trying to make sense of it all.”

Langa: “There’s nothing to make sense of here. You should stop listening to Langa and everyone else and ask me. She wants to meet the family. Please, prepare something nice for this Sunday, I’ll bring her home.”

Mrs. Dladla: (clapping hands) “Hayike (oh, no). I suppose we now have to prepare a mega feast for the queen.”

Langa: (annoyed) “You don’t have to prepare a mega anything, just something nice. Seven colours and dessert. I’ll give you the money to do so.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Ukudlisile lo mntwana (that girl has fed you love potion).”

Langa: “No one has fed me anything. If you are not up to cooking, just let me know so I can ask someone else.”

He stood up and wasn't even done eating his meal.

Mrs. Dladla: "Manje uyaphi (where are you going now)?"

Langa: "Ngiyo lala (I'm going to bed)."

Mrs. Dladla: "What about your food?"

Langa: "I've lost my appetite. Ulale kahle, Baba (Sleep well, father)."

He walked out of that house with a heavy heart. Mr. Dladla was not very impressed with his wife's behaviour that evening.

Baba: "Did you really have to do that, kodwa Mkami (though, my wife)?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I'm sorry, but clearly I am the only one who sees where this is going."

Baba: "You're just afraid of inviting a rich girl into this family. There's nothing wrong with the way we live. She loves our son, which means she loves every part of him. You should honestly just relax and let him love her."

Mrs. Dladla: "You don't understand."

Baba: "I understand perfectly. You rejected every good and decent girl Vusi brought home and accepted that lazy drunk Vee."

Mrs. Dladla: "That's not fair. She can cook and she's Zulu."

Baba: "She's poor, that's the only reason you allowed him to date her. Sadly, he cares what you think."

Mrs. Dladla: "What's that supposed to mean?"

Baba: "I mean Langa isn't like Vusi. Langa has always wanted to achieve more. I pray to God their relationship lasts so that you can swallow your words."

Mrs. Dladla: "I'm not a bad mother, you know."

Baba: "No one said you were. You're treating that girl just like your mother treated me. Sadly, you haven't even met her."

Mrs. Dladla: "That's not true, Baba."

Baba: "You'd better cook a nice feast when that girl comes over. If you or any of our children display any rude behaviour towards her, I'll be damned. You will see my angry side."

Mr. Dladla just left his wife sitting in the kitchen, gobsmacked and trying to make sense of it all. The truth was that he didn't hate her at all, he was just worried that she was going to look down on them as a family. She had come from a comfortable family and she knew deep down that her son couldn't give her

that kind of life. She also didn't want her to leave her son after seeing the kind of home he had come from. She couldn't bear seeing Langa get hurt. Her actions came across as hateful, but she was trying to prevent a possibly threatening situation. She didn't want to be ridiculed in her own house, by a stranger, an outsider at that. She would soon learn that Samarah wasn't as bad as she thought she was. Meanwhile Langa was preparing for his girlfriend meeting his parents for the very first time, Samarah was way head over heels with Langa. She was at school and it was during break when she had the chance to update her bestie Lydia on her current relationship.

Lydia: "Hmm, I can see someone is in a very happy relationship. You're even spending less time with me."

Samarah: "Eish (oh), friend. I'm so happy, words can't even explain it. Oh, please, don't take it like that. It's just – "

Lydia: (interrupting) "Ka dlala (I'm playing). I totally understand."

Samarah: "Oh, I thought you were mad at me."

Lydia: “For eng (what)? I’ve been there, baby girl. Men come and go, but we will always be there for one another.”

Samarah: “That’s true. I’m meeting his family this Sunday.”

Lydia: “Well, that’s new. Are you ready for it?”

Samarah: “I suggested it when he came to see me at my house.”

Lydia: “Heh (huh)? So he was in your house?”

Samarah: “Yes. We didn’t do it, though I wanted to.”

Lydia: (frowning) “Are you even ready for that? You’ve only been dating for almost 2 months.”

Samarah: "I think so. I mean, how did you know you were ready?"

Lydia: "I was blinded by love, but I waited a year to have sex with him. I also, like you wasn't ready, but I did it because I thought that's what couples do. I sort of regret it now to be honest. I wanted to give myself to someone who deserved it. He dumped me soon after that, remember?"

Samarah: "Well, I doubt Langa would do that to me. I mean, he wants to marry me right after I finish high school."

Lydia: (shocked) "What? Marry you? Don't you think that is a bit too soon?"

Samarah: "I thought so at first, but then, we love each other, so I don't see why not."

Lydia: "Sammy, you have your whole life ahead of you. You'll be starting Varsity. How on earth will you juggle that with being a wife? I mean, not to be rude, but will he be able to get

you guys your own house by then? Or will you be living with his family in the backyard?"

Samarah: "Lydia, come on."

Lydia: "What kind of friend would I be if I didn't be realistic or tell you the truth? I don't mean to be rude, but I have to say this. At least one day you will remember this conversation."

Samarah wasn't very chuffed about Lydia's words, though Lydia has never been mean to her nor given her any bad advice. She was simply being a friend and realistic at that.

Lydia: "Look, all I am saying is that you need to look outside the box. Most people who got married young got divorced young as well. There is more to life than getting married and all that. I'm just saying."

Samarah: "I hear you. Let's go back to class before we get into trouble."

And so, Langa had become a frequent visitor during the night, while Richard would often go see Samarah during the day. He hardly saw his wife Beatrice, he just never went back to his house at all, which angered her even more. She had permanently relied on alcohol, and with Richard's income being stretched a little too thin, she decided it was time to put her plan into formation, before he went entirely broke. While she was doing that, Richard was unaware of it all. Danger was lurking around him and he was still having the time of his life with his extra marital affairs, while his company was nearly bankrupt, with only Samarah's trust fund left as collateral.

The big Sunday had finally arrived, and while Samarah was still in bed at 8am watching tv, she was rather surprised to find Langa already outside by then. He gave her a call of which she answered immediately.

Samarah: (excitedly) "Hello?"

Langa: "Sawubona (Hello), Ntombenhle (beautiful). Yini ungathi usalele (why does it seem as if you're still in bed)?"

Samarah: "I'm lying in bed, watching tv. I thought were going to have lunch. Isn't it a bit too early to be here?"

Langa: (frowning) "My family and I always go to church on Sundays. I thought that's what you also do?"

Samarah was quite embarrassed.

Samarah: "No, my grandmother never took me to church. Never did my father. Gosh, I feel so embarrassed."

Langa: "Don't be. I can wait for you to finish getting ready. I'll be in the taxi."

Samarah: "Don't be silly. I'll open the gate for you. You can make yourself some coffee or something to eat, while you wait."

She pressed the remote button and let him in, while she ran to the bathroom. Langa wasn't quite sure what to do, but he made them both something quick to eat, while he had a

beer. Beer was his hobby whenever he wasn't working. After about an hour, she came out dressed in a beautiful polka dot dress, with a light denim jacket and a pair of black wedges. She had flats in her bag in case her feet got tired. She let her dreadlocks loose for a change and had Richard been there, he would have seen the spitting image of Grace in her. Langa really loved looking at her. She was such a beaut.

Samarah: (smiling) "Shall we go? I'm sure we're late."

Langa: "I'll tell them I got a puncture or something. Don't worry about it. Come, you can eat in the car. Let's go."

Off they went. She was quite nervous, well, not about church because she knew God, she just wasn't very in touch with Him, but she was very anxious about meeting his family. She was worried that they'd not like her at all.

Langa: "You look so nervous, relax."

Samarah: "I'm worried mostly about your mother. What if she doesn't like me?"

Langa: "You can worry about her when you get to my house. She won't be at church today. She is making a big feast as part of your welcome, along with my sisters."

Samarah was quite relieved.

Samarah: "So, who will be at church?"

Langa: "My father, Vusi and his girlfriend Aviwe, but we call her Vee, then it's you and I."

Samarah: "Oh, thank goodness."

Langa: (chuckling) "Don't worry. This is the start of a long journey for you and I."

He kissed the back of her and opened her door once they got to the church. It was not a weird feeling nor did she get any weird vibes

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in fact, she could feel a little different while walking in, she felt the holy spirit within her, she just didn't know it yet. Once she entered, she could feel so much upliftment within her, it was as if it was just what she needed. So many people turned their heads around and looked at Samarah and Langa, who walked in hand in hand. It was quite prodigious for her, since she hated attention, just like Grace. Everyone was quite surprised to even see Langa walking in with a girl for that matter. Everyone knew Vusi had a girlfriend and Langa as the ladies man. He swore he had changed once he met her, but Samarah had no idea whom he was before her. Langa led the way and they got to sit right next to his father, who had kept the two seats next to him open for the both of them. Langa wanted Samarah right by his side, on the edge of the row, of which his father did not agree to.

Baba: "Haibo wena (no, man). How can you let your woman sit by the edge? You sit there, let her sit right between you and I."

Langa: "Ngiyaxolisa, Baba (Forgive me, Father)."

Langa and Samarah switched places and he sat right at the edge. This all happened while the choir was still singing, giving Langa's father the perfect opportunity to finally meet his son's girlfriend and future wife.

Baba: (smiling) "Sawubona, Ntombenhle (Hello, beautiful lady). I'm Langa's father. You can call me Baba."

Samarah gladly shook his warm hand and returned his welcoming smile with her own.

Samarah: "Hello, Father, my name is Samarah. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Baba nodded and they continued to listen to the pastor who had started preaching.

Pastor: "My fellow congregation. Isn't it a lovely day today? It is lovely for you rose to life, while some did not make it. God chose you today, which means you still have great purpose to

fulfil. I say unto you just as was said in Jeremiah 29 verse 11 – “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” The Lord has promised us all a life of abundance, for as long as we believe in Him. John 10 verse 10 says; “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” I say to you today, that when you walk out of here, you need to start living. Live a life that God would want you to live. No one is perfect, but once He calls you home then there is no way out. This life is meant to be enjoyed; we enjoy many things such as the birth of a child which signifies a new beginning, a brand new chapter. We celebrate birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, but why can't we just celebrate a normal day for the sake of being alive and grateful? I look at you today and I see quite a lot of depressed people, more especially the youth. You have become so consumed with being rich and having money, owning the latest gadgets, the best cars, wearing the best brands, but you forget that once we leave this earth, all those things won't matter.

So many have come to me feeling overwhelmed and suffocated by their way of life, asking me to help them and just pray for them. So many of you have mental illness but you won't admit it. Some things can't be prayed away, bazalwane (congregation), but it can assist you to have God in your life or believe in a spiritual being. Be grounded and have faith, for life

can be so overwhelming. If you find love today, go for it. Don't wait for anyone's permission or what people will say. So many of you have rejected true love because of parents and friends, while some of you don't even know what love is.

There is a big difference between love and lust. I can't really explain love, but 1 Corinthians verse 13 – 14 says; "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." I think that if you find someone that fits the description of that verse, then you are loved. A lot of you also don't know that love changes, people change as well. That doesn't mean you have to suffer and endure pain if a person changes. It is okay to let go, for nothing lasts forever except the love and word of God. I have faith that you have heard my message and that you will live each day as if it is your last, for when the final day comes and your curtain gets rolled down, you will no longer be a person of the flesh, but that of the spirit. This life is only lend to us, so let us rejoice as we go enjoy the rest of our Sunday. I love you all and God bless."

Samarah was so invested in the sermon, she had never experienced something like that before. That was the day she learnt that her home and family weren't invested in God, and that her home was not protected by God hence all the tragedies that had been occurring. She had experienced an epiphany and vowed to know more about God than to just pray occasionally. Yes, she was a good person, but getting to know God was her priority from that day onwards. She wanted to experience the holy spirit within her, and that was her breakthrough. Had she carried on like before, she was going to end up quite a different person and end up in a disastrous situation sooner than expected. She wasn't even aware how Baba kept looking at her in awe, while Vusi was envious of Langa's new relationship, Vee was completely green with jealousy. She analysed Samarah's face, skin, body type and even clothes. She even noticed her Chanel hand bag and iPhone.

She was not even envious, but absolutely green with jealousy. She had heard how Vusi would speak of Langa being so ridiculously in love with his fat girlfriend, that he was saving up for lobola, but the truth is, Vusi sort of hoped that he'd find a girl like that too, but he knew he didn't have the charisma his brother had – he never did. Langa always got the best girls –

even while growing up. At one point he dated a white girl. When Vusi wanted to go for the girl he liked, she ended up in bed with Langa instead. That broke him so much, that he vowed to never follow his heart and just settle. And that is exactly what he did with Vee – they had a tumultuous relationship, but they tolerated one another.

Vee looked contemptuously at Baba as he just kept smiling at Samarah. “He never looked at me like that, in fact, he never looked at me at all”, she thought to herself. She was staring so much, that she couldn’t even hide it any more. Samarah was too engrossed in the sermon, that she didn’t even notice Vee at all. After another hour, it was time for the offering. Whilst everyone was taking out R10 notes and R5 coins, Samarah reached for her purse when the basket came and took out a R200 note, amongst the many notes that were in that purse. That was the final nail in the coffin for Vee. She had decided right there and then that she loathed Samarah. She was going to be upstaged in the Dladla family. She wasn’t even a wife yet, nor was Vusi planning on marrying her even after 7 years of dating, but she already knew that they’d like her because she had more money than her. Of course, Vusi, Baba and Langa were all stunned, but no one can ever say no to an offering. Baba of course, was very impressed. Samarah did it

unconsciously and unintentionally. She didn't intend on upsetting anyone, nor did she do it for any attention or favour from her boyfriend's family. Church was finally out and they had to stay behind for a short while and greet a few members of the church. Of course, many members of the church consisted of Mrs. Dladla's nosy church friends and they were dying to meet Samarah and see her up close. They were so impressed, overly impressed, actually that everyone had forgotten about Vee. She had quite a reputation for being a party animal and quite a drinker, which was not what the church wanted, but Samarah had no idea that already the church ladies were low-key trying to get Langa to sway his mind and marry her as soon as possible. One of them even had to take it as far as having a dig at Vee.

Church Lady: "My dear, do you drink?"

Vusi and Vee gave her one nasty look, but Mr. Dladla was there, so there wasn't much they could say, more especially in the house of the lord.

Samarah: (smiling) "Oh, no, Ma. I don't drink. I don't think I ever will."

Church Lady: (excitedly) “No wonder your skin looks so beautiful, unlike some people we know.”

Baba: (clearing throat) “That’s enough now. Stop hovering over my daughter-in-law. Masihambeni (let’s go).”

Vee was so livid. In her mind, she already had a devil’s fork ready to stab the new girl. “Makoti (daughter in law)?! He never calls me that! What the fuck does this girl even bathe with?! Umthakathi (witch)!” she thought. The thoughts were racing through her mind throughout the entire drive, and poor Samarah was completely oblivious. She didn’t even notice the annoyed look Vee had on her face and the fake smile she presented to her when she had to shake her hand after the introduction. Nonetheless, Ephesians 4 verse 25 says; “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” Vee was very outspoken and couldn’t pretend, much like two of Langa’s sisters. They’d all try by all means to hide their true feelings that day because they were warned by their brother. He didn’t take nonsense from anyone and had they dared made her uncomfortable in any way, they were going to regret it.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.”

On their way home, Baba was extremely happy that he decided to drive for a change, while Langa and Samarah sat in the seat just behind him, and Vusi and Vee right behind those two. Baba kept glaring at Samarah in the rear view mirror. She had given him a glimmer of hope, hope that would make him change his ways – forever.

Baba: (excitedly) “Ngiyathemba ukuthi uyalidla ipapa (I hope you do eat Pap), Ntombenhle (beautiful girl).”

Samarah: (smiling) “Yebo (yes), Baba. I do.”

She had learnt how to respond in Zulu by saying the basics. It was quite good progress for her. Vee was bewildered, her anger was flaring and having to keep it hidden was very hard for her, while Vusi was just envious of his brother. How he wished Samarah could have been his at that point? She was just too perfect; her robust body and mannerisms, while his girlfriend was the complete opposite. They arrived finally and Langa

opened the door and helped Samarah out of the car, as they walked hand in hand, but Baba was just too proud of Sammy. He had her walk with him and Langa had to remove his hand from her. He didn't mind, as he had never seen his father so happy to welcome a potential future daughter-in-law to their home like that. The yard was quite busy, and Mrs. Dladla had already laid a table outside in the yard and placed a gazebo above it. She had used her best table cloth, best cutlery, glasses, plates, you name it. She just wanted to show Langa that she wasn't going to be negative about it. She was quite nervous, and it was hard to hide it. She had been drilling her three daughters the entire morning, hence they didn't go to church. Phume was a very calm child and she always adhered to her mother's words. She was the best cook of them all and didn't mind cooking at all, despite being the youngest and only 15 years of age. Then there was Zanele, who was very talkative being the elder of the three and 18 years of age. Nobuhle was the middle one, who was just 16. Nobuhle and Phume were supposed to be quite close being just a year apart, but Phume was quiet while Nobuhle was much like Zanele, she loved to be in people's business quite a lot. While Phume was a wonderful cook and baker, Nobuhle could clean at least, but was a horrible cook. Zanele was the worst of the bunch, she couldn't cook nor clean nor even attempt to; she was the laziest and would always stir up trouble. Samarah walked in with Baba and

could hear Mrs. Dladla shouting from inside the house, while Langa's three sisters were outside making the last minute decorations on the table.

Mrs. Dladla: (shouting) "Who left the pudding outside the fridge, kodwa (though)?! I can never work with you girls!"

Phume saw them approaching.

Phume: (shouting) "Ma! Sebefikile (They've arrived)!"

She could see them all clearly; their resemblance was all too striking. Their mother came out and she noticed where Langa got his good looks from. She was quite light, very light and was chubby, much like most middle-aged women, but she was gorgeous, with hazel eyes, just like Langa. They were all beautiful, except that Zanele took her father's complexion, just like Vusi. They were a bit darker, but their striking dimples were a dead giveaway that they were related. What also made people go crazy over them was their teeth. They had straight, gorgeous teeth – all of them.

Baba: (excitedly) “Mantombazana (Girls)! Gather around so I can introduce you.”

The three daughters got closer, while Mrs. Dladla stood right outside the door in shock.

Baba: “Nawe MaDladla (You too, Mrs. Dladla).”

They came closer and stood in a sort of queue. Greeting people by handshake was their custom.

Baba: (clearing throat) “This is Samarah, Langa’s girlfriend and future daughter-in-law of mine. This is Phume, my youngest. This is Nobhule, the middle one of the girls and this one is Zanele, quite cheeky.”

Phume and Buhle didn’t have much of a problem, but Zanele and Mrs. Dladla were unimpressed, though they tried to hide it. Langa was very nervous about his mother’s reaction.

Baba: “And this, is my darling wife, Sthandwa senhliziyo yami (my heart’s keeper), Mrs. Dladla, uMama wekhaya (the woman of this house).”

Samarah: (smiling) “It’s such a pleasure to meet you, Ma. I’ve heard so much about you.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Hmmm, I see. Likewise, ntombi (girl).”

She was asking herself where Langa found such a decent girl? She was quite unsure of her at first, but only time would tell.

Mrs. Dladla: “Please, take a seat. I bet you are all starving.”

Langa: “Yoh (oh), you have no idea, Ma.”

While they sat down, Mrs. Dladla was about to send Phume to the house to get the cold drinks out so that they have something to wash the food down with, when she remembered that she forgot to send them for it.

Mrs. Dladla: “Phume please go get the cold drinks from the fridge.”

Phume: “What cold drinks, Ma? There aren’t any.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Eish (Oh), dammit! I completely forgot when I used all the money left for the veggies.”

Samarah: “Oh, Ma, it’s really okay. I’ll buy it.”

Baba: “Cha (no), you’re a guest here at home.”

Samarah: “Please, allow me. I mean, you have invited me and prepared such a nice meal for me yet I didn’t even bring anything. I feel so bad.”

She took out her fat purse once again, leaving all the women of that family in shock and a bitter taste in Vee’s mouth. She took out R200 yet again and placed gave it to Langa.

Samarah: "It's the least I could do. My father always taught me that whenever you're invited over to someone's house, you bring something."

Vee rolled her eyes, while Phume and Buhle were shocked and had their eyes popping straight out of their head. Zanele became instantly annoyed after seeing that. She knew that she couldn't compete with a rich bitch as she called her in her head.

Langa: "Okay, ngiyabuya ke (I'll be right back)."

Vusi: "Ngimele, ngihamba nawe (Wait for me, I'm coming with)."

Vee: "Wait for me too, Baby."

Vusi: (snapping) "Awukahle wena (wait a minute), man!"

He clicked his tongue and walked away with his brother. Vee was embarrassed, but Samarah didn't want to dwell on such. Zanele took it as the perfect opportunity to ask nonsense.

Zanele: "So, while we wait for my brothers, why don't you tell us about yourself, girl?"

Baba: (firmly) "Zanele, you already know about her. Yini ngawe (what is it with you)?"

Zanele: "I'm just asking, Baba."

Samarah: "It's okay, Baba. Well, I'm in Grade 11, and I live in Ferndale with my father. My grandmother has recently passed away. I love reading – quite a lot actually."

Nobuhle: "Do you drink?"

Samarah: "Oh, no, I don't."

Phume: (smiling) "You and I would get along just fine."

Zanele: "What about your mother?"

Vee: (interrupting) "I mean, do you even have one?"

Baba: (firmly) "We don't even know where you live, girly. What kind of question is that?"

Vee: "Ngiyaxolisa (I'm sorry), Baba."

Samarah: "We don't really get along much."

Nobuhle: "Why?"

Baba: "Hayi, hayi, hayi (no, no, no). That's enough now."

Zanele: "How else are we supposed to know our "future sister in law" if we don't ask questions?"

Baba: “You’ll get to know her as time goes by. Enough with your silly attitude. You forget that you will also need to get married one day. Uzonya (you’ll shit yourself).”

Buhle and Phume laughed out so loud.

Mrs. Dladla: “Kahle pho, Baba (Come on).”

Baba: “I’m just stating the facts. We have a guest now and let us treat her the way we Dladla’s always treat guests – with humility and respect. It felt like such eternity for Samarah as they were waiting for Langa and Vusi to come back from the shops. Baba ensured that Samarah felt so welcome, along with Phumem though she could sense some displeasure from the other three women; Mrs. Dladla, Zanele and Buhle. She wasn’t too sure about Vee, since she was quiet. She was never good at reading people, but anyone could have noticed that they weren’t happy about her visit. Everyone was born with instinct. That gut feeling is not always overthinking. While Baba was telling Samarah about how he met his darling wife, Vusi was dragging his feet with Langa. In fact, Vusi was quite annoyed

much like Vee, that he took that short walk as an opportunity to express himself.

Langa: “Vusi, uthe ufuna ukuhamba name (you insisted that you wanted to go with me), now you’re dragging your feet. We should have been back by now. The food is getting cold and you know how uMa gets when she has to eat cold food.”

Vusi was smoking the last bit of his cigarette before throwing the remains away.

Vusi: “Sorry.”

Langa: “Masihambe ke (Let’s go then).”

Vusi: “Actually, I wanted to ask you something.”

Langa: “You can ask while we’re walking.”

Langa was so anxious to go back home, and in fact he was growing increasingly annoyed with Vusi.

Vusi: "I just want to know, do you honestly think that she'll fit into this family?"

Langa: (annoyed) "Usho ukuthini (what do you mean)?"

Vusi: "Exactly that. I mean, forgive me, but I don't think she's a great fit to our family."

Langa: (angered) "Fokof (fuck off), Vusimuzi! Uyangizwa (do you hear me)?!"

Vusi: "Ngiyabuza nje (I'm just asking though)."

Langa: (angered) "I thought you were happy for me, Vusi."

Vusi: "Don't get me wrong, I am. But also, I feel you're being very unfair to that girl. I mean, we both know that you never

stick to a girl for more than 6 months. After you fuck them you leave. It is how you operate.”

Langa was so angry that he thought of charging at Vusi, but looking at Vusi’s facial expression, it was exactly what he wanted him to do. He didn’t want to mess up the first Sunday lunch with his girlfriend before it even began, so he left his outburst for later.

Langa: (breathing heavily) “Yazini wena (You know what)? I’ll deal with you later. uMa is waiting for us. Let’s go.”

Langa walked hastily before Vusi, while trying so hard to stop himself from beating him up. He was quick to get angered, but he didn’t want to show Samarah that side of him. The last time he and Vusi had an actual, physical fight was when he slept with Vusi’s girlfriend. Truthfully, Vusi never got over it. He did say that he forgave him, but now seeing him find someone like Samarah, for Vusi, he assumed that Langa was there for all the benefits and seeing just how much money Sammy had, made Vusi even more envious of their relationship. They headed back and Baba could tell Langa was angry, but as soon as he looked at Samarah, all that anger faded away.

Mrs. Dladla: “Hawu (oh), where’s Vusi?”

Vusi just entered the gate after his mother said that.

Langa: “There he is.”

The parents could tell that they had a bit of a fall out, they decided not to dwell on it, though.

Mrs. Dladla: “Zanele, Buhle, please be kind enough to pour us some cold drink.”

Zanele: (frowning) “What will Phume be doing?”

Mrs. Dladla: (irritated) “Phume cooked, in case you haven’t noticed. We’re hungry, sheshisani (hurry up).”

Zanele stood up and forced her lazy old self to do a menial task. Once she and Buhle were done, Mrs. Dladla asked them all to hold hands so they could pray. It was truly a good thing that Samarah was right between Langa and his father

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because all eyes were on her. The rest of the sisters looked like they were shooting daggers at her. They held hands and Mrs. Dladla started praying.

Mrs. Dladla: "Father God, we humble ourselves before you. Thank you so much for this wonderful and blessed brand new day. Thank you for deeming us fit enough to be alive today, for not many get that privilege. We ask that you please bless this lovely meal for us and allow us to have a great day. We ask this in Jesus Name. Amen."

They all said Amen and since it was buffet style, everyone was dishing up for themselves. She was surprised to see that Mrs. Dladla was first dishing up for her husband before doing that for herself. Vee also did the same with Vusi, while Zanele, being the first born daughter, she was supposed to dish up for Langa, since he didn't have a partner. They were already used to that.

He decided that he would dish up for Samarah, which raised his mother's eyebrows, not to mention Zanele's.

Mrs. Dladla: (clearing throat) "So, Samarah, do you ever enjoy meals like this with your family?"

Samarah: "Not really, Ma. I used to eat with my grandmother and father."

Mrs. Dladla: (frowning) "And your mother?"

Samarah: (softly) "Like I said, we don't get along much, though she stays at her own house."

Mrs. Dladla: (frowning) "Haibo (goodness)! So, your mother and father are still married yet she stays alone in her house?"

Samarah: "Something like that."

She was so uncomfortable, since everyone was looking at her and Langa and Baba didn't appreciate that from Mrs. Dladla.

Baba: "Mkami (my wife), please. Yiyeke (leave it)."

Langa: "Yes, Ma. Leave it."

Mrs. Dladla: "Sorry, I'm just making conversation. As the matriarch, I feel it is my duty to reign you in, you know. Langa tells me he wants to lobola you as soon as you finish school. Are you even ready for marriage?"

Samarah could feel that Mrs. Dladla was a tough one. She wasn't even smiling and was staring her right in the eye.

Samarah: (nervously) "Uhm... Ye... I think so."

Mrs. Dladla: "Hmm, you know, I got married when I was just 16 years old. I had Langa her when I was that age. It is not easy being married and it is even harder staying married, you know. You have to sacrifice so much. A Dladla wife ensures that she

looks after her husband, her family, her children. They all come first – and most of us don't work, we look after the family. Can you handle that?"

Samarah was growing weary of the mother's questions. "Could she really expect Samarah not to work in this day and age should she marry her son?" That was not on the table for her.

Samarah: (nervously) "I'm sorry, Ma, but I want to study after school. Surely in this day and age, women should be allowed to work and have a family."

Baba was impressed with her answer, and he smiled.

Mrs. Dladla: (chuckling) "Hmm, how many career women in this day and age as you call it have been able to keep a man? How many? That just complicates things in life."

Phume decided to chip in and make her feel less uncomfortable.

Phume: “What do you want to study after school, Samarah?”

Samarah: “Oh, I’d like to study Radiography.”

Mrs. Dladla could see that Phume was swaying her from the topic. She got annoyed and decided to eat in silence.

Phume: (excitedly) “That’s so cool. You don’t get a lot of women studying that here, hey. I would like to be a surgeon one day.”

Samarah: “That’s impressive. You must be really smart.”

Phume: “Oh, yes. I’m the smartest one of the girls.”

She and Samarah laughed, along with Baba and Langa, while the rest just looked at the two conversing in annoyance.

Samarah: “Uhm, Zanele, you’re in matric if I’m not mistaken. What do you plan on studying afterwards?”

Zanele: (irritated) “Awukahle, wena (wait a minute). Hawu (goodness)! You have barely been here for an hour and already you’re telling everyone what to do with their lives!”

Samarah: “Oh, I’m sorry. I wasn’t trying to do that.”

Langa: “Yes, Zanele. There’s simply no need to get defensive. We all know that you just want to get married to a rich man after high school.”

Most of them laughed, while Samarah just kept quite. She could sense a lot of attitude from Zanele. Vee was enjoying someone keeping Samarah on her toes for once, as she was eating and smiling all to herself. Nobuhle also wanted to shine, so she stepped in.

Buhle: “Oh, I want to be an actress.”

Langa: “With your marks, there’s barely anything else you can do after school.”

They laughed again, while Samarah smiled briefly. Buhle and Zanele didn't take it too lightly that their brother was just taking digs at them, though he was just taking part in the usual banter. Everything he was doing they attributed it to Samarah turning their brother against them.

Mrs. Dladla: "Hawu (goodness), Langa. Since when do you embarrass your sisters like this? Ngoba se uthole (just because you've found) a rich girlfriend now you think you have made it in life?"

The table was yet tense again.

Baba: "Kahle, Mkami (Take it easy, my wife)."

Mrs. Dladla: "No, I'm asking. Since when do you do that?"

Langa: "Kodwa (But), Mama, we always play like this – even when Samarah isn't here."

Vee: (laughing) "What a lie."

Langa: "Who was talking to you?"

Vusi: "Don't talk to her like that."

Vee: "Yes, Langa, don't talk to me like that."

Vusi: "Shut up, Aviwe."

It was back and forth, a lot of drama, drama that Samarah had never witnessed before. Langa hated it, so he decided to stand up and put them all in their place. He banged the table after standing up, leaving everyone speechless.

Langa: (angrily) "You know, I have been asking the entire week that you all behave when Samarah comes, but you have done nothing but embarrass me. What is going to happen should her father want to you meet you all, huh?"

Zanele: “Hawu (Goodness), Bhuti (brother), we were just – “

Langa: (interrupting) “Shut up, wena (you)! Ma, I gave you more than enough money to buy everything you needed yet you didn’t even have enough to buy us cold drink. Samarah offered and here you are, all of you making a menace of her in my presence! Only Baba and Phume were nice enough to accommodate her. How dare you hate on her when you don’t even know her? You don’t know what she even means to me nor do you have any idea what kind of a person she is. Had you given her the chance to show you, perhaps this Sunday lunch would have turned out a lot better.”

Mrs. Dladla: (embarrassed) “Langa, perhaps you need to calm down.”

Vusi: “Yes, mfo (bro), calm down.”

Langa: “Don’t you tell me what to do.”

Vusi stood up.

Vusi: “As the first born in this family, I am obliged to tell you when you’re wrong. uDelela uMa (You’re disrespecting our mother).”

Langa: “Am I now? I am telling her that she’s wrong. You are all disrespecting my girlfriend.”

Vusi: “You said that right. Girlfriend – not wife. Why are you acting like she’s the best thing sitting here on this table?”

Langa: “That’s because she is. Your girlfriend could never be half the girl she is – hence you wish you could be me right now.”

Vusi was getting angered by his younger brother.

Langa: “Yes, I see the way you look at her. I see you.”

Vusi was about to charge at the fearless Langa, when their father stopped them.

Baba: (shouting) “That’s enough! All of you! Vusimuzi! How dare you stage a fight at my table?! Is this your house?!”

Vusi: “Cha, Baba (No, father), but – “

Baba: (interrupting) “All of you should really be ashamed. Langa is right. You should have known better. In fact, I am disappointed in those of you who haven’t behaved from the moment Samarah walked in here – despite her efforts. Mkami (my wife), I am very disappointed in you.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Kodwa (But) Baba – “

Baba: (interrupting) “Samarah, I am very sorry on behalf of my rotten family. We don’t deserve someone as humble as you joining our family. You don’t deserve being subjected to daily humiliation and constant bickering like this.”

He stood up leaving everyone speechless.

Baba: “Langa, please take her home. Perhaps there, she won’t be subjected to such madness.”

Mrs. Dladla was about to stand up and follow her husband into the house, but he wasn’t interested in seeing her face.

Baba: “Phume, please bring my food to the bedroom.”

Phume: “Yebo, Baba (yes, father). Samarah, it was so nice meeting you. I do hope to see you again.”

Phume walked towards her and gave her a tight hug. I think she could see the sadness in her eyes, and the lingering tears. She was so excited to meet them and now, her excitement was killed barely halfway through the meal.

Langa: “Let’s go, Sammy.”

Samarah: (clearing throat) “It was very nice meeting you all. Mrs. Dladla, thank you for the lovely food.”

She surprised them all but Vee was glad to see her competition leaving. Vusi couldn't even look his brother in the eye. Little did he even know that Langa was not done with him just yet. Langa took Samarah's hand as they walked to his taxi. He opened the door for her and they got in. Once they drove off, Vee could be her normal, annoying self again.

Vee: “Oh, thank goodness the fat cow is gone. I mean, did you see the way she took out that money? Ungathi (as if) we're poor.”

Zanele: (clicking tongue) “She thinks she's all that.”

Buhle: “I don't think she was that bad at all, but I thought my brother would get someone sexier than her, you know.”

Vusi surprised them all and gave Vee yet another reason to doubt the entire relationship.

Vusi: “She’s beautiful, there’s nothing wrong with a woman her size.”

Vee: (shocked) “Utheni (What did you just say), Vusi?”

Vusi: “Ungizwile (you heard me). Ufuna ngiphinde (do you want me to repeat myself)?!”

He left his plate right there and went for a walk. The way he was not even ashamed of himself, he took the remaining change of the R200 Samarah had taken out for cold drink and went to the nearest tavern to drink. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dladla was not very impressed with herself and her atrocious behaviour. Her husband leaving the table like that was a sign that she didn’t behave in the best way as a woman her age and Langa’s mother. She left the girls bickering on their own while Phume was tidying up in the kitchen. She went to her bedroom to find her husband eating alone on his chair.

Mrs. Dladla: (nervously) “Baba...”

He kept quiet and continued eating. One could cut through the tension with a butter knife even.

Mrs. Dladla: “Baba, ngiyaxolisa (I’m sorry)...”

Baba: “Do I look like the person you should be apologizing to?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Kodwa (But) – “

Baba: (interrupting) “Ngiyabuza (I’m asking).”

Mrs. Dladla: “No.”

Baba: “You forget easily, Mkami (my wife). Your mother treated me the same way you’re treating that girl. What did I do? Did I not ensure that I give you a proper home? Did you ever sleep on an empty stomach while married to me? Did you?”

Mrs. Dladla: (ashamedly) “No, Baba.”

Baba: “Then why on earth would you be so harsh on that girl? Why on earth would you be so hostile towards her?”

Mrs. Dladla: “I’m sorry.”

Baba: “What you did was cruel, Mkami (My wife). You’re not the nicest person I know, yes, but I have never seen you behave like that towards a guest. You saw how your daughters were behaving. Those two will amount to nothing in life. One is as lazy as a bloody chameleon, while the other can barely formulate sentences to save her own life. You are raising women, you’re supposed to show them how to conduct themselves; how to treat their future sister-in-law. What do you think will happen to that girl once she gets married to Langa should our daughters keep behaving like that? What do you think will happen?!”

Mrs. Dladla: “I wasn’t thinking – “

Baba: "I can't even look at you right now. The only sane person here is Phume. I pray that girl becomes something big in life. I wouldn't want her to take after you."

Mrs. Dladla was hurt, but her husband was very disappointed in her.

Mrs. Dladla: "Baba..."

Baba: "You're a church woman, but you fail to act accordingly. Ephesians 4 verse 32 says; "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Mrs. Dladla: "You've made your point, Baba – "

Baba: "Luke 6 verse 31 says; "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."

Mrs. Dladla: "Baba – "

Baba: “Leave me in peace, Nomcebo, I want to rest.”

He hardly ever called her by name. She knew that she was in a big pile of shit. Yes, she might have spent less on the food for Sunday as intended and used the rest of the money for her own things, some being alcohol, but she didn't think that the lunch would be such a complete mess. She had some time to think long and hard about what her husband was saying to her. She misjudged Samarah and wasn't very kind to her. Both her husband and Langa were deeply disappointed and she could only imagine how Samarah felt. Her mother in law was very strict towards her, but she didn't dislike her. It took her a long time to get her mother in law's approval. Perhaps she was trying to do that, but the platform was not right. The treatment she gave that Samarah was inappropriate and she was setting a very bad example towards her children. She went outside and saw Zanele, Buhle and Vee still eating. She took her chair and decided to sit underneath their big tree – far away from them.

Mrs. Dladla: (shouting) “Phume! Woza la (Come here)!”

As obedient as she was, she came running. Mrs. Dladla took out a R200 note from her bra and handed it to Phume.

Mrs. Dladla: “Go buy me three Castle lite’s, please.”

Phume: “Hawu (Goodness), Ma. You had money all along. Why didn’t you buy some cold drink then?”

Mrs. Dladla: (clicking tongue) “Suka (nonsense), go buy me the beers and buy yourself some airtime or data or something ubuye uzohlala name (then come back and sit with me).”

Phume: (excitedly) “Okay. Ngiyabuya khona manje (I’ll be right back).”

Mrs. Dladla was ashamed to even look at herself in the mirror at that point. She wasn’t about to be one of those monster in laws. She was a good person, but she didn’t give Samarah that kind of first impression about herself.

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour.”

Langa was so frustrated; with his family, his brother and himself. The entire drive to Ferndale, he kept quiet while breathing heavily, thinking if perhaps Vusi was correct. What if Samarah was way out of his league? His true colours were about to resurface and be known to Samarah for the very first time. He couldn't afford that to happen. Samarah had inner conflict of her own; she had never really had anyone display hatred towards her; just a few unpleasant words about her weight. Perhaps Lydia was right; maybe they really weren't compatible. His family showed her from the onset that they didn't like her after such a great day at Church. They both were quiet and it was quite a long ride. All Samarah could think of was just being alone in that big house. Once Langa parked his taxi just outside her house, he did what she didn't expect.

Langa: “Can I come in for a few minutes?”

Samarah: (surprised) “Uh, sure.”

They got out of the taxi and went into the house. Samarah was just as depressed as Langa, most probably even more since he hadn't said anything ever since they left Orlando.

Samarah: "Can I get you anything?"

Langa: "A beer would be great. Thanks."

She went to the kitchen and brought him a beer. By then he had been spending so much time there, that he wasn't even aware she was using her own pocket money to buy the beers for him. Her father hadn't spent time with her in that house in weeks, and she had gotten used to it. They sat next to one another in the lounge as she switched on the tv.

Langa: (deep sigh) "I'm sorry."

Samarah: "What for?"

Langa: "For everything. I honestly didn't think they'd react that way."

Samarah: (softly) "It's okay."

Langa turned and held both her hands as he faced her.

Langa: "No, it's not okay, baby. I really really love you and I see myself as your husband soon. I am just afraid that you'll take whatever they said and did today to heart and you won't want anything to do with me anymore."

Samarah: "Don't be silly, Langa. I love you too. You're not your family, well, at least not attitude wise. I am sure they were just being over protective or something. I've just never experienced that before."

Langa: "I'll talk to them."

Samarah: “No, don’t. You’ll most probably make things worse. I mean, I thought Vee liked me when I met her at church, but I guess I was wrong. Your brother as well.”

Langa: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, those two are just jealous, along with Zanele and Buhle. Don’t you worry about them, Sthandwa sami (my love). Everything will work itself out.”

Samarah: “And if it doesn’t?”

Langa: “Then we’ll cross that bridge when we get there, angithi (won’t we)?”

Samarah: “I suppose you’re right.”

Langa: “Hey, come here.”

He pulled her closer to him and started kissing her. The kiss ended up being a passionate and long one. He pulled her towards him and placed her right on top of his thighs with her legs widely spread. His lips alternated between hers and her

neck, while he was gently caressing her breasts. He lifted her dress abruptly after a few minutes, moved her panties aside and started rubbing her clitoris. Of course, she tilted her head involuntarily and allowed his hands to devour her genitalia. She had no idea what was going on in his mind. Initially, she thought they were just fooling around as always, until he attempted to remove his pants while she was on top of him. She became startled and got off him while panting.

Samarah: (shocked) "What are you doing?"

Langa: "I'm sorry... I just got caught up in the moment."

Samarah: "Did you want to have sex?"

Langa: "Well, I mean the last time you were pretty keen on it, so I thought perhaps it was the perfect time."

Little did he know that Samarah had a change of heart after that morning's church service.

Samarah: (shaking head) “I’m sorry. I have no idea what had gotten into me. Had we done it I think I’d most probably would have regretted it.”

Langa: “What are you saying?”

Samarah: “I’m saying that I’m not ready and I’d like to wait until marriage.”

That was a bombshell Langa didn’t expect. In his mind he felt that he should have taken the offer when it was still hot and on the table. He was quite disappointed, more especially since he needed to release his stress from that day.

Langa: “Oh.”

Samarah: “Are you mad at me?”

Langa couldn’t bring himself to be honest with her in that sense, otherwise that would mean he was trying to coerce her into having sex with him. She most definitely would have been

unhappy about it and she would have gone and told Lydia, her best friend everything. She was a gem; she didn't drink, didn't party and was a virgin – something that most Zulu men would die for. He needed to be careful.

Langa: “Babe, I'd never force you to do something you aren't ready or for or uncomfortable with. I will wait for you. That's how much I love you.”

Samarah was convinced, but she had absolutely no idea what Langa had in mind. He was about to betray her before they even went far in their relationship. Langa kissed her softly on the cheek.

Langa: “I am going home. I'll sort this out. Don't you worry about it. I'll call you later, okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Okay.”

Langa left her house, got into his taxi and off he went. Instead of going back home as everyone thought he would, he headed

straight to the tavern. He just wanted to blow off some steam, but he after buying his first drink, he saw his elder brother sitting right across him. He got instantly annoyed. Vusi was already charged up and ready and stood up as he walked towards Langa. He sat right across Langa's table.

Langa: (sigh) "Ufunani (what do you want)?"

Vusi: "Hawu (Oh), Bhuti (brother). That's no way to greet your brother."

Langa: "Vusi, I came here for a beer. I didn't come here for you. I came here to have a drink in peace."

Vusi: "What's wrong? Did she dump you already?"

Langa just ignored him and kept sipping.

Vusi: (chuckling) "Face it, Langa. Deep down you know that you're no match for her. You will never be the right husband for her. Imagine downgrading that poor girl from her rich and

fabulous life to a life with you in your back room! You're quite ambitious!"

He laughed at Langa, aggravating him so much that he ended up grabbing him by the throat and punching him. Everyone was alert immediately as Vusi landed on one of the tables that was filled with booze. They tried to stop them when Vusi landed one punch on Langa's face, but Langa was much stronger and much more violent. He punched Vusi repeatedly to the point where he couldn't do much. His bloody nose and swollen eyes were alarming. The Tavern owner wasn't happy about their fall out. People managed to break them apart and took Vusi home. When Langa was ordered to leave by the tavern owner, he offered to pay for the damages. When she wouldn't hear any of it, her daughter vouched for him, one of Langa's much recent exes, Ntombi.

Ntombi: (Chuckling) "Still the Zulu warrior, I see."

Langa: (sigh) "Ntombi."

Ntombi: "You don't seem too happy to see me. Oh, is it because of that fat girl I heard you're dating?"

Langa: "She's not fat."

Ntombi: "Oh, right. You call them voluptuous."

Langa: "What do you want?"

Ntombi: "I just came by to see you. In case you haven't noticed, Mama was about to ban you from this place, but I vouched for you."

Langa: "Oh, I guess I owe you my life now."

Ntombi: "Goodness, Langa. You don't have to be so rude to me, you know. I mean you and I did date for almost two years."

Langa: "Sorry, I've just had a long day."

Ntombi: “Want to talk about it?”

Langa: “In a minute. Let me buy you a drink. Sit.”

That was what she had been hoping to hear. She loved Langa whereas he just didn't love her. Yes, that was his longest lasting relationship, and she was the only one amongst all the girls he had been dating during the course of their relationship that persevered. She stayed despite being dished an entire plate full of ingratitude. Despite giving Langa her heart, her virginity and all her time, he still cheated – continuously without fail nor regret. They managed to speak since he would always bounce back to her whenever he needed a stress reliever. She took it as a sign that he indeed still loved her and that she would always remain number one. Ntombi being a high school dropout who ended up running her mother's tavern along with her, while Langa was an aspiring Engineer. They could always hit it off conversation wise and between the sheets. Langa was passing time knowing very well that his mother and father were probably still awake. He needed to keep Ntombi at the tavern just long enough until it was safe for him to get her into his room unnoticed. Meanwhile, Mrs.

Dladla was enjoying her Castle lites, while sitting underneath the tree with the most sensible member of the family – Phume. Phume was grateful for her mother buying her data, and so, she had to listen to her mother’s stories of which she never used to mind at all.

Mrs. Dladla: “Phume, am I a horrible mother?”

Phume: “No, Mama. Why on earth would you think so?”

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) “I didn’t treat that girl the right way today. In fact, I was horrible to her. I had no idea I had it in me to be so mean, so despicable.”

Phume: “Ma, you weren’t that bad.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You could never lie. Come on, be honest.”

Phume: (sigh) “Okay, honestly, I expected better from you. I mean, I look up to you as my mother. If you could treat her so badly, how will we be treated when we get married one day? I

honestly don't think she did anything bad nor do I feel that you were right to treat her like that. You didn't even give her a chance to show you the kind of person she is. I think that she is a great person and quite frankly, the background she comes from should not define her or give her any stance in this family. The person she is should determine where she lies within this family and the fact that Langa loves her, should mean the most to you – to all of us, in fact.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You are wise beyond your years, my baby.”

Phume: “I just try to be honest, Ma. You made a mistake, but it doesn't mean that it can't be fixed.”

Mrs. Dladla: “I hear you, my baby.”

Phume: “If I may ask, why did you treat her like that, though?”

Mrs. Dladla: “To be honest, I don't have a problem with her. I just don't think that Langa is right for her. She's too sweet and

too perfect for him. That son of mine will ruin her. I can feel it and I can see it. He could never hang onto a beautiful thing.”

Phume: (surprised) “Is that why you accepted Aviwe?”

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) “I accepted her because I knew from while they were growing up that my sons were going to be useless. So, what better way is there than to allow them to date and perhaps marry girls on the same level as theirs? I don’t want constant family meetings and have to intervene and call them to order because of the way they’d be treating someone’s daughter badly. Vee is not the best daughter in law, but she and Vusi are very much alike. They are both drunks and can’t manage money. She cooks, cleans and that’s enough for him, so I don’t want to complain. Now with Samarah, that’s a different story. That girl is a true gem, someone who just doesn’t deserve to be married by someone like my son. He will never change. I don’t see him changing for anyone.”

Phume: “Wow, Ma. That is deep. Now what do we do because it seems as if he is in love with her?”

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) “Nothing, my baby. I can’t play God with other people’s lives. Everyone makes their own choice in life, and so will you one day. At times you look back when you’re older and ask yourself why you even went for someone, but such is life.”

Phume: “Do you regret marrying Baba?”

Mrs. Dladla: “You know, honestly, when times were tough while I was younger, I used to have a tinge of regret visiting me. But looking back, I don’t regret it at all. Yes, your father and I had many ups and downs, but I don’t regret marrying him at all. We’re not rich and I think I like it that way. Yes, I may have taken some of my son’s money, but well, I raised him and he’s a man now. So, he must suck it up.”

They both laughed as she continued to converse with Phume, while Vee, Zanele and Buhle were tidying up. They knew that they wouldn’t have been able to sleep should Mrs. Dladla have found the house a mess. It wasn’t very long until Vusi was brought home, hanging in between two men who were dragging him home. He was so drunk

he could barely walk and blood was all over his shirt. Mrs. Dladla was so stunned and as soon as she heard that it was her sons fighting, she became bored, while Vee was being dramatic.

Vee: (shouting) “Oh, my baby! Vusi, my baby, u right (are you alright)?! Oh, baby ubani oyenze lento kuwe (who did this to you)?!”

Mrs. Dladla: “He got into a fight with his brother. Take him to his room to sleep it off.”

Vee: (shouting) “I knew it! How could Langa?! That piece of – “

Mrs. Dladla: (interrupting) “Hey! Take him to his room! Uyasirasela lana (you’re making noise here)!”

Vee was assisted by the two men and Mrs. Dladla thanked them before they left. Then she remembered she had no idea where Langa was.

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, wait! Wehre is Langa?”

One of them answered.

Man: "He's at the tavern."

Mrs. Dladla: "Alone?"

Man: "No, Ma. He was seen with Ntombi."

After that, the two men proceeded to leave.

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) "Do you see what I mean, Phume? Samarah won't last with Langa. He is going to cripple that child, mentally. I can feel it."

Phume: "Well, if I were her, then I would want to know the kind of guy Langa is."

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) “It would be of no use, my darling. A woman in love can see no wrong in her boyfriend. She won’t see it and he will hate me and turn her against me.”

Phume: “So, what now?”

Mrs. Dladla: “She has to see it for herself. I don’t know when that time will even come.”

Later that evening, when everyone went into the house, and Zanele and Vee couldn’t escape since they wanted to go groove. For some odd reason, Mrs. Dladla just couldn’t go to bed. Baba had been in their bedroom ever since the tragic end to their Sunday lunch. They kept trying to leave but Mrs. Dladla was in the kitchen the entire time, until they eventually gave up. He didn’t want Zanele to go out drinking, but she didn’t worry much about Vee, since she was not her daughter. She couldn’t reprimand her to do anything, she wasn’t even her daughter-in-law and besides all of that, she had quite a mouth. Finally, after spending hours at the tavern, it was dark – about 11pm. While Mrs. Dladla was worried about her son, she kept going to his room to check if he hadn’t arrived, which

wasn't very fruitful since the taxi wasn't even parked yet. She just left food for him in his room and went to bed, at long last. That was the perfect time for Zanele and Vee to leave, but upon exiting the door, Langa was driving his taxi into the yard. When he saw those two approaching the gate, he asked Ntombi to duck and hide herself in the car, but she refused.

Langa: "Eish (oh), hide."

Ntombi: "For what? They already know me. I will do no such thing."

Langa was irritated, but what else could he have done since he wanted to get laid? Ntombi had the nerve to even open the window and wave at Vee and Zanele. Once Langa parked the car, the two stopped and walked towards them. She was the first one to get out of the car, which annoyed Langa beyond comparison.

Vee: (chuckling) "Hawu (Wow), Langa. A few hours ago you took your girlfriend home and now you are driving in here with your ex?"

Langa: “Ah, man, voetsek (piss off), Vee! Shouldn’t you be comforting your boyfriend right now?”

Vee: (angrily) “What you did wasn’t right. How can you beat up your own brother?”

Langa: “Don’t ask me shit. You two beat each other up when you feel like it, but do you ever hear me up in your business?”

She kept quiet and looked at him in annoyance.

Ntombi smiled at Zanele and hugged her. They always got along.

Ntombi: (smiling) “How are you, babe? It’s been a while.”

Zanele: “Ah, what can we say? We miss you, but nonetheless, you’ll always be the real makoti (daughter in law) here at home.”

Langa: (annoyed) “You can follow me or you can sleep outside or walk back home. Choose one.”

He walked hastily to his backroom and left Zanele and Vee standing there. Ntombi said her goodbyes and rushed behind Langa. Once in, he locked the door, unapologetically.

Ntombi: (irritated) “Goodness, Langa. Can’t you treat me with an ounce of respect, for once?”

Langa was taking his clothes while Ntombi was hoping to get her feelings validated up to no avail. Once completely naked, Langa sat down on the edge of the bed.

Langa: “Are you going to bitch and moan all night or are you going to suck my dick and give me what I need?”

She could see that had she said no, he was obviously going to throw her out. So, she did what she knew best; she got down on her knees and started sucking his penis. She always knew

just how to satisfy him, well according to him. He had a habit of being rough during sex, and he grabbed her hair and pulled her closer. She gagged on his penis, but he didn't care. He pulled her head back and forth until he climaxed right in her mouth – ten minutes later. It didn't take him long to order her to take off her clothes. He pushed her onto the bed and rammed into her, not worrying about her body's readiness for sex. For him, it was just pure stress relief. He had rough sex with her, choking and biting her the entire night. By the time it was morning, her body was aching and ridden with pain and bruises almost all over. She could barely cover her neck. She was sleeping, trying to recover from the night, but Langa had other ideas.

Langa: "Vuka wena (wake up, you)!"

Ntombi: "Langa, it's 5am in the morning."

Langa: "And? I gotta get to work."

Ntombi: "You can leave me here. I'll leave when I get up."

Langa: “Ntombi, don’t fuck with me! Get the fuck up!”

She reluctantly got up and put her clothes on. When she stood before the mirror, she noticed her bruised neck.

Ntombi: (annoyed) “Look what you did to me now.”

Langa: “Don’t act as if you didn’t enjoy it.”

He went to his wardrobe and threw one of his hoodies at her.

Langa: “Here, wear this so we can go.”

Ntombi could see that Langa wouldn’t budge. He wasn’t interested in making her breakfast or anything like that. Once she put it on, she could hide her bruises well. Just as he had opened the door, he found his father right outside his door. He was a little scared, but moreso embarrassed and ashamed. He never wanted to disrespect anyone like that.

Langa: (looking down) “Baba.”

Ntombi: “Sawubona Baba (Good morning, Father).”

Baba just looked at the two of them in total disgust.

Baba: “Ngizokhuluma nawe ma ubuya (I’ll speak to you once you come back).”

Langa: (nodding) “Yebo (yes), Baba.”

Just like that, Baba ignored Ntombi and went back into the house. Langa could barely look up. He was beyond ashamed and he knew that his father would be yelling at him once he came back home. His phone rang once again – for the 25th time. It was one of Samarah’s unreturned missed calls since the previous night. He made it a habit to call her every night at 8pm but he failed to do so that evening. Samarah was left bothered and hardly slept. She woke up and left for school with a heavy heart, and she had no idea what her boyfriend had done.

Ntombi: “Hmm, is that her? She was calling you all night. How clingy.”

Langa: “Stay out of my business, Ntombi. You’re not my girlfriend.”

Ntombi: “Yet here I am in your taxi, being driven home after a night of passion.”

Langa: (angrily) “Entlek (actually) get out.”

Ntombi: (surprised) “What?!”

Langa: “Get the fuck out of my taxi, sfebe (whore)!”

Ntombi: (angrily) “So, you use me for sex and now you won’t even drive me home?! One day, Langa! You will want me and I won’t be there for you! You will regret ever treating me like fucking trash!”

Langa: “Fokof (fuck off)!”

She banged his taxi door and walked home hurt. She really thought that things were different that time. She thought that she would have been able to win him back. She didn't care if he was a cheater, but she just wanted to be with him. Knowing that he had chosen a “fat” girl above her didn't sit well with her. Langa remained unbothered, and so he went about his normal routine as always. He was avoiding Samarah's calls and so, she stopped calling once she was at school. He was avoiding them because he just didn't know what to say to her. He was panicking that he actually messed up and he wondered if someone hadn't told her already. Samarah decided to confide in her best friend after a long day at school.

Lydia: “Dintshang (what's up)? You haven't been yourself today. Are you okay?”

Samarah: (sigh) “Eish (oh), friend. I just don't know.”

Lydia: "If you're worried about the lunch and his family, just let it go. I don't know, maybe it's a sign."

Samarah: "Seriously?"

Lydia: "I'm just saying."

Samarah: "That's not what's bothering me."

Lydia: "Then what is?"

Samarah: (sigh) "Well, after the lunch he took me home. We started kissing and fondling as usual, and then he... he took off his pants."

Lydia: (shocked) "Please don't tell me you guys did it."

Samarah: "No, relax. We didn't do it."

Lydia: "Then, what's the problem?"

Samarah: "I let him know that I've changed my mind. I don't want to have sex any more. I want to wait."

Lydia: (excitedly) "That's great news! I'm actually relieved that you have decided to wait. You won't be sorry, hey."

Samarah: "Well, I think that's the problem. After I said that, he left looking quite sour. He hasn't called me since. I called him so many times, he still hasn't gotten back to me."

Lydia knew that was a bad sign. She attributed it to Langa being a usual boy; he was probably starting to lose interest because she didn't want to have sex.

Lydia: "Eish (oh), chomi (friend), nna I think he did that deliberately, hey. I mean, he might be angry because o mo timile (you didn't want to have sex)."

Samarah: "You think so?"

Lydia: “I know so. I’ve been around, you know. I know the signs. Maybe he just isn’t interested any more, and quite frankly, any guy who gets upset over sex is not a good guy. I just don’t have a good feeling about him.”

Samarah: “So are you saying I should dump him?”

Lydia: “No, I can’t tell you to do that. You’d never forgive me. I’m just saying that you need to open your eyes. This guy has quite a few red flags, that’s all.”

Lydia was absolutely right, but sadly, Samarah couldn’t see what everyone else saw. She was in love and couldn’t believe that he was even capable of hurting her. In her mind, she had her doubts and in her heart, she had that pang of intuition that told her that Lydia was perhaps right, but she ignored it – like a normal girl in love. Sadly, when we ignore our instinct, the world unravels the consequences.

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.”

While they were waiting at the bus stop, they didn't notice Langa's taxi parked right up the street. He saw them standing there, so he walked out of his taxi, dressed in his florsheim and silk pants and threw his cigarette away. He walked towards them and they couldn't notice as they had their backs turned towards his direction.

Langa: “Sanibonani mantobazane (Hello girls).”

Of course they were both a little alarmed as they didn't even notice where he had come from. Lydia was a bit annoyed. She didn't get good vibes from him, but she was polite to please her friend.

Lydia: “Oh, hi, Langa.”

Samarah on the other hand was quite upset with him. Who wouldn't be when over 25 missed calls weren't returned? She kept quiet and didn't respond to his greeting.

Langa: (frowning) "Hawu (goodness), Awusangikhulumisi (are you not speaking to me anymore)?"

Lydia: (chuckling) "Ja, neh."

Samarah: "What do you think, Langa?"

Langa: "I came here personally to apologize. I didn't mean to ignore your calls."

Samarah: "Then why did you?"

Langa: "The truth is, I spent so many hours at the tavern that I blacked out when I got home. I overslept."

Lydia chuckled once again. The bus finally came.

Lydia: "Ai, let me go home. Sam, are you coming?"

Samarah had her doubts. She was torn between getting on that bus and leaving with Langa. She didn't know what to do. She was still mad at him, but seeing him right there just let all those feelings of rage disappear.

Samarah: "Uhm, I'll catch up with you later on."

Lydia: "Hmm, alright then. Sharp."

She got on the bus alone, while Samarah stayed behind with Langa.

Langa: (smiling) "Come, let's get into the taxi, so I can show you just how sorry I really am."

She was young and naïve and with no one to guide her. Her father had gone rogue, and had completely forgotten for a few

minutes that he had a young daughter to worry about. He just assumed that she was fine. Samara got into the taxi and Langa drove off playing his usual maskandi music. He approached the mall and she assumed he was going to take her to KFC as usual, but he surprised her and took her to Spur. She didn't mind being dressed in school uniform and walking alongside such a handsome old-looking teenager. It was around May month, and nearly Langa's birthday. He was a June baby, the 16th of June to be exact. He had no plans for his own birthday, but he just wanted to ensure that she forgave him for his first big blunder in the relationship. He wasn't genuine enough to confess his act of betrayal to the girl he claimed to love, but instead, he held onto the fact that he couldn't find anyone as pure as her to marry one day. They ordered their food and he managed to sweep her off her feet yet again, when he surprised her with a promise ring. It had quite a small diamond, though she wasn't sure if it was even a real diamond, but it's always the thought that counts, right? She was yet again head over heels with her man and had completely forgotten about the blunder he made. Had Grace been in her life, she would have perhaps been able to give her proper guidance on boys and what to look out for. Thandi wasn't the best example, and in fact, she couldn't even give the child any advice on what to look for when she started dating. Richard was slowly going down a road of disaster. After their impromptu date at Spur,

they walked around the Mall. Samarah stopped as she saw a very gorgeous jumpsuit on one of the displays at Woolworths.

Langa: “Uyayithanda le (do you like it)?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, I like it.”

Langa: “Come.”

He pulled her into the shop and didn’t even care about the price tag.

Langa: “Pick your size and go fit it. I’d love to see you in it.”

Samarah: “Langa, no. It costs R450. You’ve already done so much for me today.”

Langa: (shaking head) “It’s my duty as indoda yakho (your man) to spoil you. The price tag doesn’t matter. Come.”

She picked her size and off she went to the fitting room. Langa sat right on the couch facing the fitting room. She never thought she'd look that good in a jumpsuit. It had long slits on the sides of the legs and a big space on the abdomen area, making it look like it was a bit of a crop top, with a backless design. It accentuated her breasts and looked so beautiful on her. She was a bit uncomfortable with how much skin it was showing, but she took the chance and went to show Langa.

Samarah: "So, do you like it?"

Langa was so mesmerised. He had never seen her look that good in anything besides a dress. Seeing her dressed in something completely different for a change was really wonderful to see. She was a real woman in his eyes.

Langa: "Yes, absolutely. You look gorgeous."

Samarah: "Really? Doesn't it show too much skin?"

Langa: “No, it’s perfect.”

Samarah: “Well, then. I guess I’d better save it for the best occasion.”

Langa: “Of course. Go change so I can pay.”

She went back and changed into her uniform again. He paid for it and it was the first gift apart from the promise ring that he had ever bought her. It was very special to her and she planned on preserving it for as long as she could. After a good day, he took her home.

Samarah: “Aren’t you coming in?”

Langa: “I’d love to, but there’s something I need to take care of at home. I’ll see you soon, okay?”

Samarah: “Sure.”

He kissed her goodbye and drove off. On his way home, he kept thinking of his father and what on earth he was going to tell him. He messed up and he was sure that by then, everyone knew. Ntombi must have told everyone she saw at the tavern that she had slept with him the previous night. He was the talk of the town and he had no idea yet. By the time he arrived right at the gate, Phume was sitting right next to the gate on a chair, on her phone. She had done that deliberately, to warn him before he went into the house. As soon as he arrived, she opened the gate for him. He slowed down before parking to thank her.

Langa: “Ngiyabonga (thank you), Phume. This is nice of you.”

Phume: (firmly) “We need to talk. Go park.”

He saw the seriousness in her face, so he did that quickly. Once he parked, she rushed towards him.

Langa: “What’s up?”

Phume: (shaking head) “Vele vele (seriously)?”

Langa: “Yini (what is it)?”

Phume: “You just had to sleep with her, didn’t you?”

Langa: “Oh, I suppose Baba told you?”

Phume: “Baba? Hey, wena (you), the entire town knows. Ntombi went and told everyone.”

Langa knew that it wasn’t good. He was indeed in deep shit. He looked around and noticed that no one was outside. Vusi’s taxi was parked too.

Phume: “Oh, in case you’re wondering, they’re all waiting for you inside the house. I was just getting you prepared.”

Langa: “Thanks for the heads up.”

Baba must have heard his taxi drive into the yard, but he was surprised that he hadn't gone into the house yet, more especially when he asked him to come home earlier so that they could talk. Baba was standing right outside the door.

Baba: (shouting) "Langa! Ngilindile (I'm waiting)."

Langa swallowed hard as he walked towards his father steadily.

Phume: (whispering) "Good luck."

Once he walked into the house, he saw his mother, father, Vusi, Vee, Buhle and Zanele in the lounge. It seemed as if they were just waiting on him. Phume was still outside. She knew that her father would have chased them all out, so she spared herself the trouble of moving up and down. Langa removed his hat and greeted his father respectfully.

Langa: "Sawubona Baba (Evening, Father). Sawubona Mama (Evening Mama)."

Baba kept quiet while Mrs. Dladla responded faintly.

Mrs. Dladla: “Yebo, mfana wami (yes, my boy).”

Vee: (angrily) “Oho, thina abanye asibonakali (so the rest of us are invisible)?”

Baba: (firmly) “Hey, wena (you). Watch your mouth. Is this your house? Is this your boyfriend’s house?”

She kept quiet and looked down.

Baba: “Mkami (my wife), Vusi and Langa. The three of you stay. The rest of you phumani (leave).”

Zanele: “Kodwa Baba (but Dad) where must we go?”

Baba: “Make a plan. There’s a lot you get up to when the rest of us are sleeping, so you can make a plan.”

They walked out hastily, while the rest remained. Langa only got to take a good look at Vusi that evening. He was quite bruised, with his left eye completely shut.

Baba: “Hlala phansi (Sit down).”

Langa sat down as instructed.

Baba: “In all the years I’ve been alive, I never thought that my own boys would turn against one another – my only sons. What’s going to happen to umuzu wami (my house) when I die one day? Do you honestly expect me to leave you in charge, Vusi?”

Vusi: (shaking head) “No, Baba.”

Baba: “You most probably think that you are the perfect candidate to run this household should I die, isn’t it, Langa?”

Langa: (shaking head) “No

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Baba.”

Baba: “Why do I have to hear from your sisters and people from the community that you two were having your own match in Gloria’s tavern?!”

The both of them kept quiet while Mrs. Dladla just looked at them without breathing a word.

Baba: “Did I raise monkeys?! Hooligans?! Do your birth certificates state that you are animals instead of males?!”

They kept quiet while looking down in shame.

Baba: (roaring) “Ngiyabuza (I’m asking)!”

Both: “Cha (no), Baba.”

Baba: “Wena (you), Langa. Look at your brother. Take a good look at him.”

Langa looked at Vusi and he was ashamed of himself when he saw the damage he had done to his own brother. Though he felt he did sort of deserve it, but it was just uncalled for. He could have just walked away.

Baba: “Wena (you), Vusi, you shouldn’t have aggravated your brother in the first place. I don’t know what you two were fighting about and futhi (also), I don’t care. You’d better fix your problems before you go to bed tonight. I want to see my two sons getting along tomorrow morning, siyezwana (are we clear)?”

They both nodded in agreement with their father.

Baba: “Wena (you), Langa. You will be taking Vusi’s routes until he can start seeing again. Which means it’s a double shift for you.”

Langa: “But Baba – “

Baba: “Ufuna ukungiphikisa (you want to dispute)?”

Langa: (shaking head) “No, Baba.”

Baba: “Good. And you, Vusi, repeat the nonsense you said to Langa ever again – I dare you and I will give him permission to break your bones. You chose your Vee, so do right by her or leave her. Choose one of the two. There’s no room for jealousy and envy in my house.”

They were so embarrassed.

Baba: “Vusi, you may go.”

Langa just wanted to get out of there. He saw how difficult Vusi was walking and he felt so bad about what he had done. He must have given him a real beating. Langa was about to get up as well, when Baba stopped him.

Baba: “Wena (you), sit.”

Just after Vusi walked out of the house, Baba took that as an opportunity to speak his mind and say what had been haunting his mind the entire day.

Baba: (firmly) “What is it that you want from that girl?”

That was a trick question for him. He wasn't too sure if he was being asked about Samarah or Ntombi. He kept quiet for a short while trying to ponder his mind on the perfect answer.

Baba: (angrily) “Ngiyabuza (I'm asking)!”

Langa: “Which one, Baba?”

Baba: (shaking head) “Angina ndaba no Ntombi (I have no business asking you about Ntombi). What is it you want from Samarah?”

Langa: “I want to make her my wife, Baba.”

Baba: “Have you ever seen me as a husband behaving that way?”

Langa: (shaking head) “No, Baba.”

Baba: “Did you even use condoms with her?”

It occurred to him that they didn’t even use them at all. Judging by his facial expression, both his parents could see how much of a blunder he made. His mother was disappointed, and his father was bewildered. He did the unthinkable and slapped Langa so hard across the face, leaving instant marks.

Mrs. Dladla: (shouting) "Baba!"

Baba: (angrily) "You should never have been so soft on him! You are embarrassing this family, Langa. What on earth do you think will happen when that girl falls pregnant?!"

Langa: "I'm sorry, Baba."

Baba: "You'd better end it with Samarah. She doesn't deserve to be linked with your kind."

Langa: "Kodwa (but) I love her, Baba."

Baba: "You have no idea what love is. You don't respect yourself nor do you respect that poor girl."

Mrs. Dladla: "Perhaps your father is right. Maybe you need to end it."

Baba: “Oh, yes, that’s what you’ve been hoping for, angithi (isn’t it)? You’re actually hoping that she does fall pregnant and joins this family, isn’t it?!”

Mrs. Dladla: “No, Baba. I’m just saying that I agree with you.”

Baba: “I don’t want to see you doing that rubbish in my house ever again. If you want to marry her, then you’ll have to act accordingly, or else, you can get your own house!”

Baba left them both right there and retreated to his bedroom.

Mrs. Dladla: “Uyabona nawe (You see what you’ve done)?”

Langa: “Ma, I’m sorry. I was just so depressed about the lunch
– “

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, so every time you feel “depressed” that’s what you’re going to be doing?”

Langa: “No, Mama.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Just so you know, I never said I didn’t like her. I was behaving the way I was because I thought that if I had done so, she would leave. She’s too good for you. Your father is right. I should have never so soft on you. Now look, you can barely even act like a man.”

Langa: “I’m sorry, Mama.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You don’t owe me anything. Change your ways before the poor girl regrets ever meeting you.”

That moment was supposed to be Langa’s turning point, but there’s a saying that says; “a leopard never changes its spots”. And so, Langa went back to his room that evening with a very disgruntled heart. He was angry, confused, hurt and disappointed in himself, but clearly not disappointed enough. While he was still busy trying to sort out his little dilemma, trouble was looming in Samarah’s life. After a week, he had decided that he’d take his secret to the grave.

Of course, like all other news, the news of Langa and Ntombi died within a week and life went on as usual, but that of course, wasn't the end of her. Mrs. Dladla decided that she wanted to have a re-do of the Sunday lunch and actually behave herself that time, but she still didn't want Langa to marry Samarah. It wasn't because she didn't like her at all, she actually adored her. She was too intelligent and too kind for her son and she was going to have a very tough time. She was weak and soft, too soft really. A life of suffering was aimed at her should she have chosen to marry Langa in future. The dream she had was not even making things any better for her. She woke up on the day she was supposed to have another lunch with Samarah and the family, but with a very heavy heart full of doubt and weary and overall confusion.

Baba: "Mkami (my wife). Please don't tell me that you're still doubting that girl."

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) "It's honestly not that at all. I told you, I have absolutely nothing against her."

Baba: "Well, you've never been nice to her."

Mrs. Dladla: "It was only one time, kodwa (though), Baba."

Baba: "Then what's the problem this time?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I had an awful dream. I can't even explain it."

Baba: "Do try."

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) "I dreamt of our sons fighting, Baba."

Baba: "They fight all the time."

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) "This was different. They were at war with one another, and so were their wives."

Baba: (frowning) "Wives?"

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) "Samarah and Aviwe."

Baba: (excitedly) “You mean to tell me that Langa will marry Samarah?”

Mrs. Dladla: “It seems so.”

Baba: (ululating) “This is the best news you’ve given me my wife.”

Mrs. Dladla: “I wouldn’t be so excited if I were you.”

Baba: “How so?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Samarah seemed very unhappy, and then I saw she and Langa were rich – filthy rich. We were all living in a very huge mansion, but happiness was lacking. He was really treating her badly, Baba. So much was happening in the dream that I myself can’t even explain it.”

Baba paused for one moment as his moment of happiness turned into sorrow.

Baba: “Perhaps you should ask Gogo Nandi. She could always interpret dreams.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Yes, I’ll be sure to call her later.”

Baba: (shaking head) “No, you’ll forget. Call her now.”

Mrs. Dladla: “She might be sleeping.”

Baba: “Stop stalling and call Gogo.”

Mrs. Dladla took her phone from her night stand and called Gogo Nandi, her maternal grandmother. She was still alive at the amazing age of 88. She was still in good condition and could walk without a crutch aiding her. She called and of course, it rang for some time before she answered it.

Gogo Nandi: “Yebo (Hello) Nomcebo. Kunjani (How are you)?”

Mrs. Dladla: "I'm well, Gogo, how are you?"

Gogo: "As good as can be. I know no one calls me to check up on me for fun. What's the problem?"

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) "I had a strange dream about Langa. I'm struggling to interpret it."

Gogo Nandi: "Oh? Do explain."

She narrated the dream to Gogo who didn't seem surprised much.

Gogo Nandi: "Hmm, I see. I had the same dream about him – twice already."

Mrs. Dladla: "What does it mean?"

Gogo Nandi: "Well, it is pretty much self-explanatory. The Dladla ancestors are in favour of this girl he wants to marry, but

given the way she was raised and Langa's doings, they are going to have a tumultuous marriage if he doesn't change his ways."

Mrs. Dladla already knew what that meant. She needed to convince Samarah to leave Langa – one way or another.

Mrs. Dladla: "I see."

Gogo Nandi: "Don't worry, he'll be rich – very rich, but you'll all have that girl to thank. Sadly, I don't see him being thankful for that."

There was hope in Langa being rich and successful as they had hoped, but it seemed as if he was the one who was going to be very one to ruin it all. Riches are hard to acclaim, but staying at the top is even harder. Dreams are very important, of course sometimes they are just dreams, but sometimes they are the key to the future. At times ancestors can come through your dreams to protect you from forthcoming danger. It is important to be in touch with your spirituality, for we are all fighting demons; even those who don't believe that they are. This life is not only difficult to survive physically, but it is also a spiritual warfare. Trust your instinct, and you'll never go wrong.

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

That Sunday was going to be a particularly good day. Instead of having Mrs. Dladla and the girls stay at home and cook, they were going to go to church together and then come back and cook together. Of course, after the mishap of the previous Sunday, it was understandable that Samarah was having her own doubts. She was nervous, but very excited about church. She was getting so in tune with the word of God, and had even made an effort to read a chapter every night before bed. She was really learning a lot and in turn, that strengthened her faith and she prayed a lot more than she used to. Langa fetched her as usual, but they had no idea what was about to occur on that particular day. Instead of Langa fetching her all alone, they were all in the taxi and the front seat was reserved just for her.

By everyone, Vusi and Vee were also in the taxi. It was about to be a family affair, and everyone was warned by Baba to behave themselves and to be nice. They were strictly told to leave all their baggage behind and if he heard one complaint from

Samarah's mouth, he'd sort them out. She was rather relaxed when she walked out after Langa's call. He waited outside to smoke a little because he knew she took her time walking out of the house. Meanwhile, Zanele and Vee were flabbergasted at the size of the house. It made them grow even more envious, while Buhle was starting to have a change of heart. She thought that if she was nice enough to Samarah, they'd end up being friends and she could score an invitation to the house. While Samarah was still locking up, the rest of them took their time admiring the house.

Phume: (admiring) "Wow, how rich are her parents?"

Zanele: "Clearly not rich enough. I've seen better houses."

Mrs. Dladla: "Where, Zah? In your dreams, perhaps?"

They all chuckled except for Vee and Vusi. It was the first time that Vusi had also seen the house, making him grow increasingly envious. Langa switched off his cigarette the moment he saw her approaching. He wanted to soothe things before she got the shock of her life.

Samarah: (smiling) "Hi. You're quite early today."

Langa: "Oh, yes. About that."

He couldn't even finish his sentence, when Phume was just too excited. She peeped her head through the window and shouted at her.

Phume: (shouting) "Hi, Sammy!"

She was waving happily at her. Samarah was doing the same right back at her, until she nearly stumbled when she saw the taxi was quite full. She stopped for a second and stared at Langa.

Langa: "That's what I was trying to tell you."

Samarah: (whispering) "I'm nervous, Langa."

Langa: “Relax. It will all be alright. Come.”

He took her hand and kissed it. He then opened her door as always and got her into the taxi. Her heart was throbbing, causing her to feel overheated. She looked back at all of them, and it is amazing what one can see from the front seat of a taxi. All faces are staring right at you – clearly.

Samarah: (nervously) “Sanibonani (Good morning).”

They all greeted back and of course, the unhappy ones were mumbling their hellos, while the happy ones without any problems or grudges were greeting her right back. Samarah’s attention was mainly on Mrs. Dladla, she was the one she had to win over. She was rather surprised when she was greeted with a broad smile. She could even see all of Mrs. Dladla’s teeth.

Mrs. Dladla: “Unjani, Ntombi (how are you, dear)?”

Samarah: (nervously) “Ngiyaphila (I’m well), ma and you?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Hayi (no), I’m fine, thank you.”

Of course, Baba greeted her with the best smile out of everyone. Seeing that made her feel at ease, but now she wasn’t too sure if she was pretending because the first impression is always the one that lasts – no doubt. The ride to church was rather awkward as she was constantly wiping the profuse sweat from her forehead. Baba was making good conversation along with Mrs. Dladla, while Vusi was trying so hard to swallow his envy. Vee had noticed that each time Samarah was around, he’d remove his hand from hers. Sure, he wasn’t a romantic, but she thought that everything was fine before she arrived into the picture. Despite all the fights, both physical and verbal and all the insults, she assumed that that was how they loved one another and that it was all perfect.

In her little mind, Samarah ruined it all by making everyone focus on her. Once they got to the church, it was all eyes on Samarah yet again. Surprisingly, the church was a lot more crowded than the last time. Mrs. Dladla was wearing her usual church uniform, while Mr. Dladla was dressed properly in formal attire. He wasn’t part of any committee at church, due

to his health as he couldn't travel much, but he was often invited on special occasions like weddings and church events around the community to speak to young men. He could always give a good word or two to the youth. Once the church ladies saw Mrs. Dladla and Samarah, they started crowding Mrs. Dladla.

Woman 1: (smiling) "Nomcebo, how lovely of you to make it this time."

Mrs. Dladla: (annoyed) "What do you mean? I was busy last week. Church isn't the only thing I have running in my life, you know."

Woman 2: "Hawu (Oh), Nomcebo, don't be like that. What she meant was that we're all excited to see you."

Mrs. Dladla: "Okay, anything else?"

Woman 1: "Well, we would like to know when you're introducing your new daughter-in-law to the church?"

Mrs. Dladla: “Who are you talking about?”

Woman 1: “Hao (goodness), Nomcebo. That beautiful one, of course.”

Mrs. Dladla: “No one is interested in joining the church.”

Woman 2: “But – “

Mrs. Dladla: “Excuse me. Church is about to start.”

She left them hanging right there and walked in with her entire family. For a moment they all seemed complete. Baba had Samarah next to him as usual, while Mrs. Dladla kept glancing at her every now and then. She wanted to try and convince her mind that whatever she was thinking wasn't real. She wanted to think that Samarah would be okay and strong enough to marry her son one day, but she just couldn't shake off that gut feeling. That child was too pure for her son. And as much as most mothers love their sons and adore them above

everything, Mrs. Dladla was fair. Sure, she might have been a bit soft on them while growing up, but she was fair. She didn't take any sides and she knew which ones of her children were just useless, and which ones were clever. Every mother knows that. The pastor spoke about something very close to heart; "Judgment".

Pastor: "Why is it that so many of us judge others before we even get to know them? Is it because we fear that we might see so much of ourselves in others? Is it because we're naturally hateful? Why do we look at people and assume instead of getting to know them? Matthew 7 verse 1 – 5 says to us; "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." I say unto you that before you walk out that door today, make a choice. Choose the kind of person you would like to be. Before you judge a person, get to know them. Engage in a conversation instead of following

gossipmongers. Everyone chooses to believe what they want to about a person. How often have we heard them say; “She thinks she’s better than us because she drives a fancy car or because she is married to a rich man or because she’s educated? Who blocked them from doing the same? Who told them not to go to school? Not to buy that car not to get a rich man? John 7 verse 24 says to us; “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” Be very careful of speaking ill about others, for you never know when your chance might come to be spoken of like that. No one is perfect and God does not expect us to be perfect, but love is perfect. I’m not talking about lust, or anything like that, but real and pure love. Love each other, for God would have wanted that. Be careful what you say about another person, for what goes around, does come around. James 4 verse 11 – 12 says to us; “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?”

Samarah was so intrigued, and she didn't allow herself to be distracted one bit. Mrs. Dladla just kept her eye on her. The more she looked at her

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the more she just admired her. She had charisma, even though she was rather quiet and very anxious most of the time. That was something she was yet to find within herself and believe.

Pastor: "A lot of you aren't even aware that your family – your very own blood does not love you. We live in a world so cruel, that even the one who births you can despise you. We live in a world that is broken and raise children in the very same broken system; fathers do not want to accept that they have fathered children and reject those children. Do not be weary and best believe me when I say; an unborn child's spirit already knows when they have been rejected. That is why some women lose their children way before they are even formed in the womb. They save themselves the trouble and heartache and go back to our creator. This is why we have a lot of spontaneous miscarriages. Learn to love each other, but most importantly, love yourselves. For if you fail to love, how will you be able to reject being judgmental? You can't be full of love and judge others. When will your turn come? Learn to love so that the children who choose you as parents can love you too. I leave

you with 1 Peter 4 verse 8 – “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. May the good Lord keep you and bless you.”

That was such a lovely sermon which got Samarah thinking about Beatrice and their relationship. According to her, she was her biological mother. She hadn't heard or really seen anything that would make her doubt that. She just assumed she was one of those very unlucky girls that had a very bad relationship with their mothers. After church, they had to touch base with everyone and do a little meet and greet. Thankfully, they couldn't stay very long because they still had to cook. Samarah was under the impression that she was going to pitch up and eat like before. Once they got off the taxi, Mrs. Dladla decided to let her in on it.

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, Samarah, my darling. We decided that today, we'd be cooking together – all of us girls.”

Samarah: (surprised) “Oh, is there anything I can help with?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Well, can you cook?”

She wasn't even too sure if she should respond to that. She could cook, though, since she was doing hospitality as a subject for years before she went to Grade 10.

Samarah: "Uhm, yes, but – "

Baba: (interrupting) "Well, then. If you can cook then cook, my dear."

Langa was being extra nice to everyone, because he knew that should one of them get pissed, they might have just let the secret out. He couldn't afford all that. He had taken extra shifts to make extra money and had more than enough to spoil everyone on that day.

Langa: "I'm going out with uVusi to buy some drinks for everyone. Please, place your orders."

They were all so excited and of course, Vusi and Vee being themselves, they decided to drink something out of their norm.

Vee: “Yoh, since you insist, Sbhali (brother in law), I’d love a Heineken.”

Vusi: “Me too.”

Zanele: “I’d like – “

Mrs. Dladla: (interrupting) “Just so we’re clear – it is only for today and you only get to have one drink. You’re still too young to drink.”

Zanele: “Of course, Ma.”

Phume and Samarah didn’t order any alcohol, but juice instead. Samarah was perfectly happy without knowing the taste of alcohol. She wasn’t much of a social butterfly anyway. She was given the platform to make whatever she wanted to by Mrs. Dladla, and she was allowed to use any amount of ingredients. Langa ensured that he’d replace whatever was used. So, she made something rather simple for

them; Beef lasagne with a Greek salad and chocolate pudding. She was so much in her element that she had forgotten how soothing it was to cook and be in the kitchen. She absolutely loved it and was given the permission to give each one a job to do. Mrs. Dladla was happy, though Zanele was just envious but had to bite her tongue because she was warned. Vee, was quite a chameleon; after a few bottles of beer, she was chatting away and acting like she was enjoying Samarah's company. After all that cooking, they ate a lovely meal. Everyone couldn't stop raving about her food, and even asked her to come and cook more often. Of course, Baba couldn't stop raving and the more he was spending time with her, the more he felt that she would be good for Langa in future as his wife.

Mrs. Dladla: "Oh, that was such a lovely meal."

Samarah: "Thank you, Ma."

Baba: "Zanele should honestly take some notes from you if she wants to bag that rich man she is always talking about."

They all laughed – even her side kick Vee, but she was just offended and kept quiet.

Samarah: “I suppose I should wash the dishes.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, no, under no circumstances will you do that. Zanele and Buhle can do that. Along with Vee. They worked the least in cooking.”

Buhle: “Kodwa (But), Mama, I also want to rest and get to know Samarah better.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You have an entire lifetime for that. Samarah, come, I’d like to take a walk with you.”

Langa: “Are you sure you don’t want me there, Ma?”

Mrs. Dladla: “If I wanted you there I’d have asked you to come along, wouldn’t I?”

Langa: "Alright then. Are you sure she'll be fine?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I'm not going to sell her. Relax. Come, my dear."

She took Samarah's hand and they walked out the gate hand in hand, while Vee was quite envious. Her "mother-in-law" never welcomed her like that.

Vee: "Well, I was never welcomed like that here."

Baba: "Well, that's up to Vusi to fix. You've been his girlfriend for almost 8 years and I have never heard him speak of marriage. I don't see why you keep blaming us."

She was rather offended by Baba's nonchalant response. He was so happy that the day was a success and that his wife had a change of heart. He enjoyed a beer or two with his sons while his wife took his future daughter in law on a walk. Meanwhile Mrs. Dladla was seen walking alongside a very beautiful Samarah. It didn't take too long for people to notice that. She never did that with Vee nor anyone of her son's girlfriends, so

the question on everyone's minds was, "what was so special about her?" It didn't take long for the miserable Ntombi to rush outside to bear witness as she was told. Mrs. Dladla was well respected and they knew not to mess with her. They could gossip but never say anything to her face. While they were walking, she took that as an opportunity to have a heart-to-heart with Samarah.

Mrs. Dladla: "You know, many people see Baba as he is now, but he wasn't like this forever, you know. They don't know that I struggled with him for a few years when we were still newlyweds."

Samarah: (frowning) "What do you mean, Ma?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Do you know I caught him a few times in his taxi with girls other than myself?"

Samarah was quite shocked that Langa's mother had decided to tell her something so personal about her marriage.

Samarah: (shocked) “Well, I didn’t know that. Langa has never mentioned anything.”

Mrs. Dladla: “That’s because they don’t know. You see, marriage isn’t easy, more especially when you get married very young. You need to be sure that you’re ready – that you know a person and how they react to you on their good days, on their bad days. You need to be so sure because most people don’t stay married for long due to the fact that they do it out of pressure.”

Samarah: “I hear you, Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “I have no doubt that you love my son, Samarah and believe me, I love you too – so very much. Our first meeting wasn’t ideal and I am sure you thought that I hate you. The truth is, I feel you’re too good for my son.”

Samarah: “I don’t understand.”

Mrs. Dladla: "Samarah, you are one of those pure souls. You're too good for him and I am afraid that he'll hurt you. I am afraid that he will not treat you the way you need to be treated. Which is why I'd like to ask you this question and please, by all means, be completely honest with me."

Samarah: "Okay."

Mrs. Dladla: "Do you think you're ready for marriage? Do you think you can marry him without any regrets?"

Samarah didn't even think twice about her response.

Samarah: "Yes, Ma. I really do love him. I'm prepared for it. Should we get married, I won't expect him to do for me what my father has."

Mrs. Dladla could tell that there was no convincing her otherwise, she was in it. She wasn't prepared to leave and she didn't want to ruin their relationship by telling her of his infidelity. She was supposed to tell her, but what good would

that do? What kind of person would that have made her look as?

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) “I see. Well, then. If you ever need to talk – about anything. You can always call me. I’m just a phone call away.”

Samarah: “Thank you, Ma. I really appreciate it.”

Samarah was so in love that she thought that she had gained another family and more especially a mother. While she was still reeling from the newly created bond with Langa’s mother, a phone call came through.

Samarah: “Hello?”

Caller: “Hi, am I speaking to Samarah Moloji?”

Samarah: “Yes, who’s this?”

Caller: "Oh, I'm one of the paramedics who arrived on the scene, ma'am. I'm afraid your father has been involved in a car accident. He's been rushed to hospital as we speak. We couldn't get hold of his wife, so you were next on kin."

She felt as if her entire world had come crushing down. Well as they do say; "What goes around indeed does come back around".

“As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.”

The entire drive home felt like such a lifetime for Ssamarah. She was in tears the entire drive through and all she could think of was her father’s situation. She was stressed, but she had to go to school since she was about to start writing exams. She couldn’t afford to miss her very first June paper, and even if she had missed it, staying home would only depress her further according to Mr. and Mrs. Dladla. She was sitting right in between them, while Langa was driving and feeling quite unsettled that he couldn’t be there for her. It wasn’t about him, as he was told, though.

Baba: “Mntwanami (my child), would you like us to stay the night with you? You’re in no state to be alone.”

Samarah: (nodding) “That would be very helpful, thank you, Baba.”

Mrs. Dladla: “That’s what we’re here for, my baby.

She really felt humbled by the Dladla's willingness to help and be supportive towards her. It was just something she wasn't quite fond of. The moment they walked in, Mrs. Dladla took over.

Mrs. Dladla: "Go take a warm bath, I'll fix you some soup."

She nodded in thanks, while Baba joined her in the kitchen looking very weary, while Langa followed Samarah to her bedroom.

Baba: (worried) "Do you think she will be okay?"

Mrs. Dladla: "She has to be. I just wish she could see past Langa. He's not right for her."

Baba: (nodding) "Kodwa (But), Mkami (my wife), we both know that. Don't you think perhaps we should give him the benefit of the doubt?"

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) “And have him ruin her life? She won’t forgive us.”

Baba: “She won’t forgive us either if we meddle in or try to sway her towards leaving him. I say we let them be, but keep a good eye on Langa. Let’s face it, she’s young and in love and I am not so sure what Langa is feeling right now, but Samarah will think we don’t like her and we’re only trying to hide it by telling her how Langa isn’t good for her.”

Mrs. Dladla knew that her husband was right, although she just wanted that relationship to end.

Mrs. Dladla: “I have grown to love this girl so much, Baba. I could never forgive myself should Langa hurt her the way I foresee.”

Baba: “People make their own choices, Mkami (my wife). I’ll try and keep an eye on Langa, but you know, I can’t live his life for him nor tell him what to do.”

They were so worried about Samarah, and while Mrs. Dladla was whipping up some soup, Langa was trying to console Samarah in his own way. He followed her to her bedroom and sat on her bed, while she undressed herself without any worry. He hadn't really seen her naked before, so it was quite hard for him to contain himself, but he didn't want to take advantage of the situation. She looked like a goddess to him; seeing her beautiful, melanin skin surrounding her entire body was just golden. His mind was fighting his erection back to sleep, without her noticing. She unwittingly walked around naked, because in her mind, it hadn't registered that he was there. She was aware of his presence, but she hadn't really put her mind to it as yet.

Langa: "Are you okay? Do you need me to help you with something?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, thank you. I'll be okay. I just need a warm bath."

Langa: "Can I join you?"

She nodded with affirmation as he followed her to her en-suite bathroom. She still didn't have a towel wrapped around her body, so she was still naked. She bent over to reach for the tap in the tub and opened it. By then, her entire buttocks were exposed, leaving no room for disappointment. It was the hardest thing Langa had to do; he was literally salivating while watching her beautiful, pure, naked body that night. He kept moving around so much, so that she couldn't see that he was aroused. His eyes had gone red due to all the blood flowing to and from his brain. Once the tub was full enough, she put some bath salts in there and some foam bath and got in. She sat in that tub for a while, staring at the ceiling. Langa fought so hard against his sexual feelings and concentrated on her. She didn't say anything, but perhaps she needed that encouragement that she was doing okay and that everything was going to be just fine. He stood up and kneeled beside her, he grabbed her bathing sponge gently and started giving her a soothing bath in silence. She really needed that intimacy - that comfort from him. Although he wanted to do so much more to her, he knew that if he messed things up at that point in time, he would have lost her completely. He thought of having her for a lifetime; to him she was a real gem – wife material. He didn't think that he was undeserving of her all because he cheated on her with Ntombi and without a condom at that. In his mind, he deserved her because he found her first. It was his

duty to be her first everything. Once he was done bathing her, he helped her out of the tub and tried by all means to look away from her beautiful, naked body. He watched her lotion herself and waited for her to get into her pajamas. She seemed tired, emotionally which automatically caused her to feel physically exhausted. It is always a ripple effect. He watched her doze off and was thinking of how blessed he was to have a girl that loving and gentle and sweet. He didn't want anyone else; he wanted her. Once she fell asleep, he went downstairs and his mother was just about to bring up some soup for her.

Mrs. Dladla: (frowning) "How is she?"

Langa: "She's emotional, kodwa (but) she'll be alright."

Mrs. Dladla: "Are you hungry?"

Langa: (shaking head) "No, thank you."

Mrs. Dladla: "Baba, perhaps we need to have the talk with him."

Langa was confused and started frowning immediately.

Baba: "Sit down, son."

He sat down and looked at them both in confusion.

Baba: "Your mother and I are worried about you and Samarah. We both feel very unsure of your relationship."

Mrs. Dladla could see just how Baba was trying to sugarcoat the situation.

Langa: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Mrs. Dladla: "He means that we don't think you're right for her."

Langa: (sigh) "Not this again, Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: “Hear me out. I mean, not so long ago, you slept with Ntombi. Everyone except her knows. What on earth do you think will happen once she bumps into someone in our area and they tell her? How do you think she will feel about that? Have you ever thought of what will happen if Ntombi is pregnant? I bet you didn’t think of that when you slept with her without a condom. I taught you better, Langa – we both did.”

Langa: “So, you’re judging me, Ma?”

Mrs. Dladla: “No, but I won’t stand and watch you hurt that poor child. Can’t you see she’s going through a lot already?”

Langa: “Ma, I love her. Please, all I am asking is that you give me the benefit of the doubt – the both of you. Yes, I made a mistake with Ntombi and I can assure you that it was only a lapse in judgment. I promise, I won’t ever do it again. I love her, Ma. I want her to be my wife; the mother of my children. I want what you and Baba have. Why can’t you see it?”

He was trying so hard to convince them and deep down, Mrs. Dladla knew her son was just manipulating the situation. Her gut feeling told her that he was lying – she just knew it. Despite it all, they couldn't force them to break up, it wouldn't be right.

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) “Okay, then. We will support you no matter what, but you had better treat her right, Langa. I mean it.”

Langa: “Yes, Ma. I can assure you that I will treat her like the queen she is.”

He went back upstairs to lay in bed alongside his future wife, while Baba and Mrs. Dladla managed to place themselves in one of the guest rooms. Early morning, Mrs. Dladla woke up and heated up the soup for Samarah. She went to her room and knocked on her door. She didn't open as Langa was sleeping with her and she wasn't sure if they were even dressed or not. Langa got up to open the door and Mrs. Dladla was surprised to find Samarah still in bed, but she was half awake.

Mrs. Dladla: (surprised) “Hawu (oh), Samarah, aren't you going to school?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, Ma. I’m just not feeling okay.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Is it because of your father?”

Samarah nodded.

Mrs. Dladla: “Langa, give the two of us a few minutes alone, will you?”

Langa: (nodding) “Alright Ma. I’ll be downstairs if you need me, love.”

She nodded in agreement while he closed the door behind him. She placed the soup on the bedside table and sat next to her in bed. She looked around and admired the beauty in the simplicity of her bedroom. She saw a picture of the younger Samarah next to her deceased twin sister.

Mrs. Dladla: “This is a lovely picture. Who’s this?”

She was told by Langa that she had a twin sister who died years prior, but he also didn't really indulge much to his parents.

Samarah: "Oh, that's my twin sister. She passed on when we were ten."

Mrs. Dladla: "I see. Were you two close?"

Samarah's face lit up as she spoke of Amarah.

Samarah: (smiling) "Oh, Ma. We were beyond close. She was my crazy half, while I on the other hand have always been rather quiet. I sometimes wonder what life would have been like with her around."

Mrs. Dladla: "Hmm, what kind of person was she?"

Samarah: "Oh, she was very talkative, fearless and she just lived through each moment. She was quite funny too."

Mrs. Dladla: "I bet you both spoke about what you wanted to become when you grew up?"

Samarah: "Always, Ma. She wanted to be an Oncologist. Can you imagine? At that age we both knew what those terms meant."

Mrs. Dladla: "Hmm, I see. If I may ask, my daughter, how badly do you want to achieve your dream of being a radiographer?"

Samarah: "Oh, Ma. It is my biggest dream. I have just always found it so fascinating to see through the human body. I don't know what it is, but I am just obsessed with Xrays and the human body. I'm not really into blood, though, so I'd rather opt for radiology."

Mrs. Dladla: "What do you think Amarah would say if she saw you right now? Right of this moment?"

Samarah: (chuckling) “She’d drag me out of bed right this instant and tell me how stupid I am for moping around

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more especially over our mother. They didn’t get along.”

Mrs. Dladla: “So, now that she’s not here, why aren’t you dragging yourself out of bed? I mean, if you are too tired to do it for yourself, the least you could do is do it for her. You owe it to her to show her that you can still live through this life and be the best version of yourself, isn’t it?”

Samarah knew that Mrs. Dladla had a point. The last time someone had actually cared like that was just before Thandi’s death.

Samarah: (sigh) “I hear you, Ma. Sometimes it is just hard.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Life is hard, believe me even at this age I still concur. No one said it would be easy, but one think you will thank yourself for one day is that you chose yourself. Your father made his choices and yes, although he is still your father,

he did you dirty by leaving you all alone in this house with no one to lean on for starters. Secondly, he made a very bad choice by marrying your mother, but well, we can't really say that because otherwise he wouldn't have had you."

She was truly trying to uplift her spirits because she had a great feeling that Beatrice wasn't her real mother.

Mrs. Dladla: "Thirdly, you are too young to be moping around. Your father isn't dead – so that's the positive news out of this depressing situation. You have your first June exams today for Grade 11. Grade 11 plays a very big role in your life. I have had to leave school to take care of my children. I wouldn't want you to live the same life filled with regret."

Samarah could see just how lovely Mrs. Dladla was and that she had completely misjudged her from the beginning. She had found a mother in that woman; a loving and comforting mother, someone who knew just what to do and say at the right time.

Samarah: "Thank you, Ma. You know, it has been a very long while since I actually had someone do what you're doing for me. I really appreciate it."

Mrs. Dladla: "Come on. Go take a bath, I'll reheat your food for you."

Samarah rushed to the bathroom while Mrs. Dladla did as promised. Langa waited for Samarah to finish up before taking her to school. After she was done, they all hopped into the taxi and started off by dropping her at school. Her life had gradually changed and was about to change even further. She just had no idea.

Langa: "I'll pick you up later."

Samarah: "Okay, thank you. Bye Ma, Bye Baba."

They both greeted her goodbye with broad smiles on their faces.

Mrs. Dladla: “Langa, be sure to take her to the hospital to see her father first before you take her home, okay?”

Langa: “Yebo (Yes), Ma.”

It was an ordinary exam day for Samarah and she thanked Mrs. Dladla for dragging her out of bed with her comforting words. She wrote that paper well and she could feel it within her that she had passed. She explained everything to her friend Lydia, who was actually glad that Langa and his family was there for her.

Lydia: “Heh, chomi (oh, friend). You mean to tell me that Langa and his parents took you to hospital and drove you back home and then slept there with you and even made you food?!”

Samarah: “That’s exactly what I am saying. You know, his parents are such nice people. They are so kind to me.”

Lydia: “You know, I won’t lie. At first I thought they were after your pockets, but I can see now that they are genuinely nice people.”

Samarah: “You know, you shouldn’t be so judgmental of people.”

Lydia: “I’m not, believe me. I just know that if you are too trusting of people, they will play with you. I don’t want that to happen to you. You’re too nice at times, but you have a good heart. Nka bolaya motho (I’d honestly kill a person).”

They both laughed while enjoying their lunch.

Lydia: “On a serious note now, what exactly happened to your dad?”

Samarah: “I don’t know the fine details, but they said he was involved in a gruesome accident. He won’t walk as a result.”

Lydia: “Where was Beatrice all along?”

Samarah: “Stop calling her that. She’s my mom and what do you mean?”

Lydia: “Ag, it is her name, isn’t it? I mean, where was she all along? She wasn’t in the picture, but she suddenly appeared at the hospital dressed in black? You don’t find that weird?”

Samarah: “My mom has always been weird.”

Lydia: “You don’t find it weird that you don’t look like her one bit? I mean, thank goodness you don’t look like her – no offence, but don’t you find it a little bit odd that you don’t even have the tiniest gene from her? Not even a little freckle or something?”

Samarah: “Ag, you sound just like Amarah. She used to say that all the time.”

Lydia: “Well, maybe she knew something you didn’t. I think she was right. You are just too ignorant.”

Samarah was ignorant at that stage, it just didn't make sense to her that her own father would abandon her and leave her with her evil stepmother. If so, why on earth would her father not tell her the truth about her real mother? It seemed all too farfetched in her mind and she thought that people were making up stories like that because of their oddly strained relationship. After a while, Langa kept his promise and parked right outside the school. They were in the yard, so he was easy to spot. He hooted at her and waved, while he got out to take a quick smoke.

Lydia: "Hmm, at least your man is punctual."

Samarah: "He is, hey. I am thankful."

Lydia: "He'd better not play with you – or else..."

She showed her her hand rolled up in a fist while they both laughed. Lydia walked Samarah all the way to the gate and then stopped.

Samarah: "Aren't you coming with?"

Lydia: "I'd love to, but my mother is coming to fetch me. She wants us to go shopping for her sister's wedding. Yoh, my aunt doesn't get tired of getting married."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Should I wait with you until she gets here?"

Lydia: (shaking head) "Don't you worry about me. Go deal with life, babe. I'll be fine."

Samarah: "Aren't you going to say hello to Langa at least?"

Lydia: (sigh) "I'm waving. That's the best he'll get."

Samarah: "How long will you be this cruel towards him?"

Lydia: "Until he proves to me that he is the one. Bye now."

Samarah chuckled as she walked towards Langa. He was done smoking by then, and he gave her a gentle peck on the cheek. He opened her door for her and she got in.

Langa: "Kunjani, sthandwa sami (how are you, my love)?"

Samarah: (smiling) "I'm alright."

Langa: "I see your friend still doesn't like me."

Samarah: "I've never had a boyfriend, Langa. She is just looking out for me. I don't think she hates you."

Langa: "Oho. So, are we going to the hospital before I take you home?"

Samarah: "Yes, please. I thought you might say that."

Langa drove off and they went to the hospital. Upon arrival, they were of course, shocked to find Beatrice sitting right next to Richard's bed. Richard seemed depressed and wasn't saying anything. Instead, he was staring blankly at the tv, while Beatrice was sitting right beside him paging through a magazine. Samarah held Langa's hand tightly while taking a deep breath before greeting them both.

Samarah: "Dumelang (Hello)."

Beatrice looked up and realized that it was Samarah, and her "poor" boyfriend. She seemed unbothered by their presence and didn't even acknowledge them.

Beatrice: "Oh, hi."

Richard looked at his daughter with deep-seated pain in his eyes. His tears told a story – a story he couldn't even tell his own daughter. If he had done that, it would have been the end of their relationship.

Samarah: "Papa, how are you today?"

Richard could barely utter a word the previous day, but once he saw her, he decided to speak.

Richard: "I'm okay. How are you?"

Samarah: "I'm alright."

Richard: "How are you, Langa?"

Langa: "Sawubona, Baba (Hello, Father). I'm well, thanks and how are you?"

Richard: "Well, a little embarrassed that you have to see your girlfriend's father in this state."

Beatrice: “Oh, well, it is not the end of the world, now is it, Richard?”

She was cold and heartless and he couldn't stop her. Samarah thought that she was probably making him pay back for all those nights he left her alone; when she had to eat all the food she had cooked for him because he never made it home. While he was lying comfortably in another woman's bosom, she was sobbing the entire night and drinking herself into a stupor.

Richard: “Anyway, how was your first paper?”

Samarah: (smiling) “You remembered?”

Richard: “How could I forget?”

Samarah felt so relieved to have a piece of her father back – the father she knew.

Richard: “I've been meaning to talk to you. Are you coping at the house? I'm so sorry I've been neglecting you like that.”

Beatrice: “Oh, don’t be sorry for being the true you, Richard.”

Richard: (angrily) “Do you mind? I’m trying to have a conversation with my daughter here.”

Beatrice: (annoyed) “Well, then, don’t let me keep you. You seem to have everything under control, don’t you? The next time you need to have that diaper of yours changed – call the nurses!”

She got so upset at him and stormed out of that hospital room. She was so misunderstood, I mean, who storms out of her ill husband’s hospital room like that? It was baffling.

Langa: (shaking head) “I’m going for a smoke. Let me give you two some privacy.”

Richard was actually grateful that Langa had done that. Once he was gone, Richard poured his heart out.

Richard: (crying) “My darling daughter, I am so sorry for the way I have been behaving these past few weeks. Words can’t express just how awful I feel. I feel so guilty and believe me – I deserve everything that has happened to me.”

Samarah: “Don’t talk like that, Papa. You don’t deserve being on a wheelchair.”

Richard: (nodding) “Yes, I do. I deserve it all. I was having so many affairs and I felt like I was on top of the world, and look at me now. I’m halfway to being a vegetable.”

Samarah: “You have a second chance at life. Use it wisely.”

Richard: “The only thing that’s keeping me going is you.”

Samarah: “What about Mama? Why is she treating you like that? How will she take care of you now?”

Richard: “She will do it. She’s just upset.”

Samarah: "It doesn't look like that to me. Why does it seem as if she loathes me, Papa?"

Richard: (Clearing throat) "It's all in your mind, baby."

Samarah: "No, it's not and you know it. I want to know why she hates me so much?"

Richard: "She doesn't hate you. She loves you. One day, you'll see what I see."

What surprised Samarah was that her father never really spoke well of his wife. In fact, after Amarah's death he couldn't care less of her. Suddenly he was in hospital and he couldn't say any bad word about her. Yes, he was paralyzed, but he could afford living a life while being taken care off until he got his life on track again, but why the sudden change in Richard? What was he hiding?

Chapter 22

Luke 6:27 – ““But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”

A few weeks passed and Samarah could finally catch a break from the exams. The 16th of June had finally arrived – Langa’s birthday. Mr. and Mrs. Dladla were so supportive, that they’d cook for her and Langa would give her the food for supper. He spent most nights there with her, and his parents would often visit – more especially during Sundays. Mrs. Dladla assisted her with cleaning the house and making her proper food while she studied. Richard was discharged from the hospital, and instead of going to live with his daughter, he was taken to his house which he shared with Beatrice. It was a lot harder for Samarah to visit, but she chose to focus on her studies as advised by Mrs. Dladla. She told her that all else would fall into place.

It was quite odd as she could speak to her father on his cellphone at certain times, and when Beatrice answered the phone, she couldn’t speak to him at all. She was completely shut out. If it truly hadn’t been for the Dladla’s, she wouldn’t

have been able to pull through. She was so excited about Langa's 21st birthday, that she had planned a surprise party for him. Although his parents were against it, they chose to allow her to do that one thing for him. She loved him after all. By then, she had become quite known in Orlando. It didn't take too long for everyone to see Ntombi's "replacement". She wasn't too happy about her and the fact that everyone was raving about her made it even worse for her.

Lydia was invited too and despite her reservations, she chose to support her friend above all. She loved Samarah, that was all that mattered to her. She had asked that Langa be kept away from home until it was time for him to be surprised. He was absolutely unaware of what was to come, and so, Baba instructed Vusi to keep him busy all day. Vusi had to drive around with Langa all day and be watchful of the time and messages that would come through. Of course, Vusi was quite annoyed by it all, but who was he to stand in the way of free food and alcohol? He never received his own 21st, and he couldn't exactly be angry at his parents. He was envious that he couldn't find a girlfriend who had as much money as Samarah. While he was trying to keep his brother out of the loop, Samarah was very excited to be in charge of everything. She wasn't being bossy, although Vee and Zanele

were not too happy about her doing so. They couldn't really be rude towards her as always, since Baba and Mrs. Dladla were there at all times. While the Orlando community members were admiring the biggest and most attractive marquee they had ever seen, others were already spreading the news of Langa's 21st birthday party. The Dladla's had no idea, but it was about to be the grandest and most talked about party ever. Everyone, including those not invited had already been planning their outfits, while the jobless gossipmongers were keeping eye from across the street. Meanwhile the Dladla household had never been so lively and full of happiness and rejoicing. It looked like a mad house, with the décor people that Samarah had hired running around to fix the last minute touches, she was trying to tick off her checklist to see who had finished the task they were assigned.

Baba: "Nkosazana (Princess), the food is ready and the décor people are almost done. I have strictly instructed everyone to stay away from our bedroom. That is where the drinks will be. Mkami (my wife) has the keys, so we won't worry about theft tonight."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Thank you so much, Baba. I really appreciate it."

Baba: (nodding) “Let me know if there is anything else you need. I am going to keep an eye on those guys. I wouldn’t want anyone to mess up such a beautiful setup.”

Samarah: “Thank you once again, Baba.”

Baba: “That is what family is for, my child.”

They had reached a stage where they regarded her as family so much, that Sundays without her felt like no Sunday at all. Richard was still going through his own stuff with Beatrice, so Samarah had the Dladla family to keep her away from stress. They all assumed that Beatrice was taking good care of her husband. Meanwhile Vee and Zanele were quite irritated, and all they had to do was peel all the vegetables. They weren’t asked to do it for free either – each of them were going to get their own 24 pack of their favourite drinks, along with a R1000 secret surprise that Samarah had planned to give them.

Zanele: (annoyed) “I am done with the peeling. This is torture. Can I go now?”

Samarah: “Oh, yes. I suppose that is all done. Let me quickly check through the list to see if there is anything we might need help with.”

Zanele instantly rolled her eyes, while Vee felt she was tired of biting her tongue.

Vee: (irritated) “Oh, come on. It is just a 21st Birthday party, it is not a wedding. Besides, don’t you think you are trying too hard?!”

Those two had taken complete advantage of the situation since Mrs. Dladla was not nearby. She was still checking on the décor people along with Baba. Samarah was a bit flabbergasted by their behaviour. She assumed that they were on good terms.

Samarah: (frowning) “Excuse me? I am not quite sure I follow.”

Zanele: (imitating) “I’m not quite sure I follow. uBusy ukhuluma isilungu lana (you’re busy speaking English here). Lalela sisi

(Listen here, sis), I am a Dladla and that means that we are a Zulu speaking family. The nonsense you have been feeding us has to stop now. It is bad enough you are trying to take our brother away from us, but now you just have to buy my parents' love for you."

Vee: "Vele (of course), you think you are special wena (you)."

Samarah was so hurt, that she was almost on the verge of crying. Lydia could see that the conversation was not taking a good turn. She knew better than to turn a blind eye whenever those two were talking to her friend.

Samarah: (teary) "I... I thought we got along just fine."

Vee: (shouting) "Well, you thought wrong!"

Lydia: "And then? What's happening here?!"

Zanele: “Ungenaphi wena (where do you fit in)? This is between us and Samarah. You have no place in this conversation.”

Lydia: “Oh, ka nnete (oh really)?”

Vee: “Vele (Really)!”

Lydia: “Well, then. I suppose that you cannot give them that R1000 you promised to give them, now, can you, Sammy?”

They both suddenly changed their tune.

Vee: “Heh (huh)?!”

Zanele: (shocked) “What R1000?”

Lydia: “Oh, no. I thought that this conversation had nothing to do with me.”

Zanele: “Hayi man wena (Come on). Be serious.”

Mrs. Dladla came by to check on everyone and she sensed that Samarah was unhappy.

Mrs. Dladla: (firmly) “Kwenzakalani lana (what is going on here)?”

Zanele: (nervously) “Oh, hayi (no), Mama. We were just having a chat with our dearest sister in law.”

Vee: “Yes, isn’t it, Samarah?”

Samarah looked down trying to force the tears back in before Mrs. Dladla could even realize, but she had already saw the tinge of unhappiness slowly clouding her face.

Mrs. Dladla: “Samarah, is everything okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, Mama. Everything is fine. We were just talking.”

Mrs. Dladal: “Hmm, come see something really quickly, would you?”

Samarah nodded and continued to walk alongside the concerned Mrs. Dladla, with her face down. Once Mrs. Dladla managed to get her away from the rest of them, she gently pulled Samarah’s face up.

Mrs. Dladla: “Talk to me. I know you are not happy about something. What happened? Did someone say something nasty to you?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, ma. Everything is fine.”

Samarah wanted no trouble. She never wanted to tell on those two who treated her so badly at times, and Buhle who would always take sides whenever it suited her. She was the two-faced one.

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) “I know what you’re trying to do – you’re trying to keep the peace. You think that by not telling on them that they will somehow love you. Well, the truth is, Zanele is the worst of the bunch. I have tried with her, shame, truly. I just can’t seem to get her to do what is needed to be done. I have said it and I will say it again; if anyone and I mean anyone upsets you again from this moment onwards today, or any other day for that matter, you tell me, okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, Ma. I will.”

Mrs. Dladla: “And don’t you dare give them that R1000. They were doing all this for Langa – it is a charitable event. You don’t owe them anything.”

She was a bit stunned since she thought that Mrs. Dladla didn’t know about the surprise money prize, but she had eyes and ears everywhere. She gave her a tight hug before walking away. From that moment onwards, she had her eye set on Zanele and Vee. The moment those two tried to get near Samarah, she intervened.

Mrs. Dladla: “Try it – I just dare you. Try ruining this day for her again and you will regret it.”

They couldn't understand why Mrs. Dladla had such a soft spot for Samarah, but it was only because of her kind heart and respectful nature. Despite Zanele and Vee trying to ruin it all for Samarah, a blast from the past entered the yard just as they had all finished wrapping up the preparations. By then, Samarah was the only one left to take a bath, so they had to wait on her to finish so that they could tell Vusi to bring Langa back home. While Mrs. Dladla was finalizing the guest list of those who were to be seated on the table, a familiar and not so wanted face entered the yard, looking rather different. Of course, Zanele was the first and only one to be excited to see her, while Vee was a little annoyed. She didn't like her either, but would have preferred her over Samarah any day.

Zanele: (excitedly) “Oh, my gosh! Ntombi! It has been so long since I have seen you, girl! I heard that you moved.”

Oddly, Ntombi looked like she had gained some weight as she was even wearing a dress that was a tad bit too big for her. She

was curvy, but not big yet the dress looked a little more like a tent – as if she was hiding something underneath it.

Ntombi: (smiling) “Hey, babe. I just took a breather from ekasi (the township), you know. This place can be so toxic.”

Zanele: “Look at you – you’re even glowing! If I didn’t know better, I’d say you’re pregnant.”

Zanele was expecting her to say that

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but Ntombi just laughed it off. When Mrs. Dladla appeared looking displeased, Ntombi decided to rub the salt in the wound.

Mrs. Dladla: “Hmm, Ntombi. What an odd surprise. What brings you here?”

Ntombi: “Oh, hi Ma. Ag, nothing really. I just came to witness my darling Langa’s birthday party.”

Mrs. Dladla: (annoyed) “Askies (Excuse me)? Who invited you?”

Ntombi: (chuckling) “I’m joking. Don’t take everything so seriously. I mean, I just came to take care of some loose ends.”

She rubbed her stomach as she said that which alarmed Mrs. Dladla. It just gave her an immediate sick feeling right in the pit of her stomach. She became nervous and upset all at the same time.

Mrs. Dladla: (surprised) “Oh, I see. Do you have some of those loose ends in this house?”

Ntombi: (smiling) “You could say that.”

She rubbed her stomach yet again. As far as she knew, only pregnant women had a habit of doing that. Ntombi most probably just wanted to rub it in her face, as she wasn’t even intending on staying as yet.

Ntombi: “But don’t worry, I would never ruin such a lovely party. I just came to pass on a few greetings to all of you.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, well, if you don’t mind, we have a party to get ready for.”

Ntombi: “Of course. Ni sale kahle (Keep well).”

Zanele: “Bye, babe. I hope we do get to see you later on.”

Ntombi walked out while Mrs. Dladla gave Zanele a firm look. She knew better than to talk back or question her. Meanwhile, Samarah was getting anxious while Lydia was watching the entire conversation unfold from Langa’s bedroom window. She couldn’t exactly make out what they were saying, but she could tell that something was not right with Ntombi, though she didn’t know her.

Samarah: “So, how do I look?”

Samarah settled for a Black and Gold theme, as all white parties were a bit too outdated for her. She didn't mind spending so much on that party despite being warned against doing so. She was wearing a black bandage dress with a gold belt around her waist. It was so figure-hugging and suited her bust quite well. It brought out her melanin skin tone even more, making her look like a beautiful Egyptian queen.

Lydia: "Wow, I can't even recall ever seeing you look like the goddess you are."

Samarah: (blushing) "You don't think this is a bit much, do you? I mean, I feel like it is kind of tight."

Lydia: "Honey, you're 17 – not 71. Enjoy the skin you're in while you still can. In case you didn't know, you are going to age one day, you know."

Samarah chuckled, while Lydia chose not to say anything about the unusual girl she had just seen in the yard. They went out and Langa's parents were so pleased to see her. Mrs. Dladla

was very happy to see her slowly breaking out of her shell with that dress. She always had most of her legs and arms covered.

Mrs. Dladla: (smiling) “You look so beautiful, my dear. Langa is going to be swept away.”

She blushed as she thanked her, while Zanele and Vee were very sour. All they could think of was missing out on R1000 each. That was more painful than anything they had to endure that night.

Samarah: “Is he on the way, Ma?”

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) “Vusi just texted me saying they are just about to leave Randburg Mall.”

They all couldn't wait. It was something special for Samarah, a girlfriend of all things to think of something so spectacular for one of their children, without expecting anything in return. While some might have thought it was about her trying to earn points from Langa's parents, she just did it out of

love. If anything, she wished that he could have gotten the same privileges and opportunities she got. Vusi was growing increasingly weary and irritated in the taxi as they approached the house. He had started drinking about an hour prior, while Langa couldn't be bothered. He was just happy and felt really happy for no reason. It was the universe trying to tell him that something really nice was awaiting him later.

Langa: "Eh Ndoda (Hey, man). Why do you look so depressed? Are you alright?"

Vusi: "Ja, I just had a long day."

Langa: "Alright. You know, I feel so happy today and I have no idea why. What do you think could be the reason?"

Vusi: "I don't know. You're always happy ever since you met Samarah."

Langa: (excitedly) "You noticed it too?"

Vusi: "Ja, everyone does."

Langa: "I have never felt this way about anyone, yazi Sbali (you know, brother). I can't wait to actually marry her."

Vusi: "Well, I'm not sure about that, I mean, after what you did with Ntombi, can you honestly say you love Samarah?"

Langa: (displeased) "Ushokanjani (what do you mean)?"

Vusi: "Nothing."

Langa: "I made a mistake, I swore on my own life it wouldn't happen again."

Vusi: "Okay."

Langa: "If you're so worried about my mistakes, why don't you fix yours for Vee?"

Vusi: "Because..."

Langa: "Because what?"

Vusi: "Because, not everyone is as lucky as you."

Langa should have paid more attention that evening to Vusi's words and actions, but he was too oblivious to it all. He had no idea the rage and bitterness that had already been brewing inside his brother's heart would one day contribute to his own downfall. Langa was driving so excitedly, he wasn't even drinking that evening. He knew that Samarah didn't mind him drinking, but she hated the smell of alcohol on his breath. He tried by all means not to smoke nor drink whenever he would see her, because she didn't like the smell. It is always the little things when one is deeply in love, that make you fall even harder for them. Once he approached the street corner, the marquee was so big and the fairy lights made it even more noticeable. The street had never looked that grand before. Once he stopped by the corner, he was in disbelief.

Langa: (surprised) “Bafo (Brother), is there a wedding in our street that I am unaware of?”

Vusi: (chuckling briefly) “No, come.”

Langa: “Kwenzakalani (what is happening)? I can’t even park the taxi.”

Vusi: “Woza (just come).”

As Langa got out he noticed just how many people were dressed to the occasion right outside the gate. The moment he and his brother approached the tent, he nearly fainted when he saw the beauty of it all.

Everyone: (shouting) “Surprise!”

Langa was so shocked, no one had ever thrown him a party before – let alone a surprise party. Samarah was so happy to see the shock on his face as everyone started singing “happy birthday” to him. She walked towards him and kissed and

hugged him briefly. He was so surprised, that tears flew down his cheeks involuntarily. His heart was beating for joy, he had never felt that kind of love for anyone. They had literally been dating for just under six months, yet his heart was full. He took that moment to look around and saw how his entire family was there and smiling along with him. His parents were so proud of him; proud that he managed to find himself a girl who loved him despite it all. She didn't care about any materialistic things, she just wanted to be a part of his life. As he was wiping tears of his face, and thanking everyone. He briefly saw Ntombi and she looked nothing like she did the last time he saw her. She gave him a stern look from within the crowds, causing him to feel a huge lump in his throat. She then walked away and disappeared within the crowd. That was enough to throw him off the entire night. He knew that it wasn't a suspicion and that it was actually true.

Lana: (nervously) "Eish (oh), You all know how much I hate speeches."

Mrs. Dladla: "Nonsense! You were the head boy at your school and captain of the debating team, Langa!"

They all gave a brief chuckle as Samarah just kept staring him in the eyes. She didn't see his nervousness consuming him that evening. She just saw the love of her life and her future husband.

Langa: "Eish (Oh), I didn't even expect this. I mean, just a few minutes ago, I was telling Vusi that I just feel so happy today and I had no idea why."

Phume: "That was the universe trying to tell you something! You have your beautiful girlfriend to thank!"

Baba: "Yes, I second that!"

People started shouting "speech" as a way of getting him to say something. People always want to make a big habit out of something that isn't even their business. Langa could feel a pang of regret out of what he had done with Ntombi not so long ago, but he knew that should it have been true and Samarah had found out, she wouldn't have looked twice at him. She would have simply walked away and his chance of marrying a pure girl like her would have meant the end for him.

Langa: “Sthandwa sami (my love), out of all the things I have ever received in life, you are my most prized possession. I never thought I could ever fall for someone like this, Samarah. You are just everything to me. Seeing you every single day lights up my day. When you are sad, I become sad. When you become happy, my heart rejoices. You are something that we all call a rare gem, and I would be crazy to ever let go of you. I truly believe that the ancestors have brought us together for a reason. You have lit up my life and my family’s in such a way that I can’t even explain. You mean the world to me, and I will forever love you for that.”

He knelt down on knee, shocking everyone – including Samarah herself and his parents. They had expected that he wanted to marry her straight after high school, but they didn’t expect him to propose like that without having a talk with her father first. And without a ring to top it all off. While everyone was gasping, half the guests took out their phones and started recording.

Langa: “Sthandwa sami (my love), I know, this is most probably the least ideal engagement setting you had in mind, but I felt

like I couldn't wait any longer. When I met you I made a promise to myself; that I would marry you right after you finish high school, on your 19th birthday. I am honouring that wish tonight by asking you to marry me. Samarah Moloji, will you marry me?"

Samarah was in tears, as she really didn't expect that.

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, Yes! I will marry you, Langa!"

Everyone was clapping hands, and while Langa was hugging his soon-to-be bride, he saw Ntombi's mother amongst the crowds, looking at him very displeased. Something wasn't right; and it meant that he had obviously done her wrong and he needed to pay for it. No mother would enjoy seeing her daughter getting the shorter end of the stick. And just like that, history was slowly repeating itself; two young people fell in love, while one's parent had dark secrets that would soon affect his child's life, the other's parents were in full support of the relationship. Little did the soon-to-be bride know that her boyfriend was going to change on her once he had everything he had been praying for. Life is something else; you are not obliged to do anything for someone and when you do – do it

willingly and out of love, for when those people finally grasp what you have done for them – they are not obliged to stay with you. That is the bitter pill that seems too hard to swallow for most people on this earth.

“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

While everyone was still raving about the impromptu engagement, Langa was having a hard time trying to get Ntombi and his entire situation out of his mind. He couldn't even confide in anyone, because he knew that everyone would tell him to end things with Samarah if he really loved her. His parents had asked him to go get changed in his bedroom, since Samarah had even bought him a new suit for the occasion. Langa hated feeling less of a man, but that evening it was all about him. He enjoyed being made to feel like important, so he didn't even worry about Samarah and the entire expenditure that came along with the party. While he was getting dressed, Vusi was there with him, as his big brother. He was annoyed, but he was hiding it quite well. He knew his brother really well and he could see how on edge he was while getting dressed.

Vusi: “And then wena (you)?”

Langa: “Yini (what is it)?”

Vusi: "Why do you look so edgy?"

Langa: "I don't know what you are talking about."

Vusi: "Oho, I see. You think I don't know you, Langa neh (hey)?"

Langa: "I am just nervous about everything, that's all."

Vusi: "Okay. Perhaps it has something to do with Ntombi."

Langa froze for a minute thinking that Vusi knew something. His girlfriend Vee was mouthy and everyone knew that she knew everyone's business.

Langa: "What about her?"

Vusi: “Come on, I know you saw her. I mean, I saw how you froze every now and then. And that proposal? We both know it was unplanned. What exactly are you trying to do to the poor girl, Langa? Are you trying to drag her down?”

Langa: “What exactly is your problem, Vusi? I thought you were happy for me.”

Vusi: “Who said I wasn’t?”

Langa: “Your tone, all this conversation. What exactly is the matter?”

Vusi: “I am just saying that if you truly love her, sort out your shit with Ntombi.”

Langa: (angrily) “I told you over and over again – we’re over! It was a mistake.”

Vusi: “Well, that mistake could be potentially growing inside of her as we speak.”

Langa felt a huge pang in his gut.

Langa: “What did you just say?”

Vusi: “You know exactly what I just said. You know very well you didn’t use a condom that night.”

He hated it whenever Vusi was right.

Langa: “If she’s pregnant, it is not mine.”

Vusi: “If you say so, but that’s not what I heard and you know that now that she is back she will not keep quiet about this – neither will her mother.”

Langa: (nervously) “Are you going to tell on me?”

Vusi: (chuckling) “Relax, I won’t ruin your moment, golden boy. In fact, I will just let all this unfold right in front of me. It is your life, after all. Samarah will find out soon enough, so you won’t be able to hide it much longer.”

Langa: “Why do I get the feeling you want this all to end?”

Vusi: “No, why would I possibly wish for that? I am just an average taxi driver who stays in his lane.”

Langa was quite disappointed in his brother for not wanting to give him proper advice. In actual fact, he was hoping that his brother would support the lie, of which he wasn’t prepared to do – well, at least on on Langa’s terms. Vusi gulped the remainder of his beer and left the bottle on the floor.

Vusi: “Don’t keep them waiting. We’re all waiting for you. Come on, don’t look so sad. It is time for you to keep up the show.”

He gave him a brief smile and walked out the door. Langa was sweating profusely and he had to calm down before everyone noticed that he wasn't himself. He started counting on his fingers and tried to recollect as much as possible about that evening. He replayed it all over and over in his mind and it all gave him the same results; they slept together most probably about five times that evening and they didn't use a condom. He even tried to think if he did ejaculate inside of her each time and it gave him a total. Yes, he did. He counted using his fingers and it all came down to it. She was most probably 2 months pregnant if not three.

Langa: (exclaiming) "Fuck!"

He heard a stern knock on the door before recollecting his feelings. Just as he was about to get himself together, in walked Samarah. She found him wiping the profuse sweat from his forehead looking rather stressed.

Samarah: "I am sorry for just barging in like that. I was getting worried about you. Everyone is waiting for you so that the party can start. I mean, we are all kind of hungry."

Langa: (chuckling nervously) “Oh, I am so sorry for keeping everyone waiting. I was just deep in thought.”

Samarah: “You look stressed. Are you alright?”

Langa: “I couldn’t be happier, babe.”

Samarah: “I am so sorry for putting you on the spot like that. I thought you would love getting a surprise like that.”

Langa: “No, it is not you at all. I am just too happy, that’s all.”

Samarah: “Okay, shall we go then?”

Langa took both her hands in his and pulled her closer to him. He gave her one long, passionate kiss.

Langa: “I don’t know if I ever tell you this enough, but I love you, Samarah. Nothing will make me fall out of love with you.”

Samarah: (chuckling) "Well, I love you too, Langa."

Langa: "Promise me one thing."

Samarah: "Anything."

Langa: "Promise me that no matter what happens, we will solve it together first."

Samarah: "Of course, we're a team."

She had no idea that it was the start of a vicious, manipulative cycle created by Langa in their relationship. They both walked out hand in hand and just as they were out of his room, his mother was ululating and dancing with so much joy. She started singing a gospel song and everyone else joined. What would a party have been at the Dladla household without inviting a few church people? After that, Mrs. Dladla started praying.

Mrs. Dladla: “Father God, we humble ourselves before you. Dear lord, first and foremost we thank you for this day, for we did not create it and we did not even know that we would be here to see it, but by your grace, we saw it. Secondly, we thank you for bringing Samarah into our lives. Dear Lord, I always read and teach my children about selfless and unconditional love, but never in my life did I ever think that such people exist. We cannot thank you enough for the wonderful blessings that come with her presence into our lives, and for the mere fact that my son has found true love in someone so amazing, brings joy to our hearts. Lastly, I pray that you allow this union to last, lord. We pray that this night may be a night of fun but safe fun for the youth and may they all go home safely. We thank you once again in Jesus Mighty name. Amen.”

They all said Amen, and it didn't take rocket science to see how displeased Zanele and Vee were unhappy. Buhle was the two faced daguther as usual, she was glad to be in Samarah's good books that evening, so she was going to have a smooth night. The speeches were said and thanks was given and it was finally time to eat. After the food, Mrs. Dladla and Baba had a drink or two and took the party to their bedroom. They always knew when to leave, though they kept an eye on them to

ensure that nothing bad was going on in the marquee. Meanwhile, everyone went to change and got into more comfortable clothing and the drinks started flowing. Mrs. Dladla ensured to stay awake with Baba to keep tabs on the alcohol, so no one could even steal it. Everyone was dancing the night away, and it was the first time that Lydia had that kind of fun with her best friend. It didn't take very long for someone to try and ruin the fun, when Ntombi came out of nowhere and patted Langa on the shoulder, while he was dancing with Samarah. As he turned around he nearly fainted, while Samarah looked at them both surprised. Lydia was annoyed because she had a little more experience than Samarah, so she knew that it was either a bitter ex or a jealous side chick, plus she had seen her before earlier on that day.

Langa: (firmly) "Can I help you?"

Ntombi: "We need to talk."

Samarah: "Langa, what's going on?"

Lydia: "Yeah, what's going on?!"

Langa: (nervously) “Oh, this is Ntombi, baby. She is just a cousin of mine who came to visit.”

Samarah: “Oh, hi. It is lovely to meet you.”

Samarah, as naïve and oblivious as she was, took out her hand for Ntombi to shake, but Ntombi just gave her a filthy look and completely ignored her presence.

Ntombi: “Langa, we need to talk – now! Or else, I will turn this place upside down.”

She wasn't kidding and Langa was torn between a rock and a hard place, all this while Vusi was actually secretly enjoying it, while Vee was laughing all the way from where she was seated, completely forgetting that she was drinking Samarah's money.

Samarah: (frowning) “Langa, what's going on?”

Langa: (nervously) “It’s nothing, babe. Continue having fun, let me sort her out, I will be right back. I promise.”

Before Samarah could even ask what was happening, Langa had forcefully grabbed Ntombi and pulled her out of the tent. Before she could even come back to her senses, he was nowhere to be seen. She knew deep down that something wasn’t right – she knew it. Everyone around her knew it – the community knew it, but of course, the victim is always the last one to know.

Samarah: “What the fuck just happened?”

Lydia: (sigh) “I don’t know, but what do you think just happened?”

Samarah: (teary) “Am I being played, Lydia? I mean, you can be honest. You are the most honest person I know. Tell me the truth, please.”

Lydia: “Eish (oh), friend, I don’t think I am at liberty to answer that. I don’t want to get involved in your issues.”

Samarah: “You are my best friend

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so tell me the truth, please.”

Lydia: “Eish (oh), let’s wait for him to come back. I really don’t know, I won’t lie to you.”

Samarah: (shouting) “Just be honest!”

Lydia: “Fine, yes. I think you are being played. I saw her coming here earlier on and she looked really weird. His mom was shocked, I doubt she knows but she looks pregnant.”

Samarah felt like a huge knife had stabbed her right in the gut. For a moment her world felt like it was spinning and it was worse because she was sober. She couldn’t understand how she could have missed the signs; Langa was perfect according to her. She refused to believe that he could have cheated on

her, more especially so soon within the relationship. Self doubt started playing in her mind; she thought she wasn't good enough or woman enough for him since she was a virgin. "He must have cheated because I can't satisfy him", she thought to herself. Her mood had been dampened and worst part, she had no idea who Ntombi was nor what Langa was doing with her.

Lydia: "Friend, you didn't plan this party just so you could be depressed. Come on, live a little."

Samarah: (shaking head) "I can't think straight right now, friend. I mean where did he go?"

Lydia: "Well, there is only one way to find out."

Samarah: (frowning) "Which is?"

Lydia: "Call him."

Samarah contemplated it. Her heart was beating too fast. She stared at his number for a good few seconds before actually attempting to dial the number. She went ahead with it and it rang unanswered. Lydia could see that her friend was about to have a really bad night.

Lydia: "Try again."

She did indeed and it rang unanswered again. Samarah couldn't keep her tears within any more and started crying silently.

Samarah: "He isn't answering his phone, chomi (friend)."

Lydia: "Come, let's go sit in his room. You can't possibly be seen like this."

While the two of them walked swiftly to his room, Vee and Zanele being the nosy two as they were caught an eye of the entire situation. Meanwhile Langa was finding it hard to deal with Ntombi. He had taken her to the nearby park, which was

about five minutes away from his house. No one was around, just a few people were passing by. He dragged her roughly far enough just behind the trees so that no one could see them together.

Langa: (angrily) "What the fuck, Ntombi?!"

Ntombi: "Ouch! Langa, you are hurting my arm! Let go of me!"

Langa: "What the fuck are you doing here?"

Ntombi: "What do you mean? I live here."

Langa: "Don't you test me, bitch! Is that what we discussed just before you left?!"

Ntombi: "No, but you couldn't possibly expect me to leave forever, did you? This is my home. I grew up here. I know no one there."

Langa: “Unganginyeli (Don’t fuck with me), Ntombi, yezwa (you hear me)?!”

Ntombi: “Langa, you can’t control me like that, at least not any more.”

Langa was so frustrated, that he did the unexpected. He slapped Ntombi so hard that she fell onto the ground. He was about to give her another blow on her face, until she told him something he didn’t really expect to be true.

Ntombi: (shouting) “I’m pregnant!”

Langa stumbled a bit and quickly regained himself again.

Langa: (shocked) “What the fuck did you just say?”

Ntombi: “I’m pregnant and it is yours in case you try and deny.”

Langa: “Don’t you fucking tell me that shit, wena (you)! That bastard you’re carrying is not mine.”

Ntombi: “Well, you can tell that to my family when they come to your house to inform them about what you have done to me. You have defiled me, Langa, and now you think you can go and live a happy life with that fat bitch of yours?!”

She was still onto the ground as she was swearing at him, which angered him even more. He kicked her out of rage and she just kept going.

Ntombi: “Try killing this child of mine and my mother will kill you. She knows – everyone knows and so does my father.”

Langa: (panicking) “Why the fuck did you tell everyone?”

Ntombi: “Because I knew you would do this to me. Face it, I am pregnant and I am keeping it. There is nothing you can say or do to change my mind.”

Langa's mind was blowing up due to frustration, and it was about to get worse when his phone rang – twice and he left it unanswered. Ntombi could see his frustration and she enjoyed it. She felt it was her getting one step ahead of Samarah.

Ntombi: "Is it her? Is she trying to get hold of you?"

Langa: "You don't get to ask me about my relationship. Look, you need to go back."

Ntombi: "No, I am not going anywhere."

Langa: "Look, you need to. Just until the baby is born, please. I will do anything."

Ntombi: "You will have to send me money. You know I don't work."

Langa: "Fine."

Ntombi: “R5000 a month.”

Langa: (shocked) “Ini (what)?! You are insane! I am just a taxi driver.”

Ntombi: “You are but your girl isn’t. R5000 or I talk.”

Langa: “Fine. You’d better be gone by tomorrow morning.”

Ntombi: “If you don’t send that money within 48 hours, I will send her everything. Don’t you worry, I have her number thanks to your sister.”

She walked away limping a little, with a smirk on her face. She didn’t want to give Langa the satisfaction of knowing that he really beat her up badly. As she walked home, she kept wiping off the blood from her face. Her mother Magdeline, got the shock of her life seeing her daughter bruised. She left the house in a good condition.

Magda: (shocked) “And then, wena (you)?!”

Ntombi: "Yini, Ma (What is it)?"

Magda: "What happened to you?"

Ntombi: "Some idiot tried to mug me on my way home."

Magda: "How does one try to mug you when you live just around the corner and the street is so busy?"

Ntombi: "You'd be surprised."

Magda: "I hope you're telling me the truth."

Ntombi: "Why would I lie?"

Magda: "I don't know, perhaps because you just think Langa will choose you over that hippo."

Ntombi: "What makes you think he won't?"

Magda: "Because she has money and you don't. She is loved by his parents while you're not."

Ntombi: "Oh, please. I am the one carrying his child. And besides, she hasn't slept with him. He is dying of hunger that one. I will give him a few more months and once the baby is born, he will be putty in my hands."

Magda: "You are forgetting one thing – Langa is a man. He is a man just like your father and any other bastard out there. Men just never get satisfied with anything. He won't leave her for you, if that's what you're hoping for."

Ntombi: "He will, just you wait and see."

Magda: "Well, I don't care about that. We are setting a date so that we can inform his family that you're expecting his child. I have already spoken to your father and uncles."

Ntombi: “That won’t be necessary. I am going back to KZN. I will be back just before the baby is born.”

Magda: “That’s not what we discussed.”

Ntombi: “This is my baby, my life, Mama. I have made my decision.”

Magda: (shaking head) “It is him, isn’t it? What did he promise you? Did he promise you marriage? You saw how he proposed to that girl tonight.”

Ntombi: “That was just for show. He loves, he will love me again if you think he has fallen out of love.”

Ntombi was in so much denial, yet she was planning on doing everything it took her to get Langa to be hers again. Samarah had no idea that she was slowly falling into a pit of hell. While she was crying in Langa’s room, Lydia was trying her best to console her.

Lydia: "Sam, don't cry. You are honestly giving people the satisfaction to talk about you. What do you think his mother will say if she finds you crying like this?"

Samarah: (crying) "I can't help it, friend. Something is not right. I can just feel it."

Lydia: "Can you at least just wait for him to come back, please?"

While she was consoling Samarah, a stern knock appeared on the door.

Phume: "Samarah, it's Phume! I just want to see if you're okay. I saw you crying and I am worried about you."

Samarah: "I can't let her see me like this."

Lydia: "She's fine, Phume. She just needs a few minutes, please."

Phume: “Okay, but if she doesn’t come out within five minutes, I am telling uMa (my mom).”

She walked away while Lydia was trying to continue with her job.

Lydia: “Maybe you should take this as a sign.”

Samarah: “A sign of what?”

Lydia: “I don’t know, that you two aren’t meant to be or something.”

Samarah: “Are you serious right now?”

Lydia didn’t even get time to respond when they both heard voices outside the room.

Langa: “Ufunani la wena (what are you doing outside my room)?”

Phume: “Your girlfriend is crying and it is all your fault.”

Langa: “Ukhuluma ngani (what are you talking about)?”

Phume: “I knew you would ruin a good thing. I am telling uMa (mom).”

Langa: “Phume, wait!”

Phume walked away from him briskly and into the house.

Langa: (knocking) “Sam, please open the door, Sthandwa sami (my love).”

Samarah was contemplating trusting him all over again.

Langa: "Please, I'd like to explain myself to you. Please allow me that chance."

Samarah: "What should I do, Lydia?"

Lydia: "Let him in. If you don't, you will keep wondering what is going on in his head."

Langa: "Please, love."

After a few minutes, Samarah unlocked the door and let him in. He looked like hell itself.

Langa: "May I please talk to you? Alone."

Samarah: "Whatever you want to say you can say in front of Lydia."

Lydia: (shaking head) "Aowa (no), friend. You two can speak without me. I will be right outside if you need me."

She gave Langa a stern look before closing the door behind her.

Samarah's eyes were so swollen from all the crying and Langa felt a little bad about it since it was all his fault.

Langa: "Sthandwa sami (My love)."

When he tried getting closer to her, she stepped back.

Langa: "I am sorry for making you cry. It wasn't my intention at all."

Samarah: "Who is she? Why did you just leave with her so abruptly?"

Langa: "I told you... She's my cousin."

Samarah: "Don't you lie to me!"

Langa: (sigh) "Okay. The truth is, she is my ex. She didn't take the news of me moving on very well. She refuses to accept that we are over, so I had to let that sink into her head. I swear to you, she wants me, but I don't want her. I am over her; I wouldn't be with you if I was still into her. You have to believe me."

Samarah: "How can I believe you, Langa? You lied to me."

Langa: "I am sorry. I was just afraid of losing you. Please, Sammy, I won't be able to survive if I lose you. You are my world. And nothing and no one can ever compete with you."

Samarah: "I don't know, Langa."

Langa: "Please, just think about it. I promise you, if I ever mess up again then you have every right to leave me. Give me one last chance, please."

Samarah: "That depends, are you telling me the truth?"

Langa: "I have no reason to lie to you."

Samarah: "If I ever find out that you lied to me, Langa, or that you are keeping secrets from me, I swear – I will leave you and never look back."

Langa: (relieved) "You have my word, Sthandwa sami (my love)."

He held both her hands and kissed her passionately, and just like that, she was putty in his hands all over again. She knew deep within her heart that he was lying to her, but when you are in love, your judgment gets clouded so easily, you end up doing stupid things. Yet again, as the Bible says; Luke 8 verse 7: "For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light."

“Put no trust in a neighbour; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms.”

Six months later...

It had been a tumultuous 6 months and Samarah was finally in Grade 12. She and Langa had a very good relationship – or so she thought. She was really under the impression that he was the perfect guy; he was taking her out whenever he could, he was staying up late with her at times at her house and at times she would visit him at his house. He would sit up and read a book while she was studying. He would quizz her right before tests and exams and she was having the time of her life. She hadn't had sex with him yet, and she had sworn to wait until marriage. Of course, it wasn't easy for Langa, but he had so many tricks up his own sleeve, and everyone around him was fooled – all except Vusi. He could see right through his brother, and sadly, he would tell Vee nearly everything that he knew about Langa. While everyone thought that their relationship was nothing short of perfection, trouble and secrets were brewing.

Samarah's father had been keeping contact and even though she still wasn't living with him, she would occasionally visit him and he didn't mind at all. He was recovering well, though he couldn't walk any more. Samarah had no idea where her father found the money for his ailing health and ongoing physiotherapy as she had assumed that her father's business was right under control. She had no idea that a huge curve ball was about to be thrown her way; in an attempt to disrupt her academics. Witches and demons come in many forms, yet so many people still have no idea that most of the time they come in the form of our loved ones. Those who know you from the inside out, have all access to all of you and can kill you easier and much faster than a complete stranger.

Spiritual warfare is real and has entered even our houses. Our own mothers have now become enemies. Samarah's evil stepmother was about to show her true colours, but God always has bigger plans. For as long as you are still alive, God has not finished drawing your plans on this earth as yet. Your race will end when He says it is time.

Samarah had just bought her uniform for the upcoming year, and she was quite excited. She was accompanied by Mrs. Dladla, and they had become so close. Langa's parents were

also not aware of the filth he had become; he had gradually made his way up to being the biggest liar they had ever encountered. Samarah and Mrs. Dladla had just finished shopping for her school things, on a Sunday. She wasn't a last minute person, but she had been so busy that it had temporarily slipped her mind. She decided it was time to have lunch with her future mother-in-law. They were at Randburg mall and they decided to go to Spur, since Mrs. Dladla adored their ribs. Langa had dropped them off and went to get one load before fetching them again from the mall.

Mrs. Dladla: "My child, I am very sure you are excited for this coming year. I cannot wait for you to become the best Radiographer in the country."

Samarah: (smiling) "Thank you, Ma. I am also so excited. I really do hope that my marks will be high enough to guarantee me a spot at Wits."

Mrs. Dladla: "Don't be silly, you should stop second guessing yourself. You are the smartest daughter I have ever had."

Yes, she had become a daughter to her; apart from Phume, Samarah was the next best thing. Zanele had finished her matric and passed with an H symbol. Her parents weren't very disappointed, as they had expected that. She couldn't go to University since her marks were very low and she felt she was too good for a 'low grade' job. So, she had been home for a few weeks trying to figure life out, according to her.

Samarah: "Well, I doubt Buhle and Zanele would love it if they heard you say that, Ma."

Buhle was now in matric, along with Samarah, and knowing that she wasn't also very smart was quite stressful. She was always caught between a rock and a hard place as she would side with Zanele and Vee whenever it suited her, and then turn on them and be nice to Samarah whenever she needed a favour.

Mrs. Dladla: "I have told you before, my baby. You are my daughter; though not by blood but you are. God brought you into our lives for a reason. Don't you worry about those two daughters of mine. I have always known since they were young that they were going to be quite vile. You won't believe it, but

they were once suspended from school for burning a fellow learner's hair with a lighter.”

Samarah was shocked but it wasn't something that those two weren't capable of.

Samarah: “That must have been quite embarrassing for you as their parent, Ma. I am pretty sure it was in high school.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, no. They were in Primary school, a grade apart. I was so angry that I taught them a lesson they'd never forget. I have been praying and asking God to just change them because I myself at times wonder if I really did give birth to them.”

They both laughed.

Mrs. Dladla: “Nonetheless, they are my children and I do love them, but I cannot excuse nonsense. If they do rubbish, I have to correct them – even if it means that I will have to write them off should the need be.”

They continued to have a good conversation, and an hour later she received a disturbing call.

Samarah: "Hello?"

Ruth: "Hi, Samarah. I am so sorry to bother you, but I had no one else to call."

Ruth was one of Samarah's neighbours who also kept a watchful eye on her house whenever she was gone.

Samarah: "Hi, Mam Ruth. Is everything alright?"

Ruth: "No, not really. Your father is outside the house. He doesn't seem to have the keys. He says that your mother dropped him off here and left. He has a few bags with him on the ground."

Samarah was surprised. Why would Beatrice do such a thing? She lived with him in their own house.

Samarah: "Okay, Mam Ruth. I'll be right there. Please, can you stay with him while I make my way home?"

Ruth: "No worries. I will keep him in my house until you come."

Samarah: "Thank you."

She hung up and Mrs. Dladla was rather worried.

Mrs. Dladla: "Is everything okay?"

Samarah: "I don't know, Ma. My mother apparently dropped my father off at my house and left."

Mrs. Dladla wasn't really surprised at that. She was actually shocked that Beatrice held out so long. She thought that she

would have cleaned him out and left him a month after his accident.

Mrs. Dladla: "Where did she go?"

Samarah: "I don't know. I need to get going."

Mrs. Dladla: "Let me call Langa to come and fetch us."

Samarah nodded while thinking deeply. She had no idea what awaited her. It was not about to become an easy walk in the park. She paid the bill and walked out with Mrs. Dladla. They waited outside on one of the Mall benches for Langa. She didn't even hear Mrs. Dladla's distinct conversation with Langa while she spoke with him on the phone. About 15 minutes later, he had arrived with Baba in the front. He hardly sat in the front, but she was really fine with it. She sat right behind them with Mrs. Dladla by her side. They drove in silence, as the Dladla's knew that they might have been on their way to a rather dramatic Sunday. Things never ended well with Beatrice around, hence they always avoided her by all costs. Once they

arrived, it didn't take too long for Mam Ruth to come out of her house.

Ruth: "Greetings, family."

Samarah: "Hello, Mam Ruth. Is my father there?"

Ruth: "Oh, yes. I just gave him some food. I offered him a bath but he refused. He is in a really bad state, hence I didn't want to tell you over the phone. I didn't want to upset you the day before your big day."

Samarah's heart was palpitating.

Samarah: "May I see him?"

Mam Ruth was really unsure about that but she didn't have a choice. She nodded and went inside the house to get him. The moment he got weeled out of Mam Ruth's house

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with her son carrying his bags, Samarah's tears fell down her eyes. He looked so bad, that Mam Ruth's description of his condition was a mere euphemism. He was dressed in torn clothes, and looked like he hadn't bathed in days. He had sores almost everywhere on his body and a few flies were swarming around him. She couldn't hide her pain as she thought that he was healthy and happy because that is what he had been telling her whenever they spoke on the phone. Guilt was starting to consume her. She thought that she was living large while her own father was being neglected by his wife. Samarah couldn't utter a word, as she wheeled her father into the yard. Mam Ruth was very compassionate and she understood completely. Mrs. Dladla and Baba thanked her and her son for their generosity, and they soon followed her into the house. She stopped in the middle of the lounge and stared at him. He could barely look at her.

Samarah: (tearful) "Papa, what happened? Why do you look like this? Where's Beatrice?"

That was the very first time that Samarah had called Beatrice by name instead of Mama. She was so hurt, that the woman could actually be so vile. She remembered everything that Amarah had told her about Beatrice and whenever she had tragedy

strike in her life, the headaches and anxiety always came back. She touched her forehead, and they knew that it was the onset of another migraine.

Mrs. Dladla: “You two help her out, I will sort out Richard. I’ll be back soon.”

Baba and Langa took Samarah and placed her on the couch and attended to her, while Mrs. Dladla had taken Richard to one of the bathrooms on the ground floor. Richard was too embarrassed to even look anyone in the eye. Mrs. Dladla was very nice to him, and barely said a word. She just undressed him carefully, and bathed him in water mixed with some Savlon. It took a lot to get his body to ease up, with all those sores all over his body. He was not quiet because he was too full of himself – no, but he was quiet because he felt ashamed that the very parents of the boy he didn’t see fit enough to be his son-in-law had been taking care of his daughter, while he wasn’t even sure what he was dealing with. He was embarrassed that Langa’s mother was being so nice to him and was bathing him whereas he had a wife who had run away. She packed away all his clothes and dressed him in some. She placed a light fleece blanket over his legs and wheeled him back to the lounge, where Samarah had calmed down a little.

Mrs. Dladla: "I will go make something to eat."

That was her way of excusing herself from the conversation so that Richard and Samarah could have a private moment together.

Samarah: (teary) "Papa, what happened?"

Richard began to show some emotion ever since he got there.

Richard: (crying) "I don't know what happened, my child. My life is such a mess, such a mess..."

Samarah: "What do you mean? What are you talking about?"

Richard: "Everything seemed fine when I got back from the hospital. Beatrice took really good care of me, until I had learnt that she cleaned out all my business bank accounts and I was declared bankrupt."

Samarah was rather shocked, that she could barely say anything for a few minutes.

Richard: “When I asked her about it, she got angry at me and started depriving me food. Whenever I tried to call you – she’d take the phone from me. At times she’d leave me in my chair from the morning and only be back in the evening. It was so bad that I didn’t want to tell you. I didn’t want to disrupt your academics.”

Samarah: “But Papa, why on earth would she do this to you?”

Richard: “I don’t know. I think perhaps because she is busy cheating on me. I offered her a divorce, but she refused.”

Samarah: “So why did she drop you off here and leave?”

Richard: “She sold the house – without my consent. I don’t know how she did it and she just dropped me off here and

left. I don't know where she is, even Ruth tried calling her but she is nowhere to be found."

Samarah had realized that her father was basically broke, jobless and disabled. Not even support from the state would be enough to cover her school fees for the current Grade 12 year let alone University fees that were awaiting her for the coming year.

Samarah: "Okay, what about your car? Surely we can sell that to cover our expenses for a few months?"

Richard: "She sold everything. I only have my clothes left."

Samarah: "Well then we must let the authorities know and get her arrested, Papa."

Richard: "No! I mean, let her be, she won't get very far with the money. Believe me."

Samarah: (teary) "So, what now, Papa? I mean, I am doing matric this year. My fees cost R42 000 per annum."

Richard: "I know, my baby. But, we'll figure it out. I promise."

Samarah: "How? You don't have a job, no money and you won't get hired anywhere where you'll be able to make that much money. So, we should use my trust fund instead."

Richard: "I'd rather die than have you use that money! I saved it for your future."

Samarah: "My Matric year is part of my future, Papa. Besides, we still have Amarah's trust fund. Surely you never touched it."

Samarah had no idea that the money was gone in Amarah's trust fund.

Richard: "I used it years ago. I had some financial difficulties and had to use it."

Samarah: “Well then, that leaves us no choice then. We have to use my trust fund.”

Richard: “Let’s rather wait for my RAF payout, Sammy. Surely it shouldn’t take too long now.”

Samarah: “Papa, right now you can’t even afford a lawyer. How on earth will the process be sped up if you have no one to back you?”

Richard: “But, your University fees – “

Samarah: “I’ll apply for a bursary. And if you’re so worried about it, you can replace the money when you get your payout. I can’t afford to fail this year, Papa. You already have so many medical bills that were most probably not even taken care of.”

Richard: (embarrassed) “You’re my daughter, Samarah. I should be the one to care for you – not the other way round.”

Samarah: “I am your daughter, yes and it is my duty to take care of you now. Just let me.”

Richard was too proud, but he needed to make a choice though it was hard for him. While Mrs. Dladla was pleased that Samarah did not even think of skipping school to take care of her father, she was more than happy to look after him during the week. He didn't need much help; just to get bathed and placed in and out of his chair. He was still a bit weak and needed to learn to do things on his own. Samarah didn't want to burden Mrs. Dladla, but both she and Baba had agreed on that. Langa would drop them off there in the mornings, pick Samarah up for school before he went to do his daily job. It was bad enough that Langa had a very big secret he had been hiding, but now that Samarah was about to get hold of her trust fund money, things were about to slowly spiral out of control. Meanwhile Richard was slowly getting a taste of the wrath of ancestors. He was still not trying to make amends simply because he seemed to have a way out of every single problem. He wasn't really homeless; and his financial problems were about to be a thing of the past. Though he couldn't walk, he was grateful because he was still alive. The pain he had endured was nothing compared to what was coming. After all, Galatians 6 verse 7 says; "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap."

“Whoever digss a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.”

A few weeks had passed and Samarah had gotten into a very good routine. She had a study routine and luckily for her, she wasn't compelled to attend afternoon classes at school because she was quite clever and well ahead of the syllabus. She managed to get 7 distinctions at the end of her Grade 11 year, so that already paved the way for her as one of the top learners at her school. Her friend Lydia, got 6 distinctions, and they were quite ready for the year ahead. They studied together and at times would spend time in the school library until Langa fetched the both of them. Lydia didn't like Langa at all, but she had made peace that her friend chose him. There was not much she could do, other than love and support her friend no matter what. She hadn't been complaining of him in a long while, so that was a good sign in her eyes. Things were going well in their relationship, according to Samarah. Though Langa would go to his hometown every now and again, his family thought that it was because he wanted to keep the elders in the loop regarding his plan to pay lobola for Samarah the coming year, but he had his own dealings. This particular afternoon, Mrs. Dladla and Baba were spending the day at

Samarah's house with her father, who was motivated enough to get back up, while she was relaxing in Richard's room, studying the poetry they had done that week. He got an odd call, which forced him to go outside.

Samarah: "Who is it?"

Langa: "Oh, it is my uncle from KZN. Go ahead and study, I don't to disturb you."

He went out as far as even outside the gate, where no one could hear what he was saying.

Langa: "You're really starting to annoy me. How many times have I told you not to call me when I am busy?"

Ntombi: (annoyed) "By busy you mean whenever you're with her."

Langa: "Ntombi, I don't have time for this right now. What do you want?"

Ntombi: "I need money."

Langa: "I sent you money already."

Ntombi: "I don't want to give birth at a public hospital, I told you. Do you want to embarrass me like this when I have told everyone that the father of my child is rich? Don't upset me, Langa. I have kept my end of the deal, so you keep yours."

Langa: "Fine, how much?"

Ntombi: "R15000."

Langa: (angrily) "You're insane! I don't have that kind of money."

Ntombi: "You think I am an idiot wena, neh (don't you)? I know all about the lobola. These streets are small, you know. Everyone knows everyone. So, if you can save up for

lobola money, surely you wouldn't mind to spend it to ensure that the mother of your child has a comfortable birth."

Langa: "Did you just say son?"

Ntombi: "Yes, it is a boy – your very first son. Don't disappoint me."

Langa: (excitedly) "Fine, I will send the money."

Ntombi: "Clearly you didn't hear me. Do you expect me to give birth all by myself? I expect you to be here when I do, Langa. I am due any day from now. Don't disappoint me."

Langa: "I can't just leave – "

Ntombi: "Make a plan."

She hung up on him, leaving him frustrated and excited at the same time. He didn't want to touch his savings at all – he knew

that it was just going to go downhill from there. Luckily for him, he had saved money in an investment account that was accumulating interest every month, but now that he needed money, he was going to pay a lot of penalties since the money hadn't matured yet. He thought that if he took some money from his lobola and he told Ntombi about it, he might have ended up taking it all. He walked back into his room looking quite depressed.

Samarah: "Is everything alright?"

Langa: "No, I don't know."

Samarah: "What is it?"

Langa: "My great aunt in Kzn is ill. She has cancer."

Samarah: "Oh, baby. I am so sorry."

Langa: "That is not even the least of my worries."

Samarah looked at him anxiously awaiting the bombshell.

Langa: "She needs to start treatment immediately and they don't have that kind of money."

Samarah: "How much will she need?"

Langa: "R15 000."

He could see that Samarah was very worried about the entire situation.

Samarah: "I see. Well, I'll lend you."

Langa: "No, baby. I wasn't hinting."

Samarah: "I know, but it is your aunt. She needs this. We're practically family anyway."

Langa: “Baby, I just don’t know about it.”

Samarah: “No, in fact, I’ll transfer it to your account right now.”

Langa looked a little displeased and ashamed but deep down, he was relieved that he didn’t have to touch the lobola money. Poor Samarah was blinded by her love for Langa, that she had no idea he had already swindled quite a lot of money out of her – before that R15 000. Langa had slowly become someone that would use Samarah to his advantage. Yes, he did love her, but not enough to treat her like the queen she was. She had no idea that while he was “patiently” waiting on her to give up her virginity to him, he was getting sexual relief every month when he was going away to “visit relatives” in KZN. It was a rather disheartening situation, but it is always the saddest for the one who has no idea she even is a victim. To her, Langa had done so much, that R15000 was nothing. She took the money out of her Trust Fund money, of which was sent into her bank account a few days prior. She was using and managing the money well, and she was paying Mrs. Dladla a little something for looking after her father. She didn’t want to

accept it, but Samarah wouldn't take no for an answer. After the transfer was made, he smiled in relief.

Langa: "Thank you so much, baby. I promise you, I'll pay you back every single cent."

Samarah: "Don't worry about it."

Langa: "I owe you one, seriously. Now I need to pack."

Samarah: (frowning) "Pack? Where are you going?"

Langa: "I need to see her and pay for her treatment, love. She is one of my favourite aunts, I can't just send her the money and relax. Surely you understand, don't you?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

Langa: "Thank you. I just have one more favour to ask you."

Samara: "What is it?"

Langa: "Please don't tell my father about this."

Samarah: "About the money or about your great aunt?"

Langa: "Both of them, please. I don't want to stress them out on top of all the stress they already have. I mean, Papa will most definitely have a heart attack if he finds out."

Samarah had an eerie gut feeling within her that told her that Langa was lying, but once again, she chose to trust him.

Samarah: "Okay."

He kissed her and proceeded to pack away his clothes. She just stared at him with that gut feeling that just wouldn't go away. Him packing up meant that she also had to cut what she was doing short and also get ready to go home. She assumed

that he would drive her home as usual, but he just had other ideas that day.

Langa: “Love, I know I always take you home, but can you please request an Uber? Just for today. I really have to get going.”

Langa had never asked her to do such, but who was she to assume that he was doing something wrong? He kissed her goodbye without even requesting the Uber for her at least. While she waited in his room for the Uber’s arrival, he was already planning on naming the child. He was playing a dangerous game; a game far too many men play that leads to gambling with the lives of the women they claim to love. Everyone has a story to tell about young love; some are more heartbreaking than others. In life, we all make our own choices, but at the end of the day, certain people can push you to the limit. She was oblivious to the fact that she was so deep in thought, she didn’t hear Phume knock on the door.

Samarah: “Oh, I’m sorry, Phume. I didn’t hear you come in.”

Phume: "That's alright. I saw Langa drive out here like a maniac. I thought the two of you left together."

She then remembered that she had sworn to secrecy, along with the R15 000 she had sent him.

Samarah: "Oh, yes. He said he had a few things to take care of back in KZN."

Phume: (frowning) "At this time? I mean he has been going there quite often. Is there something I am missing? I hope you are not planning on getting married sooner than the mentioned date."

Samarah: "Oh, no, Ma. Not at all. I have to focus on my studies."

Phume: "I see. Do you perhaps know what he is going to do in KZN?"

Samarah: “No, Ma. He only told me that he had to go take care of a few important things and that he would be back in a few days.”

Phume looked at Samarah in confusion. Her brother was behaving waywardly and keeping secrets from everyone it seemed. She just didn’t know what it was.

Phume: “So, he left you here instead of taking you home?!”

Samarah: “Oh, I requested an Uber, Phume. I didn’t want to bother him.”

There it was. The very first lie she told to cover for him. It all starts that way. Mrs. Dladla wasn’t convinced. In fact, she was peeved at her son. He never behaved that way, which had confirmed her suspicions; he was cheating on the poor girl with someone back home. She needed to find out and end it all before she got hurt.

Phume: "Alright then. I'll keep you company until your ride comes. That's if it is okay with you."

Samarah: "Of course, it is always okay as long as it is you."

She sat next to her on the bed and stared at Samarah. She noticed a tinge of sadness and worry on her face and she knew her brother had everything to do with that poor girl's misery.

Phume: "So, I need some kind of advice from you..."

Samarah: "Oh? What sort of advice?"

Phume: "Well, boy advice."

Samarah smiled in interest, not knowing that Phume was in fact lying. She was the smartest one in that house and could see when her brother was up to no good. She had her suspicions, but she needed to confirm it first before letting the secret out there. Besides, she saw a few messages on her brother's phone a few weeks prior and she had Samarah's feelings to think of.

Samarah: "Do tell."

Phume: "Eish (Oh), the thing is, it is about a friend of mine and her boyfriend. I mean, you know I would have told you if I had a boyfriend by now."

Samarah: "Okay, yes?"

Phume: "The thing is, this friend of mine comes from a really well off family, you see. She really loves this guy and he seems to love her back, and although he isn't well off at all; in fact, he is just making ends meet, I have some sort of proof that he is cheating on her."

Samarah: (surprised) "Okay."

Phume: "Yes

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so what do you think I should do? I mean, should I confront him? Or tell her? Or should I just mind my own business?"

Samarah: (sigh) "That's a tough one, honestly. I mean, I feel that if you tell her, and she ends up not believing you, she would either think that you're after her man or that you are just trying to get in the way of things. Also, if you don't tell her and she finds out that you knew, then she would never trust you ever again. Also, if you confront him, and he gets to her first, he could spin the entire story around and most probably delete all the evidence before it even gets a chance to go to her."

Phume: "So what do you suggest I do?"

Samarah: "I think you should keep quiet and just let it all plan out. If she finds out then you can deal with it when you get there. You won't have much to loose then and she will understand if she finds out that you knew, of which is highly unlikely."

Phume was a little disappointed in Samarah's answer. She was hoping that she'd tell her to tell the friend, which was obviously her in this case. She wanted to tell her so badly that her brother was doing her dirty, but she just didn't want to seem like she was trying to get rid of her.

Phume: "I see. So, if it were your situation, you would want me to keep quiet?"

Samarah: "Oh, that's a very tricky one, hey. I mean, it would take me a while to come to terms with it, but I think I'd want you to tell me because this situation is a bit different. I wouldn't try and accuse you of wanting my boyfriend or anything like that. You are real and you are very honest. You like me and you have treated me well from the first day ever since I met your family. I honestly would want you to tell me; no matter what the situation."

Now Phume was indeed confused. She was caught between a rock and a hard place.

Phume: (nervously) “I see. I totally get you. Thank you for listening, though.”

Before she knew it, her Uber had arrived.

Samarah: “Of course. You know you can count on me for anything.”

The poor Samarah had no idea that Phume really wanted to tell her about her boyfriend. She had grown very fond of Samarah and she knew that had it been her in that situation, Samarah would have told her in a heartbeat. No one enjoys seeing those they love suffer at the hands of someone who had promised them love. After all, John 8 verse 32 says; “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”. So many people have made awfully bad choices because they fell in love at a very young age, but then, so many more people have made even worse choices because they chose to fall in love at a much later stage in their lives. There is really no winning recipe in life when it comes to love and relationships. All that is needed is that one should follow their gut and force themselves to see the true person in front of them – no matter how difficult it is.

Six months later...

Time had already flown and before they all knew it, it was June month yet again and Langa's 22nd birthday. By then Samarah was 18 and was coping really well with her matric year. She was focused and had already applied to Universities. She was adamant on becoming a radiographer, although not a lot of companies offered bursaries for that course, she ensured that Nursing was her second choice. Being a radiographer will ensure that she worked in pathology, which was hers favourite. She enjoyed being able to diagnose people instead of working with patients themselves and well, handling blood. She couldn't handle the smell of blood, but should she need to do the job, she would have had to suck it up.

Richard had recovered fully, though he would never walk again. It was hard to make peace with it, yet he could manage to do most things on his own. Mr. and Mrs Dladla no longer saw him daily – only on Sundays since they ensured that they'd have a family affair every Sunday after church. By then Richard had rebuilt his relationship with his daughter, though it took one full year. All that was happening while Beatrice had gone Missing in Action. She was gladly spending all the money she stole from Richard, and was soon running low on funds.

Langa had gotten a little too comfortable with being keeping his dirty little secret, and having his cake while eating it too, well – at least on one side of life. Samarah was quite invested in her spirituality and had become so close to God that she could even see a few visions in her sleep. She was still a virgin and hadn't broken the vow she made to herself and to God that she'd wait to have sex after marriage. She had no idea what her ancestors had in store for her, though. While some of her deceased family members were trying so hard to break through to her, Langa was just making things worse. He managed to hide his son from everyone – including his parents. Although Vusi knew all about it, he decided to keep quiet until he needed it as leverage. Vee also knew, but she had to swear to Vusi not to tell, otherwise it was going to be the end of them. Zanele had gotten married to a somewhat rich taxi owner, and was now living in KZN. The lobola money was more than enough and the Dladla's managed to do some renovations with it as the husband told them that he could pay for his own wedding and they needn't have saved the money for the wedding.

Langa had become so invested in marrying Samarah, and was even counting down. While he had paid damages for his son Mthokozisi Nkosiyabo Dladla. Yes, he did name the child

himself as Ntombi's parents were more than grateful for the damages. Of course, Langa had no idea just how spiteful women could be. While he ensured that he could have Ntombi as his side chick, she had plans of her own. No woman enjoys being a side chick; they all just agree in hopes that the man will one day choose them over the main chick.

Langa ensured that he wanted nothing grand for his birthday that year, so they all opted for a nice lunch at Samarah's house for a change. Buhle couldn't be happier since they would all swim, though it was winter. Vee too joined in though she never hid her dislike for Samarah on countless occasions. Langa was very edgy that day and he could hardly stay in one place. He was constantly on his phone – a new phone which Samarah had gotten him a few months prior because he had “lost” the one she had bought him before. She was too busy with her academics, she never bothered to follow up on it, but she just reported it to insurance instead and got Langa an upgrade. Mrs. Dladla was in the kitchen helping Samarah peel some vegetables, while Baba and Richard were enjoying a drink over the braai stand in the backyard. Mrs. Dladla noticed a change in Langa, which annoyed her.

Mrs. Dladla: “Weh (hey), Langa. Since well you’re not helping your father and father-in-law braai, why don’t you help us wash a few of these vegetables?”

Langa was so out of it, that he found himself smiling on his phone and didn’t hear a word his mother had said. She glanced at Samarah who had changed her facial expression as she watched him in disbelief. Mrs. Dladla became angered and threw a carrot at Langa, and only then did he come back to earth.

Langa: “Hawu (Oh), Ma. Kanti why uyenza so (why did you do that)?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Don’t mess with me, Langa! I am still your mother! Did you not hear me speak to you just now?”

Langa: “No, I didn’t.”

Samarah: “Of course you didn’t because you are so invested in whomever you’re talking to on your phone.”

The tone in her statement was that of jealousy and curiosity. She was hoping that he'd realize his mistake as usual and put the phone down and join in on the conversation, but well, he was yet to disappoint the poor girl yet again.

Langa: "Oh, I am sorry. I didn't hear you."

Samarah: "Well, are you going to help us finish up here?"

He looked at his phone yet again and smiled to himself briefly.

Langa: (chuckling) "I'd love to help, but I have to go somewhere really quickly."

He grabbed the keys to the taxi and just when he was about to rush out, they both quickly stopped him.

Samarah: (surprised) "Where are you going?"

Langa: “Oh, uh... I have to refill the alcohol.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Njani (How)? When we have loads stocked up?”

Langa: “Ja, I forgot something. Ngiyabuya (I’ll be right back).”

He rushed out before they could ask something else. Mrs. Dladla could see the tinge of hurt in Samarah’s eyes. It was totally understandable. I mean, who wants to prepare something nice for their partner, only for them to go somewhere else on their birthday. It was a blessing in disguise that Lydia wasn’t there as of yet.

Mrs. Dladla: “Hayi (No), I don’t know about you, but haven’t you noticed anything different in Langa’s behaviour lately?”

Samarah: “Not really, Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Sammy, you can talk to me. You surely know that, right?”

Samarah: "Yes, Ma. I know I can always count on you."

Mrs. Dladla: "If you have anything on your mind, anything at all, please don't be afraid to tell me."

Samarah nodded while she went into deep thought for a few minutes.

Samarah: "Do you think he is cheating on me, Ma?"

She asked that with a breaking voice and threatening tears. Mrs. Dladla knew that it was a cause for concern. I mean, they had been dating just over 2 years, but it seemed as if he had caused her so much hurt.

Mrs. Dladla: "I don't know, my baby and you know I'd never speak on his behalf, but to be honest, I have my suspicions. I mean, all the late nights, the drinking at the tavern until late and sometimes he comes back just after midnight. It could be that he is cheating or that he perhaps isn't ready to

commit. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life with someone like that? You two are young and you have such a bright future ahead of you. Don't get me wrong; you are the best thing that has ever happened to us, but I need you to know that you should never at any time feel obliged to stay with Langa. If he does not treat you the way you need to be treated – leave.”

Samarah: “Maybe I shouldn't have gotten him that phone.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Men should always work for their things. He should spoil you first and then, only then can you spoil him back. You did it out of love, I totally understand it, but it may come across as you spoiling him. He might get so used to what you're doing for him that in turn, he could reward you with nothing but bullshit to put it lightly. Stop doing nice things for him for a while. I hope that you don't give him money, because that would most definitely make him go rogue.”

Samarah had to lie yet again and it was worse because she was lying to an elder.

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, Ma. I don’t give him money at all.”

In her mind, she thought that Mrs. Dladla was convinced, but she could see right through her. Samarah had become some sort of a blesser to Langa, that he didn’t feel the need to spend on her any more. She had no idea that he took money from her every now and again and spent it on Ntombi. It was not nice, but then again, Samarah started something which later became a habit which was quite hard to outgrow. At times, women are the ones who spoil these men. Why should he feel the need to work hard for her when she could do that for them both? 1 Corinthians 4 verse 7 says; “For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

The funny thing about love is that at times the recipient does not replicate what he or she receives. They end up being somewhat disrespectful towards the giver, without even realizing it. While Langa was having the time of his life, sharing what was meant to be a good day with the love of his life, Samarah and the rest of his family were enjoying the day without him. It seemed pointless to keep waiting for him after two hours of him not pitching up for his own birthday lunch. The mood was tense because by then everyone started to fuss around Samarah, of which she hated. Every little thing could make her cry at that point. Luckily Zanele was not there, since she was married while Vee was enjoying every moment watching the poor Samarah about to drown in her own tears. She tried so hard to keep her emotions in check, yet it was very difficult with all eyes on her. She kept browsing through her phone, waiting for Langa to go online or even pick up his phone, even after they realized that his phone was switched off after multiple attempts.

Lydia: “Maybe he had a puncture or something. You know the roads are nowadays in Randburg.”

Mrs. Dladla: (annoyed) “I don’t understand who goes out to buy beer for a whole two hours.”

Baba: (angrily) “That boy will know me. He had better run because when I get my hands on him – “

Richard: (interrupting) “Forgive me for asking, but does he always do this? I mean you two are his parents, and surely you should have noticed any bad behaviour from his side.”

They were sceptical to answer because it wasn’t going to look too good. They didn’t want to seem like they didn’t care about Samarah because they adored her.

Mrs. Dladla: “Nothing much out of the ordinary, Mr. Moloji, just him staying out ‘til late every now and then.”

She was nervous and worried about Samarah at the same time. Vee was enjoying her drink and once the table was quiet, she opened up another beer just to irritate the rest of them, leaving Vusi very much embarrassed.

Vusi: (firmly) “Would you stop drinking for a minute?!”

Vee: “Sorry. I thought we had come to a party, but then – “

Vusi gave Vee a firm look and she kept quiet and sipped on the beer despite being told to stop. She was intentionally drinking way more than necessary to spill a few beans and blame it on the alcohol afterwards. That is what cowards do most of the time.

Richard: “Perhaps we should just carry on eating without him. I mean, he will make it to his own birthday party, surely.”

Richard had no hope. At that point, he felt like telling Samarah straight in her face that she deserved better, but he was in no

position to act like he had been a good man nor a good father to her.

Samarah: (nodding) “Okay.”

Mrs. Dladla: “May we please pray for the food.”

They all held hands and she started praying. She was sitting next to Samarah, and could feel how hot her hands were and that she was starting to shake. She was managing just fine with a lowered dosage of her anxiety pills, but every now and then she’d have a minor setback.

Mrs. Dladla: “Dear God, we come before you as your children. You have always remained faithful to us by providing us with nothing but love and grace and for that, we are truly grateful. Thank you so much for giving us a daughter in Samarah, for we know that you do things by Your will. We ask that this meal be blessed, and that you bless Langa with many more years to come. We ask that you bless Samarah and Langa’s union – if it is your will, lord. You surely know what’s best.”

She did that intentionally, and she was secretly asking the Lord to pave a way forward in their relationship.

Mrs. Dladla: “We thank you for the love we share and the company we keep. We thank you in Jesus’ Mighty name. Amen.”

The moment they said Amen, Vee started with her crude behaviour.

Vee: “Whoo! Siyabonga Jesu (Thank you Jesus)! I am starving!”

Vusi: “Vee!”

Vee: “Yini (what is it)?! You like acting as if you don’t see these things, nawe (you).”

They started eating in awkward silence, while Vee was making crude sounds intentionally.

Vee: “Yoh (oh)! This food is lovely. Uyabona wena (you see), Samarah, you surely do belong in the kitchen. It’s no wonder Langa chose you over her.”

That was enough to make everyone drop their forks and look at her in shock, while she remained unbothered.

Lydia: (angrily) “Vusi, kgala mpya eo ya gao (call your dog to order).”

Vee: “Hayi ke sisi (Oh, sis). You can call me whatever you want in your little language, but fact remains everyone is keeping a secret from the golden girl here. Well, almost everyone.”

Vusi: “Vee, stop it!”

Vee: “Hayi (no)! Stop being such an idiot, nawe (you). Stand up for yourself and stop being in your father’s shadow. Wena (you), girly, your man is having the time of his life with Ntombi

as we speak now. I am even surprised he managed to keep her a secret for such a long time.”

Vusi: “Vee!”

Vee: “Voetsek (piss off), man, Vusi!”

Vusi was so embarrassed, while Samarah found it quite hard to take all of that in.

Samarah: (teary) “What are you talking about Vee?”

Vee: (chuckling) “Oh, now you feel that I am relevant enough to be heard? Well, then, you can ask everyone around you who claims to love you. I mean, he is spending his time with his perfect little family right now. Ask Vusi, he knows everything. But, of course, he will deny it. His loyalty to your man is just implausible.”

Everyone was shocked, while Samarah was just trying hard to process all the news.

Phume: (annoyed) “Vusi, stop her. Better yet, get her out of here.”

Vee: (chuckling) “You’re one to talk. Aren’t you the one who saw all the texts on his phone between him and Ntombi?”

He was putting her on the spot, which led Samarah to believe that she had been lying to her all along. She felt betrayed in the worst way possible.

Mrs. Dladla: “What is she talking about Phumeza?”

Phume: (teary) “I can explain.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You knew and you said nothing?!”

Phume: “I tried to tell, but it was months ago. When I confronted him, he denied it.”

Lydia: (clapping hands) “Yoh (wow)! Jah, neh, bophelo ke tapeite shem (Life is truly something else).”

Samarah: “Excuse me.”

She stood up and rushed upstairs to her bedroom and locked herself in before Lydia could even enter. She tried to get her to open her bedroom door, but to no avail. After about 15 minutes, while Mrs. Dladla was reprimanding both Vusi and Vee at the table, Lydia came back down.

Mrs. Dladla: “I am very disappointed in you – both of you! You, Aviwe, after all these bloody years with my son, you still haven’t learnt anything?! Anything at all?! Why on earth do you think he still hasn’t married you?! Why do you think that unlike Langa who has been saving up for lobola, Vusi still isn’t mentioning anything about marrying you?! Get your shit together or leave this family – for good this time! I will not have you embarrass us or Samarah like that ever again! As for lying about us, you surely will regret ever talking about me like that ever again!”

Vee: “I am sorry, Ma, but – “

Mrs. Dladla: (interrupting) “I don’t want to hear it!”

Vusi: (angrily) “Kodwa (But), Ma, why are you shouting at us? Why aren’t you directing all that anger at Langa?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Do you see him here?! Do you?!”

Vusi: “But he has always been your favourite – “

Mrs. Dladla: “You hold it right there – right there! Vusi, as the first born we both thought that you’d pull up your socks and become a leader. After all, you were named Vusimuzi. You were given that name for a reason, but clearly you have shown me how weak you are. Instead of coming to us and telling us what your brother had been up to, you were busy discussing his affairs with Aviwe during pillow talk. That is not how a man behaves, my son. If you think you even deserve to be the leader of the Dladla family, then I have news for you. You are weak; Dladla men lead – they don’t gossip. You and your

brother are both the same. You have become utter disappointments. Mr. Moloji, please do forgive my son's girlfriend for her atrocious behaviour. I promise, it will never happen again as it will surely be the last time that we ever take her anywhere. Please, give Samarah my regards, for I cannot even comprehend what she is going through right now. I am too ashamed to face her for what my son has done. I can assure you, though, that both my husband and I knew nothing of this. I do promise that I will get to the bottom of it all."

She stood up with Baba by her side and said her goodbyes. They had become quite clever because they could request Ubers instead of relying on their rather unreliable sons. They went out and requested an Uber and waited at the gate for it. Phume was in tears and refused to leave until she spoke to Samarah.

Phume: (crying) "Mr. Moloji, may I please see Samarah? At least just so that I can explain."

Richard: "I think you have all done enough for one day. Perhaps another time."

Phume: (crying) "Please, sir. It will only take a minute."

Richard was a little relieved that all that was discovered on that particular day, for he could finally get rid of Langa. He never thought that he was the perfect fit for his daughter, but he didn't want to risk losing her by telling her to break up with him.

Richard: (nodding) "Okay, you can go try speak to her."

Vusi was too embarrassed to even look at the angered Richard, so he said his goodbyes while grabbing Vee by the arm. Buhle was just enjoying the food and drama, and was quite sad it had come to an end. She was a little sad for Samarah, though they weren't close because she could never choose a side and stick with it. Meanwhile, Phume was saddened by how the situation had turned out. She knocked and knocked on Samarah's door but she just refused to open, so she decided to speak to her from right outside the bedroom.

Phume: "Samarah, please open up for me so I can explain."

She remained quiet.

Phume: "I know what this looks like

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but believe me, I tried to tell you. I came across certain weird messages between Langa and Ntombi months ago. Do you remember that day when I asked you about a friend whose supposed boyfriend was cheating on her? Well, that friend was you. I had my suspicions because the messages weren't clear enough to confirm cheating, but I was very upset about it. You mean so much to me and I would hate to lose you. After your advice and after me confronting him, I chose not to involve myself. That was the last time I ever touched his phone and the last time I suspected him cheating. Believe me, I really wanted to tell you, but I wasn't even sure if you were going to believe me. You did say that I should stay out of it, and so I decided to do just that. If you choose not to forgive me, I'd understand. It does feel like the ultimate betrayal. My parents know nothing of the sort, and we don't know of any baby; nothing was ever reported to our family. That much I can promise you. Whatever you decide to do will be totally up to you, but just remember that we love you and we only want what's best for you. I am really sorry."

Those were really heartfelt words and though Samarah didn't open the door, she heard and comprehended each word. She was silently crying in her bedroom, while looking at her phone. Langa wasn't calling her back and his phone was still off. So many thoughts were running through her mind. He wasn't answering or responding to anyone's calls or messages, so it had confirmed everything Vee had said. She just couldn't believe that she didn't see any signs and that he was hiding something as big as a child. She was heartbroken; and the first heartbreak always feels the worst. She felt like her entire throat was being ripped into two. She felt like she was breathing and suffocating all at the same time. Yet again, God is no fool, Langa's time was soon going to come and he was going to pay for all her tears.

Upon arrival at home, Mrs. Dladla and Baba were devastated, and angry at the same time. They both were in so much disbelief that their son had done something so atrocious. They just couldn't wait to get home so they could confront their son. They became even more angry when they realized that he was not home at all. They rushed to his back room the moment they landed at home, and found the room unoccupied.

Baba: (angered) “Uyabona lo mfana (you see that boy)! I am going to kill him with my bare hands the moment I find him!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Calm down, Baba. You can’t be so angry. It is not good for your heart.”

Baba: “He will kill me, Nomcebo! That boy will be the death of me! And as for Vusi, how dare he just let all this slip right under our noses and choose to tell Vee of all people?! Imagine what Richard is saying about us right now!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Baba, please. Calm down. Come into the house, I will make you a cup of warm milk to calm you down.”

Baba was growling in anger. He had not been that angry in years. With each minute that passed, Langa was still not home and Baba had grown rather impatient. He didn’t even want to speak to Vusi and Vee was not even welcome in the house the moment they got back to the house. Meanwhile, Baba was calling all his relatives in KZN to ask about Langa’s whereabouts for the previous few months. They all had said the same thing; that he had gone there to visit and support his great aunt with

her battle against her so called cancer. Little did they know that they were playing with fire.

Baba: “So, are you all sure that that’s all he had come to do there? There is no news of Langa having a baby?”

Uncle: “No, there is no baby we are aware of, Bafo (brother). That much I can assure you.”

Baba: “Kulungile (Alright). Just so you know, that if you lie to me, it won’t end well for you. Surely you do know that.”

Uncle: “Yebo, Bafo (Yes, brother). I know that very well.”

Baba: “We’ll speak soon.”

He hung up and sat on his chair and waited on Langa to come back. Meanwhile Langa was with Ntombi at a hotel. Everyone would have figured out that he was with her, had she visited him at his house. They were lying in bed after he had slept with her yet again.

Ntombi: "This is so nice, isn't it?"

Langa: "Yebo (Yes)."

Ntombi: "I am just happy that you managed to spend your birthday with me for a change. It truly means a lot to me. Now I know that you really care about me."

Langa: "Sure."

He took out his phone and switched it on. Only then did the dozens of messages bombard his phone. His heart rate accelerated and Ntombi noticed since she was lying on his chest. The more he saw the messages coming in, the more anxious he became.

"You have some explaining to do."

"I have never been so disappointed in my life, Langa."

All those were nothing compared to what he saw from Vusi. “She knows, Bafo. Vee told her everything.”

He jumped out of his bed quicker than the speed of lightning and got into his clothes.

Ntombi: (frowning) “What is it now? Uyaphi (Where are you going)?”

Langa: “I don’t have time to explain. I’ll call you.”

He got into his taxi and started dialing Samarah’s number, which rang unanswered and took him straight to voicemail. The more he called, the more she rejected the calls until she eventually switched off her phone as well. He rushed to her house, which took him half an hour to get there. He didn’t have the key to the gate any more since Richard was now staying with her again full time. He called again and only got her voicemail. He then got out of the taxi and started calling for her.

Langa: “Samarah! Sammy! Sammy, please! Open up for me!”

Richard felt it was the perfect time for him to be a father at that point. He needed to show that he could still be authoritative even though he was still in a wheelchair. He wheeled himself out of the house, staring at him dead in the eye all the way from the door. He drove that wheelchair until he got to the gate. Langa was very nervous and took off his hat immediately.

Langa: “Sawubona Baba (Hello, father). May I please see Samarah?”

Richard: (angrily) “You have some nerve showing your face here after what you have done, boy.”

Langa: “I understand, Baba, but if you let me explain – “

Richard: “You know, I never liked you from the beginning. I never even thought that you and my daughter would ever get

this far, but I gave you the benefit of the doubt. Believe me, I did. Now, you have done nothing but finally prove me right.”

Langa: “I don’t think you understand, Baba – “

Richard: “No, I don’t think you understand, Langa. You are the very first boyfriend my daughter has ever had and now you just decided to blow your chances with her. You did say you want to marry her next year, right? So, why can’t you do right by her?”

Langa: “I am willing to do that, sir. I really am.”

Richard: “If so, then tell me, where were you today? Why did you just up and leave without even waiting for us to enjoy your birthday meal? Can you look me in the eye and tell me you weren’t with some girl?”

Langa: “Sir, I can assure you that I wasn’t cheating on your daughter.”

Richard: (chuckling) “I have been young, just like you, Langa. I know all the tricks in the book. Look where they got me now. I know you are lying and sadly if she chooses to forgive you, I won’t have a say in it, but what I can say to you is that do not underestimate me just because I am in a wheelchair.”

Langa: “I swear to you, Baba, I am not doing anything of the sort.”

Richard: “Go home. She will call you if she wants to. She is going to school tomorrow, in case you haven’t noticed.”

Langa didn’t want to anger Richard any further, but he was devastated. He was so used to Samarah forgiving him, he had no idea that Vee would ruin everything for him. His smooth ride had actually come to an end, he just wasn’t aware. He drove back home with a heavy heart, but his heartache was nothing compared to what Samarah was feeling. He started being filled with regret, though it was only because he got caught. Within 20 minutes he was home. He sat in his taxi for a few minutes and ended up switching his phone off again because Ntombi wouldn’t stop calling and texting. The moment he got out of the taxi, it was as if Baba had been waiting for that

moment. Mrs. Dladla, Phume and Buhle were running behind him. They hadn't seen him walk so fast in a very long time.

Mrs. Dladla: (anxiously) "Baba! Baba! Wait, please!"

He had never been that angry before. His blood was boiling, causing his blood pressure to go sky high without him even worrying. Langa had no idea what was about to transpire, but the moment he turned his head, his father grabbed his shirt and started throwing endless punches, leaving everyone panicked.

Phume: (shouting) "Baba! Baba! Please stop!"

While the women were trying to calm him down, it felt like they were just agitating him even worse. The Dladla household had always been a household of peace, with hardly any commotion nor fights, but that evening Baba shocked each one of his neighbours. He kept punching, with Langa not throwing a single punch back at him, out of respect. He could have taken him on, but it was his father and he wouldn't have dared. He let his father beat him up, while cursing him.

Baba: (Angered) “Is this how I raised you, Langa?! Is this the kind of man I taught you to be, huh?! You have become a liar, a cheater and you keep secrets from us now?! How dare you have a child and keep such a secret from us?! How many times have I told you to end it with Samarah if you don’t value her the way you should?! Uyenza amasimba angaka (You have done so much shit)!”

Langa didn’t say anything, but looked down and welcomed his father’s beating instead. His nose was bloody, wetting his entire shirt. Langa’s silence was frustrating Baba even more.

Baba: (shouting) “You made us all look like fools in front of her father! It was as if we were deliberately disrespecting him because of his situation! Answer me, dammit!”

Langa: (softly) “Ngiyaxolisa (I am sorry), Baba.”

Baba: “You tell that to her, and her father. I can’t even look at you right now.”

Baba was feeling out of energy and his breathing started changing. He started breathing slower and he looked out of breath. He stumbled a little as he was about to step back, causing Mrs. Dladla to worry.

Baba: (slowly) "I... I curse... the day you were born!"

After those exact words, he collapsed on the ground causing everyone around to panic. Langa was in a state of shock, as he thought "I have just killed my father".

Chapter 27

Titus 1:16 – “They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.”

While the Dladla’s were going through their own turmoil, Samarah was experiencing emotional turmoil of her own. She fell asleep after everyone left and after crying herself to sleep. During that time, her body forced itself to shut down as her migraines had just begun. She dreamt Mr. Dladla crying silently while looking at her, but she couldn’t understand what the dream was about. She was staring at him and calling out to him, but he didn’t respond one bit. Instead, the tears simply flowed down his face endlessly. The look of pitiful despair on his face, she had never seen before. That was not even the end of that dream; she looked around and saw herself in a hospital room, where Baba was sitting up on the bed crying while looking at her. Mrs. Dladla, Phume, Buhle and Vusi were surrounding him, while Langa was sitting right across him. His face was emotionless.

Samarah: (frowning) “Langa? What’s happening? What are you doing here?”

She walked towards him in the dream but couldn’t even touch him. She was like a soul because she just walked right through him. None of them could see her despite her efforts to make them see her. Langa suddenly walked up and smiled as Ntombi walked in holding a baby. She couldn’t see the baby but he was wrapped in a blue blanket. Her mind concluded that it was a baby boy. The joy written all over Langa’s face caused her so much heartache, she could feel her heart slowly being ripped away from her chest.

Samarah: (shouting) “Langa?! What’s happening?! Baba?! Ma?! Phume?!”

Ntombi and Langa were so happy and they walked out of there together, holding their baby, while she rushed behind them. No one took note of her nor her pleas. She was running frantically behind them until they disappeared into that lift. She headed back to Baba’s room and still found him in that devastated state, crying while staring at her. She was begging, pleading with them to tell her what was happening, but they all couldn’t

say anything. Instead, they were all so saddened by Baba's situation. They didn't even notice Langa at all, so it seemed. She woke up sweating profusely and hyperventilating at most. Her throat felt as if it was closing up on her since it was so dry. All that crying left her dehydrated. She wanted to check the time and realized that she had switched off her phone hours ago. Once she turned it back on, she noticed it was just after 4am. She calmed herself down when she realized it was just a dream, but all the stress came rushing back to her when she remembered what Langa had done the previous day. Then she remembered that it was Monday and she had to go to school. It wasn't going to help her moping around over a boy, although they shared quite a lot together. She got out of her bed and started praying.

Samarah: "Father God, I really need you right now. I know, I might be young but I am also human. I have a fragile heart, oh, lord. I feel weak and angry, hurt, stupid. I can't even explain exactly, but you do know how I feel right now. Lord, I have never felt so much pain in my entire life. I think the last time was when Amarah passed away. They say you, lord, are the one who chooses our destiny even before we're born. You saw my heart and my future before You even created me, lord, then how come I am going through such pain? What did I do wrong?"

Am I really that undeserving of love? Why did you bring him into my life if you knew he'd hurt me like this, lord? I know, a lot of people do this whenever they are in need and feel stuck, but please God, show me a sign – anything. If I am truly meant to be with Langa then show me a sign. If not, then show me. Show me so that I can know if I should carry on with my life right now. If you do this, then I will let it be, I won't question any more, I will simply accept that it is Your will. That is all I ask, Lord. I pray and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.”

She felt so much lighter after that prayer and got back into bed. She had a peaceful night's sleep after that and before she knew it, it was time to get up and ready for school. Her 5am alarm rang and she wasted no time. She switched the alarm off and didn't bother to even look at her phone. She had a few WhatsApp messages

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but nothing had prepared her for what she was about to see. She went about her usual routine and morning duties. She always got up early because she knew that she was quite slow and avoided being late. Once she was dressed, she packed her bag and grabbed her phone without checking the messages. She headed downstairs and found her father had prepared her

a lovely farmhouse breakfast. She hardly even ate the day before, so her body was starting to complain.

Richard: "Morning, Sammy. How did you sleep?"

Samarah: "Morning, Papa. I slept very well, thank you. How about you?"

Richard: "I hardly slept because I was very worried about you. I couldn't even go up to check on you, you know."

He hadn't been upstairs alone ever since the accident since he couldn't get on the stairs with his wheelchair.

Samarah: "Oh, I am so sorry about that. I know you were very worried, but it wasn't my intention. I just needed to be alone, you know."

Richard: "I understand. He was here..."

Samarah: "Oh, well. I don't really want to talk about him right now, if that's okay with you?"

She was responding to her father while enjoying the meal.

Richard: "Of course. Are you ready for today? Who is taking you to school?"

Samarah: "Oh, I will take an Uber. I mean, Lydia is most probably on her way to school already."

Richard: "I wish life could return back to normal, you know."

Samarah: "Don't worry about it. Listen, I have to go, but we'll fix that problem okay?"

Richard: "What problem?"

Samarah: "I'll make sure you will be able to get back upstairs again. You've always loved the view from the upstairs balcony."

Richard: (shaking head) “No, Sammy. We agreed. No more splurging.”

Samarah: “You saved that money for me, so technically, Papa, so I owe you for that. Besides, I will get a bursary, just relax. I’ll see you later.”

Richard: “Okay. I love you.”

Samarah: “I love you too.”

She decided to walk a few houses until the Uber arrived. Once she arrived at school, she found Lydia already there as she expected. She had always been an early bird. The moment Lydia saw her, she rushed towards her and attacked her with a hug.

Lydia: “Bathong (goodness)! Samarah! You should never ever scare me like that man.”

Samarah: "I'm sorry."

Lydia: "I hardly slept, I mean look at my eyebags. I'm a mess and it is all thanks to you."

Samarah: (chuckling briefly) "I am really sorry. I just wanted to process it all."

Lydia: "Well, you need to find a different mechanism, bra, because wow. It is just not working. Anyway, how are you? Are you feeling any better?"

Samarah: (deep sigh) "I am trying my best. I mean, it is not easy and I still don't really know the truth yet. I did have a weird dream, however."

Lydia: "What kind of dream?"

Samarah relayed the dream to Lydia, who was speechless.

Lydia: "Well, maybe Baba is still upset about the entire issue, but perhaps something has happened to him. You should check on him when you get the chance. He and Mrs. Dladla were really pissed about the entire thing. And that Vee, hehe, she had better not hope that I get my hands on her because I'll show her that I am not afraid of her."

Samarah: "I doubt we should take it that far."

Lydia: "What about Langa?"

Samarah: "What about him?"

Lydia: "Has he called yet? I mean what Vee said and the dream, I mean don't you see the connection?"

Samarah: (frowning) "I mean perhaps it was just a dream."

Lydia: "Girl, a clear dream like that I'd never dismiss, honestly. You really need to take your life a lot more seriously. Anyway, back to my question, has he called?"

Samarah: "He's been calling and I switched my phone off. My father said he was at my house last night and he must have left me all these messages on WhatsApp."

Lydia: "So, you haven't checked?"

Samarah shook her head.

Lydia: "Why not?"

Samarah: (sigh) "I don't really have a reason. Let me quickly do it now."

The moment she opened her WhatsApp, she was startled to come across a number she hadn't seen before. She opened the message, and nearly had a heart attack. "You see this? This is my son. Isn't he cute? He looks just like his father. Now you know the truth and you can do your fat self a favour and stay away from Langa. I won, bitch."

She started hyperventilating while shaking slowly.

Lydia: (surprised) “What’s wrong?”

She handed Lydia the phone and once Lydia was reading the message out aloud, it started to sink in what exactly was happening. The dream, her prayer request to God early that morning. It was all true. Her relationship was all coming to an end.

Lydia: “What the fuck?! Let me call this bitch!”

Lydia didn’t even get a chance to dial the number because Samarah collapsed right in the middle of the school garden.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.”

Samarah received assistance immediately with Lydia by her side. Lydia had to go to class, so Samarah was left with the school Nurse who had been assessing her while she was unconscious. She must have been unconscious for about 10 minutes or so, when the nurse finally got her to wake up.

School Nurse: “Samarah? Samarah? Can you hear me?”

Samarah: (drowsy) “Where am I? What happened?”

School Nurse: "You collapsed. Please tell me, how many fingers do you see?"

Samarah: "Four."

School Nurse: "Do you know what your name is?"

Samarah: "Samarah. Samarah Moloji."

School Nurse: "I understand you are on anxiety medication?"

Samarah: (frowning) "You went through my bag?"

School Nurse: "You know that it is school policy for me to find out what you're allergic to before I treat you, right?"

She nodded in silence.

School Nurse: "Okay, can you tell me what happened? Why you collapsed so early in the morning?"

Samarah then immediately thought of what caused her to collapse.

Samarah: "Oh, I had just received bad news."

School Nurse: "Okay, I am booking you in for an appointment with the school psychologist."

Samarah: "No, I don't need it."

School Nurse: "You're in matric and we care about your well-being. You don't have a choice."

She knew very well that the nurse was right.

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay."

School Nurse: "We called your father. He is on his way to come fetch you."

Samarah: "You really shouldn't have bothered. He is wheelchair bound and he can't drive right now."

School Nurse: "Oh, I didn't know that. I am truly sorry. He didn't seem to mind when I called."

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay. When is my appointment with the school therapist?"

School Nurse: "Tomorrow after school."

She sat there and waited while the nurse gave her a few minutes to herself. Lydia had put her phone back into her bag and she thought of reading the message again. Her biggest fault that day was reading that message over and over again, until she just couldn't anymore. She decided to delete the message and block Ntombi's number immediately. She waited

for her father, knowing that he was not going to take the news very well. Once he came, she was actually surprised to see that he made it.

Richard: "Sammy, I'm here."

That feeling of seeing someone she loved and trusted come to her aid, brought tears in her eyes. The moment she saw him, she started crying. Richard opened his arms for her to hug him and she burst into tears as he let her place her head on his legs. She cried it all out and he let her. The past few months were really amazing for her; having her father back in her life while he was fully fledged supportive; Beatrice was gone so she didn't have any reason to feel stressed; everything had been running smoothly until Langa's awful birthday. After she allowed herself to cry for a good few minutes, her father took her home in their Uber ride. On their way home, she received an unexpected phone call from Phume. She was a little hesitant to answer, but well, she had nothing to lose.

Samarah: "Hello?"

Phume: (Hesitant) "Hi, Samarah... How are you?"

Samarah: "I'm well, how are you?"

Phume: "I'm okay, thanks. I am sorry to bother you, but Mama asked me to call you."

Samarah: "Is everything alright?"

Phume: (voice breaking) "No, uhm... Baba has been admitted to hospital. He suffered a stroke. We've been here since last night."

Samarah felt a painful stab in her gut and suddenly remembered her dream. She couldn't understand what Langa and Ntombi had to do with it, but she figured that Ntombi's text message was the other sign.

Samarah: "Oh, no. Is he going to be alright? Which hospital is he in?"

Phume: "He's at Chris Hani Baragwanath. I didn't want to bother you considering what you're going through. She just thought I should let you know."

Samarah: "It's alright. I was on my way home, but I'll make my way there."

Phume: "Okay."

They hung up.

Richard: "Is everything alright?"

Samarah: "May we please make a detour to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital? Baba has been admitted. He suffered a stroke last night apparently."

Richard: (sigh) "Do you really think it is a good idea to see them? After what you have just been through?"

Samarah: "I need to see him. He is not a bad person. Surely you can't punish him for Langa's doings."

Richard: (nodding) "Okay. Driver, please make a U-turn at your nearest robot. We need to get to the hospital, please."

The driver did as told and they arrived there within 15 minutes. Hospitals were not a good place for her. She always said they felt like death itself. How she would work in one, she was yet to cross that bridge. Once she arrived in the lift alongside her father, she recollected her dream with every minute that went by. Her heart started racing when she saw the lift approaching Baba's floor. Richard could see his daughter's face filled with anxiety and held her hand as a way of comfort. Once they were out, they found Langa, sitting on the bench across Phume, Buhle and Mrs. Dladla looking like death itself. Vusi was standing a bit further away from Langa, against the wall. As soon as Langa saw Samarah, he wanted to stand up and get close to her, but she completely ignored him and walked towards the devastated Mrs. Dladla.

Samarah: "Ma, I'm here. How is he? How are you?"

Langa wanted to approach her, but sat back down immediately after Richard gave him a stern look.

Mrs. Dladla: (teary) “Oh, Samarah. I’m okay. He is stable right now. The Nurses are just checking his vitals right now before we can go back in for visiting hours.”

Samarah: “What happened? I’m sorry I didn’t respond to anyone’s calls. I’ve been processing everything.”

Mrs. Dladla: “It’s a long story, but he had a stroke right after his argument... with Langa.”

It was quite obvious to Samarah that they were arguing about her. The Nurses walked out and told them that they could all see him, but only two people at a time were allowed.

Mrs. Dladla: “You go, Samarah.”

Samarah: “Can I go in with you, please?”

She nodded and held her hand as they walked in together. Seeing Mr. Dladla lying on that hospital bed, with so many wires connected to him, reminded her of her dream. He looked sad, which was the total opposite of him. He was asleep, but he still looked sad, if that even made any sense. She stood across him, watching him with a very broken heart. She shed her first tear after seeing him.

Mrs. Dladla: (teary) "I didn't want to say anything in front of Langa. He hasn't been taking it all very well and feels as if everyone is blaming him."

Samarah: "What exactly happened? He was fine yesterday."

Mrs. Dladla: "He had been hyperventilating ever since we left your house. Once we got home, I could see that his blood pressure was unstable, but he just kept thinking of Langa and the entire situation. Once he heard Langa parking the taxi in the yard, he followed him outside and started beating him up."

It was no wonder he had all those bruises on his face

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she thought to herself.

Mrs. Dladla: “When he collapsed after beating him to a pulp, we all thought that he wouldn’t make it. By the grace of God he is still alive.”

Samarah: (teary) “May I talk to him?”

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) “Of course. You needn’t ask.”

Samarah walked towards him and held his hand. It was still warm, yet not so full of life as she knew it.

Samarah: “Baba, it’s me. I hope you can hear me.”

Baba wasted no time and reacted to her voice instantly. He squeezed her hand, shocking Mrs. Dladla as he had been asleep ever since he was admitted.

Mrs. Dladla: (shocked) “He hasn’t woken up ever since he got here.”

He opened his eyes forcefully though they could see it was hard for him. He removed his oxygen mask.

Baba: (clearing throat) “Samarah...”

Samarah: (teary) “Baba... Are you okay? How are you feeling?”

Baba: “Don’t you worry about me, my dear. I’ll be okay. I am more worried about you.”

His speech was a bit slurred since his right side was paralyzed due to the stroke.

Samarah: “I am not the one lying in here, Baba.”

Baba: “I need you to do something for me.”

Samarah: “Yes, anything.”

Baba: “Leave Langa – for good.”

Samarah was so taken aback, more especially when he was ill in bed and he was requesting that of her.

Samarah: (shocked) “What do you mean, Baba?”

Baba: “Don’t get me wrong, you’re the best thing that has ever happened to us as a family, but if you stick around you’ll be the one that gets the shorter end of the stick. You cannot be with Langa anymore; he has betrayed you more than once and now an innocent child is the product of it all. My heart is aching, my child and if you stick around any longer, I’ll die of heartache. Do us both a favour and leave. Leave him and live your life. Langa is nothing but an anchor. He will drag you down with him and flush all your ambitions and dreams down the toilet.”

No one could even describe the shock within her that day. She looked in his eyes and he was dead serious. He was full of sadness, but very serious.

Baba: “If you take him back, I won’t give you my blessing. I am sorry for putting you in a corner like this, but one day you will thank me for this. You have the rarest and purest heart I have ever come across. You’re too good for him. If he won’t drag you down, Zanele and Buhle, Vee and Vusi most definitely will. I know what I am talking about. Leave, Samarah. Know that you will find someone who will love you the way you deserve to be loved.”

She couldn’t believe her eyes. When she looked at Mrs. Dladla she was filled with endless tears. They seemed to be in agreement. She felt rejected, though she knew deep down that they were right. It wasn’t an easy decision to make, but rather that than stick around to endure even more heartache. She wasn’t prepared to leave Langa – not even for the love, but for the stability, love and peace his family had brought her. In due time, I guess they’d have met at church or something, but that life was over for her – for the time being.

Samarah: (crying) “Okay, I understand completely, Baba. Ma, Baba, I thank you both for being there for me when no one was.”

Mrs. Dladla: “We’re just a phone call away. I still hope to see you at church. Don’t be a stranger.”

She just nodded in agreement but it was going to be awkward. She wasn’t ready, but did what she had to do. Ntombi ridiculed her that morning and led her to a panic attack. She knew she needed and deserved way better. She walked out reluctantly, while the tears were just streaming down her face. Her father saw how heartbroken she was and assumed that it was because of Baba’s condition. Phume stood up briefly and stared her in the eye. She just wanted to hug her, but that would have made things a lot worse. Yes, she would have thought that Samarah was still angry at her, but they’d sort it out over a phone call or texts.

Samarah: “Papa, let’s go.”

Langa stood up and faced Samarah.

Langa: “Sam, can we talk, please?”

Samarah: “Langa, it is over between us. There is not much you can do or say to change my mind. I do however wish you well with Ntombi and your son Mthokozisi. Or do you call him Nkosiyo? Which one is it? Anyway, you don’t have to respond to that. It is really not my business. I wish you well in life.”

Langa: “Wait...”

Samarah: “Psalm 127 verse 3 says; “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Do not let that boy become like you.”

With that said, she left with her father by her side. It wasn’t easy for her, but she knew she had to do it. Langa felt as if his heart was being ripped away from his body. All he wanted at that point was to die. He thought that he’d get her back eventually, but after calling numerously only to find that she had changed her number, he stopped trying. His father was not speaking to him – despite him paying a nurse with his lobola money he had saved up for Samarah to care for him, Baba was still adamant that Langa had ruined it all. He ripped the family

apart. While Samarah had tried her utmost best to excel in her studies, she passed with 7 distinctions, while Langa ended up making things official with Ntombi. He didn't marry her, however, claiming that he had to spend all the money on his father's well-being. His son was introduced to the family, and even though they accepted the child, they didn't warm up to Ntombi at all, but she was much like Vee.

Vusi felt the pressure and ended up marrying Vee that December. Ntombi was too comfortable but when Mrs. Dladla was around, she couldn't do as she pleased, except wreck havoc every chance she got. Phume was finally in matric, while Buhle was about to go to Varsity. Luckily, she got a bursary to study Teaching at UJ. The family was very happy and proud of her, since well she did a little better than Zanele. They seemed a little better now that they had a baby to keep them busy and fill the house with joy, but all the drama and havoc made Baba's heart weak. With each day that passed he thought of Samarah and how he had lost out on a good daughter in law. Nonetheless, Langa gave up trying to regain his father's trust and love and lived up to his words the day he cursed him in the yard. He drank on a daily basis and hardly gave Ntombi much attention, until she ended up going to taverns and clubs alongside him.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

7 Months later...

Another year had finally come while Samarah was reeling in the news that she had passed her matric so well. Her father was very proud of her, though it was a bit hard for her to understand why they couldn't celebrate her accomplishment like every other child in her school – with family. She was happy and excited, but she felt a little empty when she couldn't spend it with any other family member other than her father. Certain things just didn't make sense to her and she really wanted to enjoy her day much like Lydia and everyone else in her grade. After fetching her results, Richard was over the moon. She didn't have enough money to pay for her fees, due to every expenditure that occurred the previous year, along with the custom made car she bought her dad in order for him to get around. He didn't want her to do it, but she insisted so that he could get his life on track again. She also managed to get a railing installed alongside the stairs that would assist Richard to get upstairs. He had always enjoyed the balcony view. Her

father insisted that they go celebrate at the nearest restaurant, with her favourite meal and a milkshake, since she didn't drink at all.

Richard: "I am so proud of you, my baby. Your mother would have been so proud – "

He stopped as he realized he said what he shouldn't have said.

Samara: (frowning) "What do you mean? Beatrice left you and I. How can she be proud of me after what she did, Papa?"

Richard: (nervous) "Oh, I just meant that I know deep down she is proud of you, my child. She is just going through a lot."

Samarah: "Hayi (No), it seems as if she has always been going through a lot. I can't even recall a day where she was actually nice to me or Amarah."

Richard: "You're reading too much into things. Don't worry about it."

Richard tried very hard to change the topic, but Samarah felt something missing that day.

Richard: "You don't seem very happy at all. What is it?"

Samarah: "How come I am basically the only one amongst my friends and basically everyone I know who doesn't have any uncles or relatives? I mean from either side of my parents? That is really creepy, don't you think?"

Richard: (nervously) "I told you, Sammy, most of them have died and some just don't have a relationship with me. It is complicated."

Samarah: "How so? I mean, they did come to Grandma Thandi's funeral, but they can't even come to celebrate the good things like me finishing my matric?"

Richard: (sigh) "One day, you'll understand. I know, you don't like this and you feel confused, but if it will make you happy, I can call the Dladla's to come celebrate with us."

Samarah: "I doubt they'd even want to come after everything that happened."

Richard: (shaking head) "They've always been fond of you and they'd be happy to hear from you."

Samarah: "You don't even like them."

Richard: "I never said that."

Samarah: "You didn't have to. You were really happy when Langa and I broke up."

Richard: "This isn't about me or Langa, it is about you celebrating a very special day to you. I can't have you leaving for Varsity while depressed."

He took out his phone without further ado and dialled Baba's number. Baba was a lot better, although his right side was never back to normal. He answered the phone after a few rings.

Baba: "Dladla."

Richard: (clearing throat) "Dumela (Hello) Mr. Dladla. How are you?"

Baba wasn't sure whether he should have smiled or worry after hearing Richard's voice after such a long time.

Baba: (hesitantly) "Yebo (Yes), Moloji. I am well, how are you?"

Richard: (chuckling) "I am fine, thanks. Why do you seem worried to hear my voice?"

He could hear Mrs. Dladla voice over the phone.

Mrs. Dladla: “Ngubani (Who is it)?”

Baba: “It’s Samarah’s father.”

Mrs. Dladla: (excitedly) “Put him on speaker.”

Baba: “It could be bad news.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Not after the dream I had. Put him on speaker!”

Baba: “Yima kancane (hold on a minute), Moloji. I am about to put you on speaker before my wife kills me.”

Richard chuckled while he could now hear the both of them.

Mrs. Dladla: “Hello, Richard! How are you?! It has been so long! How are things? How is my daughter?”

Richard: (smiling) “She is moping around here because you are not around. Let me put you on speaker as well so you can speak to her.”

He put them on speaker as well.

Richard: “Bua (Talk).”

Samarah: (nervously) “Hello, Ma. Sawubona (hello), Baba.”

They were both so happy to hear her voice. Mr. Dladla was asking her a million questions at a time, while Mrs. Dladla was ululating for reasons known to her. It made Samarah so happy and it made Richard even happier seeing her smile for the first time that day.

Samarah: “I am well. I passed... with 7 distinctions.”

They both started rejoicing and she could hear that they were crying out of joy. They both congratulated her and prayed for her over the phone. It was such a moving moment for her.

Mrs. Dladla: “Where are you guys? Do you mind if we come?”

Samarah: “Oh, I hope it won’t be much of a bother for you.”

Baba: “For you, we can do anything.”

Richard suggested that he fetches them. They were more than delighted by the request. They paid the bill and luckily they hadn’t ordered food as yet. He went to fetch them and they were so happy to see Samarah. Baba had completely forgotten about his stress. It was a good thing actually that they didn’t go inside the house, because they would have seen Langa’s son, something which would have completely derailed Samarah’s progress. It took her so long to try and forget about Langa, so she didn’t need a setback like that. They were so happy and Samarah completely forgot that she didn’t really have a family. They were so delighted about her accomplishment, they gave her R500 as a gift.

Mrs. Dladla: “My child, you’ll always be my daughter – no matter what. I know, things are so awkward now, but whenever

you need to speak about things you can't share with anyone else, I will be there. You are an amazing person and what happened between you and Langa shouldn't end our relationship."

Baba: "I am so pleased that you called, my daughter. I will now let Phume know that you are well and you are not angry at anyone of us. It took her a really long time to forgive herself for not telling you when she first noticed."

Samarah felt a little bad. She changed her number without letting anyone know and Phume must have felt like complete garbage.

Samarah: "I am so sorry. I changed my number and forgot to notify everyone else. I'll make it a point to call her later."

They had such a great day at her house, with Mrs. Dladla cooking for them. It felt like a real family affair and the house was lively again. It felt so good for her not to even ask about Langa at all and they also were comfortable to not talk of him and Ntombi. After their meal, the men decided to go upstairs to

the balcony and enjoy the view over a good whiskey, while Mrs. Dladla took the opportunity to get real with Samarah. She had her castle lite while Samarah had apple juice.

Mrs. Dladla: "So, how have things really been since you and Langa split up?"

She went right to the point.

Samarah: (sigh) "In all honesty, Ma. It was hell at first. If it weren't for my studies, I'd have given up on life. I prayed and asked God for guidance and the more I did that, the more I got the same dream occurring; where Langa was happy with Ntombi and his son."

Mrs. Dladla: "Do you miss him?"

Samarah: "I won't lie, the pain has subsided, but I feel like I need some answers on most days. I do miss him at times, but then, I needed to move on."

Mrs. Dladla: "I never told you this, but you know we people of the olden days started dating very young. We were groomed for marriage from a very early age. I had a boyfriend before I met Baba, you know. Just like you, I also saved myself for marriage, although I gave it up to Baba before then."

Samarah chuckled embarrassed.

Mrs. Dladla: "I really liked him because he was the ladies man; he had come from a very wealthy family and he chose me out of all the girls in the school. We made things official the very first day he asked me out. I was head over heels and I refused to see that he was a real ladies' man. Once I found him kissing my best friend, I called it quits immediately because that is the kind of girl I was, you know. My point is, at times I do think of him and wonder, what life would have been like if I had chosen to stay with him over Baba."

Samarah: "And? Do you regret your choice?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Absolutely not. Because today, he has twelve children and six wives. He would have never changed. Baba is

the perfect man for me though it was never a smooth sailing road. What I mean is that you shouldn't feel bad for missing him at times, but don't dwell on the past. If you do that, you will hinder your own progress and you won't open up to love. There is someone worthy of your love out there, and that very person will treat you like the queen you are. My son loves you – no doubt, but he doesn't love you enough to be the man you deserve. After all, Ephesians 5 verse 28 says; "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Langa doesn't love himself as yet, hence he just couldn't love you the way we taught him how to love. You'd be amazed at how many men out there were raised by good women and men yet they still choose to be assholes."

Samarah was touched by the speech Mrs. Dladla gave her, yet she had this curious look on her face and it didn't take too long for Mrs. Dladla to figure it out.

Mrs. Dladla: "I know what you're thinking. Proverbs 12 verse 4: "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones. That should sum up what you would like to know. In plain and simple terms, Ntombi is the complete opposite of you."

They both laughed and luckily Samarah did not dwell on that little inkling of hope. She told Mrs. Dladla about her ambitions and that she was indeed accepted to study at Wits, which was going to take three years to study towards a Bachelors Degree in Radiology, and since the fees were quite expensive, including Residence fees, her bursary was going to cover everything. She was very excited to be able to share all that with a mother figure like Mrs. Dladla. They had a good time together and Richard wanted to request an Uber for them around 11pm that evening, since he was rather intoxicated. Since Samarah had her driver's license already

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all thanks to her father's motivation, she offered to drive them. They were so proud of her, it was as if she was their own flesh and blood. Upon arrival at their house, they thanked one another for the lovely day. Baba was quite tipsy, alongside his wife and they stumbled until they got to the door. Samarah waited for them and they waved goodbye before she drove off. When she was about to leave, Langa's taxi stopped right before her and she got startled. She hadn't spoken to him in months and seeing him with Ntombi in the front seat while she was holding their son was not a good feeling. She felt her stomach

get tied in knots before coming back to her senses. She drove off without saying anything, leaving Langa in complete distress.

Ntombi: “Wasn’t that your fat ex? Hmm, she can drive at least.”

He completely ignored her and drove in. His night was never the same again knowing tht he messed up such a good thing for someone like Ntombi who was ambitionless and didn’t mind drinking all day.

Weeks later, it was finally time for Samarah to go to Varsity. She was very excited more especially because Lydia was going to study at Wits along with her. They were both going to stay at Res, and they had hoped to share a room, since first year’s share a room. If not they were going to opt for sharing a flat together. They both received bursaries since they obtained such excellent results. Lydia wanted to be an Accountant. Richard wanted to be part of the experience, and opted to drop Samarah off himself. He had gone to view the residence room with her, and was pleased.

Richard: “I love this. It reminds me of my army days.”

Samarah: "You never really talk about those days, you know."

Richard: "There's not much to tell. I really hope that you'll be happy and safe here."

Samarah: "Papa, stop panicking, alright. I will be safe, I promise."

Richard: "You promise to call me whenever you need me, right?"

Samarah: "Yes, I promise you."

Luckily for her, she had no idea, but Baba and Mrs. Dladla wanted to surprise her. They took an Uber to Wits and arrived there with a potplant, a bunch of roses, and yet another R500.

Mrs. Dladla: "Knock-knock. Guess who?"

She was so delighted to see them.

Samarah: (excitedly) “Ma! Baba!”

She rushed towards them for a hug and Richard’s mischevious smile showed her that he knew about it all.

Samarah: “Papa! You knew about this?!”

Richard: “We needed to surprise you.”

Samarah: “I can’t believe you guys did this.”

Baba: “We love you and wanted this to be special. I mean, we did this with Buhle, but now it is your turn.”

They were more than delighted to take a few photo’s together. Of course, she was thinking what Langa was going to think about his parents being all over her like that. They left after an

hour and she could finally be alone and let the moment sink in. It wasn't too long before Lydia walked in with her parents.

Lydia: (shouting) "Guess who, bitch?!"

She ran towards her best friend and hugged her.

Lydia's mom: "Lydia! Language!"

Lydia: "Sorry. I'm just so excited."

Lydia's Dad: "Well, we need to see the place before we leave, you know. Just to ensure that we're satisfied."

Lydia: "Well as you can see, Samarah already cleaned up and everything is in place. Come on, let's take pictures so you two can leave us in peace."

Lydia's mom: (shaking head) "How do you cope being friends with this nut case?"

Samarah: (chuckling) “She is the only one who understands me.”

They took pictures with her parents too and once they left, it was fun time for Lydia. Instead of unpacking, she took out a bottle of champagne she had secretly hid in one of her travel bags.

Lydia: “So, who’s ready for some fun?!”

Samarah: “Are you serious?! What if you get caught?”

Lydia: “Why do you think we are allowed to lock our doors? Don’t be such a party pooper. Grab a glass so we can celebrate.”

She popped the champagne bottle and poured them each some in a glass.

Lydia: “A toast. To new beginnings, meeting new people, to love and friendships and to securing the bag, babes.”

Samarah: “Well, I don’t know about love, but I second that.”

Lydia: “Stop being so negative. We’re all destined for love and greatness. I for one know that I intend on having as much sex as I possibly can this year.”

They both laughed.

Samarah: “What are you talking about? You haven’t had sex in like almost two years.”

Lydia: “That’s the exact reason why this is one of my new year’s resolutions.”

They both chuckled and enjoyed themselves and decided to have a party while settling in. The following day was the start of orientation day and Samarah knowing herself she ensured that she set an alarm for 8am since they had to report to their

designated spots at 9am. She wasn't an alcohol fan, but sipping on champagne sounded nice though it seemed a lot more bitter than she had tasted. They danced and Lydia ended up having a six pack of her usual drink – Savanna. When the morning came, they were woken by the noise of everyone running up and down the corridors. Samarah jumped up and checked the time.

Samarah: "Shit!"

She looked over at Lydia's bed and she was fast asleep. She also didn't hear her alarm ringing because she had a very pleasant dream. She dreamt she was standing in the queue to collect her time table when she met a very good looking guy in glasses. She couldn't recall her name, but her head was pounding, much to her regret.

Samarah: "Lydia! Wake up! It is 8:45!"

Lydia: "Eish, eish, (no, no), man, Sammy! It is not even 9am yet!"

Samarah: “Which is exactly why you have to get up! We don’t even have enough time to take a shower!”

Lydia grabbed her phone and when she realized that Samarah was telling her the truth, she also jumped up and grabbed any form of clothing she could grab her hands on. They rushed to the bathroom and found most girls preparing themselves to leave. They washed their faces and armpits and brushed their teeth and headed back to their room.

Samarah: “I regret listening to you. You know I hate alcohol.”

Lydia: “Oh, please. I just wanted you to drink one glass. You decided to take the entire bottle. Let’s go, I’ll see you later. Call me when you’re done, okay?! Love you.”

Lydia rushed down while Samarah was her slow self. She packed her note taking diary and a few pens in her bag and took some money and off she went. Walking on campus was a bit overwhelming for her. She was used to her school who literally had about less than 100 matriculants. Now she had to walk amongst hundreds if not thousands of people. Yes, it was

spacious and no one was bumping into one another, but it was a whole different ball game and quite an adjustment. She took a deep breath and carried on to her point. Once she was there luckily all they had to do was collect their time tables and diaries and take a seat anywhere. She took the furthest one as she hated attention. It was an overwhelming experience but a nice one at the same time. While she sat in her seat, she got on her phone and of course, Lydia had just taken a picture of herself in her own queue collecting her time table. She was nice enough to check on her to see if she was coping. She responded to her text and heard a very deep and masculine voice.

Guy: "Hi, is this seat taken?"

She looked up and had a deja-vu moment of the dream she had a few hours prior. The very same tall, dark and very handsome guy who appeared in her dream was standing right there before her. Could it have been a coincidence or maybe it was the champagne she wasn't even supposed to drink. The last time she felt like that was when she saw Langa for the very first time. She felt butterflies in her stomach and analysed the beauty of a man standing before her. Words were struggling to come out of her mouth as she stared at the beautiful glasses he was wearing. He was quite amused by it all.

Guy: (chuckling) "Hello? Can you hear me? Are you alright?"

Samarah: "Oh, hi, I am so sorry. I didn't mean to be rude, it's just that..."

Guy: (frowning) "Yes?"

Samarah: "Never mind. No, this seat is not taken at all. You may sit."

Guy: "Thank you. My name is Aaron by the way."

Samarah: (smiling) "I'm Samarah, but you can call me Sam."

Aaron: (frowning) "I've never heard that name before. It's such a beautiful name. Do you mind telling me what it means?"

Samarah: "Oh, it means protected by God."

Aaron: "Well, then. I love it. In that case, I will stick to calling you Samarah. We shouldn't waste such a beautiful name by cutting it short."

Samarah: (blushing) "Do you mind telling me what Aaron means?"

Aaron: "Well, luckily for you my name is also Hebrew and it means Exalted or strong."

Judging by his looks, he worked out a lot but his physique portrayed someone really strong. His name really suited him.

Samarah: "Well, then. It is a pleasure to meet you, Aaron with a Hebrew name."

They both laughed and got on like a house on fire. They had the same interests; though Aaron was registered in Neurology, he had to start doing medicine and then specialize in Neurology, which was going to take about 7 years.

Samarah: "Do you mind telling me why you want to be a Neurologist?"

Aaron: "Oh, my father died of brain cancer, so I really wish I could find the cure to brain cancer one day. I promised him that on his death bed."

Samarah felt a little sorry for him because she could relate.

Samarah: "I'm so sorry about that. When did he pass on?"

Aaron: "It's okay, he passed on when I was ten years old."

Samarah: "Well, my twin sister, Amarah, passed on when I was also ten years old."

Aaron: "Oh, I am very sorry. What happened to her?"

Samarah: "If I knew, I'd tell you, hey."

He just took it as if Amarah died a mysterious death such as murder or something, so he didn't pry. They had a great time in class and it was very nice for her to actually find someone else of the opposite sex who had so much in common with her. They both loved reading; although Aaron was a drinker, he wasn't much of one. They enjoyed deep conversation and could relate to one another. They were both raised by single parents basically and they knew why they had to work hard to achieve their goals. This was soon to be a very interesting and much needed train ride for Samarah.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

While Samarah was feeling relaxed in having a new friend who also loved the same taste of music that she loved as well, Aaron saw big prospects of a future wife in Samarah. He had dated before in high school, but his high school sweetheart decided to dump him right on the eve of their matric dance. He never gave up on finding love and was a one woman-man unlike Langa. He was raised well and knew just how to treat a lady. After their first round of orientation, they were done for the day. Most women looked at Aaron and thought he was a nerd and most of them liked him because he had money. He found out the hard way that going for the most attractive girl at times will only end in tears.

Aaron: “I am starving. Would you like to grab something to eat?”

Samarah: “Is that a trick question?”

Aaron: (frowning) "I don't follow."

Samarah: "Well, most people assume that people my size eat too much."

Aaron: "Well, I'm not most people. I'm Aaron Hlatswayo."

She smiled and nodded. She thought they were going to the campus cafeteria, but he took her to the parking lot.

Aaron: "I know we just met and all, but I'd really like us to go out and eat somewhere proper. The Cafeteria food is not very appealing to the eye nor the tongue."

She was a little sceptical at first.

Samarah: "Oh, I am not so sure about that. I mean, I only got to meet you now, you know."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Oh, I see. I fully understand. You can bring a friend if you wish. If that's the only way you'll feel safe and confirm that I'm not a kidnapper."

Samarah smiled and dialled Lydia's number right away.

Lydia: "Hey, are you done?"

Samarah: "Yes, I'm in the parking lot. Can you come?"

Lydia: "What are you doing there?"

Samarah: "Just come."

Lydia: "Fine. I'm literally 5 minutes away."

Samarah: "Cool."

She hung up.

Samarah: "She's five minutes away."

Aaron: "No problem. We can wait."

She was a bit taken aback when he unlocked a blue Golf 7 GTI.

Samarah: (shocked) "Is that your car?"

Aaron: (chuckling) "Yes, well, it was actually my mom's car and she gave it to me on her 18th birthday."

That really scared her a little. She grew up in riches before Beatrice scewed them up, so she wasn't unfamiliar with money, but for a guy fresh out of high school to be driving a Golf 7 makes one wonder, how rich his parents actually were. She didn't pry and ask that, she just nodded and let it be. Lydia came rushing.

Lydia: (out of breath) “Yoh (oh), Sammy! Don’t you ever make me run like that. I honestly thought you were getting mugged or something!”

Samarah: “You are so dramatic.”

Lydia: “Ai (oh), maybe because you’re in front of gorgeous strangers you decide to call me that. By the way, hi. I’m Lydia, I’m her bestie, her ride or die. I bet she told you all about me.”

She took out her hand for him to shake and he gladly did.

Aaron: (chuckling) “Hi, I’m Aaron. I am sort of doing the same course as Samarah. Pleased to meet you.”

Lydia: “Like wise. Well, what am I doing here? I thought we were going to have lunch.”

Samarah: “Actually, Aaron here would like to take me out, but he said that I could bring a friend.”

Lydia: “Well you could have just said so over the phone. I am game for anything.”

Samarah: (surprised) “Lydia, we barely know him.”

Lydia: “You have a strong intuition, so if he was giving us bad vibes, you’d have said no already. So, which car are we taking?”

Aaron: “What makes you think we’re driving there?”

Lydia: “You’re a tall, dark and handsome guy in glasses standing before a very expensive car. Trust me, if we were taking the bus, we’d be at the bus stop by now.”

Aaron laughed at the vivacious character Lydia was, while Samarah felt a little embarrassed. Lydia opened the back door and sat there, while Aaron opened the front door for her. She was a bit nervous at first, but Aaron was a real gentleman. He didn’t exclude Lydia in the conversation – not even once.

Aaron: "So, I never told you ladies where I am originally from. My mom and I live in Ferndale, but we originate from Christiana."

Lydia: (shocked) "Shut up! Sam and I live in Ferndale, bruh (bro)! Although she originates from Christiana, while I come from Bloem. Isn't that right, Sam?"

Samarah: "Well, yes. That's what my dad says, but I've never been there?"

Aaron: (frowning) "That's odd. Don't you guys talk about family history and all that?"

Samarah: "Sometimes."

She was quite embarrassed and hated to fill in everyone around her about her family's unique dynamics. Lydia knew how such topics made her feel, so she quickly changed the topic.

Lydia: “So, AA, where has your mom been hiding you all this time because we’ve never seen you in like ever?”

Aaron: (laughing) “AA? As in like a battery or road side assistance?”

Lydia: “It seems like the best way to shorten your name unless I call you A.”

Aaron: “A is much better. Anyway, I wasn’t hiding at all, you just never saw me.”

Lydia and Aaron laughed briefly as he started the car and proceeded forward. They talked about everything and everything in just under ten minutes. Lydia was good at that. They finally made it to The Matrix mall, and Aaron ensured that he walked right in between them, so that neither of them felt awkward. They sat down for a decent meal for any student McDonald’s of which he paid for. He refused to let them pay for their own food. It was really refreshing for Samarah to meet someone so calm and relaxed who actually had a lot of things in common with her. It was even more

refreshing for Lydia to see her best friend gel with someone like that. For a moment there, they completely zoned out and were talking about what they only could understand. Lydia was incredibluy fascinated by the entire show. It had only dawned on them after a while that they were talking to one another and Lydia was excluded from the conversation.

Aaron: "Oh, please forgive me. It is quite rude of us to do that. Believe me, I am not always like this. It's just that, I've never met anyone so fascinatingly charming as your friend."

Lydia: (chuckling) "I don't mind at all, believe you me. You're actually the very first fascinating person she has ever met in her entire life."

Samarah: "Lydia."

Lydia: "Ai (oh), you like sugarcoating things. Anyway, let me keep quiet."

He bought them a Mcflurry each afterwards, and oddly he was also an ice cream lover, unlike Langa. He was very neat and was a drinker, but not a heavy one like Langa, and he didn't enjoy smoking at all. His car was exceptionally clean and his nails were buffed and had a very good shine, which was something Samarah was not used to seeing. Since they didn't have anything to do, he offered them a chill session with drinks and snacks at his flat, and although Lydia was game, she didn't want to seem too presumptuous. They had no idea who he actually was, so they politely declined.

Aaron: "Well then, I'll see you two beautiful ladies tomorrow then."

Lydia: "Likewise. Bye."

Aaron: "Bye. See you around, Sammy."

Samarah politely waved at him and he drove off. Lydia was very excited for Samarah.

Lydia: "So..."

Samarah: "So what?"

Lydia: "Oh, come on, Samarah. You enjoy stressing yourself about minimal things. What do you really think of Aaron?"

Samarah: (shrugging) "I don't know, I mean, he is really nice.... And cute."

Lydia: "I knew it! I knew it! I knew it!"

Samarah: "Knew what?"

Lydia: "I saw it all. The sparks were flying amongst you two. It was so hard not to notice, I mean come on. Everyone saw it. I bet even a blind man could have seen it."

Samarah: “Come on, we both came here to study, remember? For education. I’ve had my fair share of heartbreak and I am not applying for it any time soon.”

Lydia: “I’m just saying you really have nothing to lose here. Aaron is the one. You both have everything in common, hey. I mean well, apart from the bonus that he has a lot of money, he is the only child and you won’t have to worry about any devilish siblings unlike your ex. Mr. and Mrs. Dladla are so wonderful, but they can never force Langa to change. He is a father now and he is busy with that bimbo, and most probably paid lobola for her. Do you, hun. You’re in Varsity and it is your time to shine. Hopefully, it will be your time to get laid too.”

Samarah: “I told you, I am saving myself for marriage.”

Lydia: “Yeah, sure. I hope so too, but I wouldn’t bet on it.”

They carried on having their usual chats about their day while Lydia enjoyed a few sips of champagne. She promised Samarah not to overdo it like the previous night and since Samarah didn’t even drink alcohol

she didn't touch the champagne at all. She kept scrolling through her phone, secretly hoping that Aaron would have texted or called her, but then she remembered that she never gave him her number and he never asked. "Perhaps he was just a nerd who came to study", she thought to herself. She was going to see very little of him after orientation since their courses were very different from one another, but she was glad that she could at least hold a decent conversation with the opposite sex – apart from Langa. Bed time came and they both knelt down and prayed before bed. While sleeping, she had a dream about Aaron yet again, though it was very strange. Aaron was dressed in a suit, awaiting her at the altar.

She was approaching him in a white wedding gown, and they were both smiling and very happy. Out of the blue, Langa appeared from a distance holding a bloodied knife in his hands, while she looked at Aaron who was down and surrounded by blood. She found herself in the middle of the church, with no congregation, while Langa was standing over Aaron's body smiling at her. She woke up panting and full of sweat, only to realize it was 4am. She struggled to sleep right after that. It was hell since her first orientation lesson for day two was going to start at 8am only. She found herself reading a novel instead

until her alarm clock rang. Little did she know what Aaron was up to. She got up and was quite tired, leaving Lydia surprised.

Lydia: "And then? Didn't we both sleep at the same time?"

Samarah: "Eish (oh), I couldn't sleep after 4am."

Lydia: "Why? Bad dream?"

Samarah: "I'll tell you all about it during breakfast. Let's go get ready."

They went to the bathroom and took their showers. The wait in the queues was really annoying for the both of them, considering how much they really enjoyed their own space. They hated sharing with everyone and some girls were quite messy, leaving hair clogged in the drain. They went back to their rooms and got dressed. They headed to the dining hall for their breakfast and sat down next to one another. Samarah told Lydia about her worrismatic dream, leaving Lydia quite surprised.

Lydia: “This doesn’t sound right. Perhaps you need to speak to someone, you know.”

Samarah: “What kind of someone? Please, don’t tell me about a therapist. I already see enough of her once a week.”

Lydia: (shaking head) “No, I am talking about a healer, a sangoma or even a medium.”

Samarah: “I’ve never been to such, I mean my family doesn’t believe in that.”

Lydia: “Well, I don’t mean to burst your bubble, babe, but your father is a little dodgy. I mean, he doesn’t really attend church and hardly prays. You can’t be having such dreams of Aaron and Langa, when you literally just dumped Langa few months ago. Don’t take this lightly. Just think about what I’ve said.”

Samarah decided to put Lydia’s words on the backburner and focus on other things instead. They went their separate ways

after breakfast, and she met Aaron right outside the lecture hall door, where they were supposed to be having their second round of orientation. He looked so neat and handsome as always, dressed in a pair G-Star Raw jeans, a simple white Tshirt and a pair of flip flops. He didn't look fancy at all, which is exactly what she liked about him. He moved his glasses closer to his eyes and smiled when he saw her.

Aaron: "Hey. How are you today?"

Samarah: "Hi, I've been better."

Aaron: (frowning) "What's wrong? Whose ass am I kicking?"

Samarah: (laughing) "Nothing like that. I just couldn't get much sleep last night."

Aaron: (frowning) "Why? Were you partying?"

Samarah: "Not even. I just had a bad dream, that's all."

Aaron: "Do you mind telling me about it?"

Samarah: "Perhaps later."

She didn't want poor Aaron to think of her as a psycho. Who meets a person and then dreams of them getting stabbed by an ex the very same evening? They went about their day, and three hours later, they were done. They went to collect their list of textbooks and left campus. Orientation had come to an end and the hard work was about to begin the following day. They walked out of the venue, and Aaron started speaking her language.

Aaron: "How about a bite?"

Samarah: "If you keep carrying on like this, I will become even bigger than what I already am."

Aaron: "Who said you're big? And did I ever say I have a problem with the way you look? I absolutely love it."

She blushed at that compliment while they locked eyes for a moment. She had texted Lydia moments before she left the venue and she came running.

Lydia: “Sorry to have kept you guys waiting. I had to purchase my textbooks and man, they were a shitload.”

Samarah: “Lydia bathing (my goodness).”

Lydia: “Sorry. What’s up guys?”

Aaron: “I was thinking we’d have a bite and some drinks before the hard labor begins?”

Samarah: “I don’t feel comfortable with you spending your money on us like that, man. We’ll make you bankrupt. Lydia here can drink an entire restaurant.”

Lydia: (laughing) “She’s not wrong about that.”

Aaron: “Well, I didn’t want to seem like a serial killer or anything by inviting you guys to my place. I mean, I’m a mean cook and I have some drinks there. Non-alcoholic ones too.”

Lydia: “I’m game!”

Samarah: “Lydia.”

Lydia: “Keng (what)? He’s not going to kill us, man. Lighten up. Let’s go.”

She walked ahead of them, leaving Aaron laughing while Samarah was a little nervous.

Aaron: “If you don’t feel comfortable, we don’t have to go.”

Samarah: “Oh, no. It’s not that. It’s not even you – believe me. I just... I’m just an anxious person, that’s all.”

She didn't want to let him know that she was suffering from anxiety and depression, but he actually knew a lot more than she thought he did. They got into his car and drove to his apartment at The Franklin in Marshalltown. Samarah assumed that he was left with tons of money, but the stylish apartments she saw there were nothing she had in mind. They were so exclusive and gorgeous, she was in absolute awe. Before they drove in, he swiped his access card to open the gate and stopped to greet the security guard. He seemed very fond of him, and they had a rather brief yet casual conversation.

Aaron: (smiling) "Dumela, Ntate Tau (Good day, Mr. Tau)."

Mr. Tau: (smiling) "Hello, Aaron. It is good to see you today. I see you have brought two lovely ladies with you."

Aaron: (chuckling) "It is really not what you think. Ntate (Mr) Tau, meet my new friends, Lydia and Samarah."

Mr. Tau greeted Lydia first who was seated at the back and then looked at Samarah and paused briefly. He looked at her as if he knew her from somewhere.

Mr. Tau: (smiling broadly) “Dumela Mosadi o montle (Hello, beautiful lady).”

He had a quite a Tswana accent.

Samarah: “Dumela Ntate (Greetings, Father).”

Mr. Tau: (smiling) “You are destined for greatness, my child. Always follow your dreams.”

She had no idea what he meant and she dismissed it. She really thought he was just being a usual elder, though he wasn't that old, perhaps in his mid 40s.

Aaron: “I hope she takes heed of your words, Mr. Tau. I am going to cook something really nice for these two. Can I bring you some?”

Mr. Tau: "If it is no bother, you know I always love tasting your fancy food, though I prefer pap and meat."

Aaron: (chuckling) "I am trying to show you new ways, Mr. Tau. I'll see you later, okay?"

Mr. Tau: (nodding) "Keep well."

He still looked at Samarah in a very odd way, but she just didn't notice. She was feeling so lethargic due to the lack of sleep in the early hours of the morning. They walked up to his apartment, and unlike most students, his was lavishly and fully furnished. Everything looked so perfect, rather too perfect.

Aaron: "I'm quickly going to change into something more comfortable. I'll be right back."

It was a two bedroom apartment and everything was in place; it was a neat apartment with no dirty dish in sight. Everything was in black and red with a tinge of white. There was a big

painting right in the middle of the lounge area, with Aaron, and two people beside him who looked like his parents.

Lydia: "Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't Aaron look a little bit older than an average 18 year old?"

Samarah: "You're starting again with your theories."

Lydia: "Which are never wrong. I mean look at Langa, I told you multiple times he wasn't to be trusted and what happened?"

Samarah: (sigh) "What's your point?"

Lydia: "I'm just saying he just looks a little bit older than the average 18 year old. That's all."

Samarah: "Would that be a problem?"

Lydia: "What the fuck for? Girl, the older the dick, the better."

Samarah: "Ai (oh), no, Lydia man."

Lydia burst out laughing when Aaron walked out of his room in shorts and a sleeveless shirt.

Aaron: "Am I missing something? What's the joke?"

Lydia: "On, don't you worry about it. I'm just laughing at her. She is literally so stiff, hey."

Aaron: (smiling) "Well, I think she is just perfect."

He winked at her.

Aaron: "What would you ladies like? I have all kinds of things in the fridge?"

Lydia: "Mind if I take a look?"

Aaron: "Oh, no. Please, help yourselves."

While Aaron took out some meat and utensils to start cooking, Lydia opened his double door fridge to find tons of different drinks, and a wine shelf in the kitchen filled with all kinds of wine. It was absolute heaven for her. She took a bottle of Pinotage in the fridge since it was cold and helped herself, while she poured some juice for Samarah. He seemed like the perfect guy, but at that age, could one really have it all like that?

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

After a good hour, Samarah started to relax. Lydia had been relaxed from the moment she had her first glass of Pinotage while Aaron was drinking a bottle of Heineken. Samarah was quite happy with her orange juice. They played some music while he was cooking and occasionally chatting to them. Samarah loved cooking and nowhere did she even see anything like what Aaron was doing before.

Samarah: “What are you making? It looks so professional.”

Aaron: (laughing) “I once did a chef’s course back in high school. I am not the greatest, but my food does taste good, though.”

Samarah: “I see. What do you call this dish?”

Aaron: “I’m making my famous Caprese Chicken. It is basically a mixture of gooey cheese, sun-dried tomatoes and a sweet balsamic reduction to chicken.”

Samarah: “Sounds so fancy.”

Aaron: “Oh, please. I’m just an ordinary guy. You look like you can whip up a mean meal too.”

Samarah: “I try. I’m not as good as you, though.”

Aaron: “I could teach you some day if you’d like.”

Their chemistry was on another level, whereas they’d flirt without intention. It just came naturally. He made her blush without effort and she made him laugh so effortlessly. It was beautiful for Lydia to see. She didn’t even mind it whenever they’d unintentionally ignore and forget about her. Even after they blessed the food and dished up, they were enwrapped in their own topic every now and then.

Aaron: “Oh, Lydia, I’m so sorry. I did it again.”

Lydia: “Oh, please, Aaron. I am just here to keep an eye on you and to make sure that you won’t kidnap my friend the next time she visits you.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Next time?”

Lydia: “You really like acting blonde, don’t you? Of course there’ll be a next time. If it were me I’d be consummating the relationship right this moment, but I love love, guys. I mean what you guys have right here – beautiful.”

Aaron just chuckled though he really hoped that Samarah felt the same way. Her anxious and nervous behaviour sent mixed signals to him. He could feel deep down that she really enjoyed being around him, though it seemed to be a bit early, but he had more than enough experience with love to know when a girl was into him. He got the same vibes from her, he just needed to act fast because she was truly one of a kind. He could tell she had been through a lot, but who hadn’t?

They finished eating and carried on with their usual conversation, while Lydia was on the phone with her own potential partner for nearly two hours on Aaron's balcony. She did that deliberately to allow Samarah the freedom to speak freely with him and get to know him.

Aaron: "Has anyone ever told you that you have such a beautiful face? I have never seen anyone as beautiful as you, Samarah. It may sound cheesy, but well, it is true."

Samarah: (blushing) "Well, the last guy who told me that impregnated someone else while we were together. I found out on his birthday last year."

Aaron: (frowning) "What an idiot. I hope he didn't make you sick, I mean living with HIV is not a death sentence, but it isn't easy living with it after such betrayal."

Samarah: (looking down) "Oh, no, he didn't. I... I've never... I've never been with anyone before..."

Aaron was stunned. He didn't think such girls still existed.

Aaron: (surprised) "Are you telling me you're still a virgin?"

Samarah: (embarrassed) "Yes. I'm a late bloomer, aren't I? I don't know why I feel embarrassed."

Aaron: "Why do you feel embarrassed?"

Samarah: "I don't know. I mean, he probably cheated on me because I was and still am adamant on saving myself until marriage."

Aaron: "Hey, you are one of a kind, Samarah. In fact, girls like you don't really exist anymore. You have morals and principles. I admire that – more than anything in this world. If you saving yourself for marriage is what you really want, then no one and nothing should ever make you feel like it is a bad thing to do. Your ex was an asshole for cheating on you. He didn't do it because you decided to remain pure – he did it because he just couldn't choose to wait for the bigger prize. Losing you is most

probably one of the biggest regrets in his life. He will never get anyone as good as you – not even half as good and amazing as you. It's actually a good thing that he did that in a way, otherwise I'd never have met you."

He briefly brushed his fingers on her cheeks, leaving her body electrified. She saw something in him she couldn't see in Langa – a guy who was truly gentle. It was more than just thinking of the physical with Aaron. He was calm and understanding and he was adamant on giving her the world – she just didn't know it yet. They locked eyes for a few seconds and Lydia walked in from the balcony and caught a glimpse of it all.

Lydia: "Ah, sunanang man (can you two just kiss already)? I mean, I've been out there for two hours waiting for it to happen."

Samarah blushed and looked down embarrassed, while Aaron just laughed it off as always. He was used to Lydia's craziness.

Aaron: "Who were you talking to for so long?"

Lydia: "A potential partner."

Samarah: "You never told me that."

Lydia: "Patience, baby girl, patience. Are we ready to leave? He is right outside res with a gift for me."

Samarah looked at the time and it was already 7pm.

Samarah: "Oh, it is really getting late. We've been here for quite some time, haven't we?"

Aaron: "Well, time really does fly when you're having fun."

Lydia: "Yes, A, it has been so much fun, truly, but I really have to bounce."

Aaron: "Of course, I get it. I'll take you guys home."

Samarah: "Oh, no. We didn't even wash your dishes. I feel so horrible."

Aaron: "I'm not handicapped, babe, I'll wash the dishes. Besides, I have a dishwasher for emergencies."

She smiled back at him and they walked downstairs. Lydia was already in the parking lot waiting for them. They got into his car and drove out, upon nearing the gate, he informed Mr. Tau that he'd be back to dish up for him after dropping them off. Once he got there, Samarah took a closer look at the guy who was waiting for Lydia right outside. He was tall, and looked very sporty. He was walking on foot and handed her chicken licken. She was in such a real hurry for food? She thought to herself. Samarah shook her head in amusement.

Aaron: "That's quite a friend you have there, huh?"

Samarah: "Oh, yes. She's the fun one amongst the both of us, but she never judges me. We've been friends since primary school."

Aaron: "I see. Well, it was so lovely spending time with you again today, Samarah. Please, don't be a stranger now that I won't be seeing much of you lately."

Samarah nodded in disappointed as she thought that he wasn't going to ask for her number.

Samarah: "I'll see you around."

He gently grabbed her hand.

Aaron: "You forgot something."

Samarah: "What's that?"

Aaron: "Your number."

Samarah frowned.

Aaron: “You truly didn’t expect me to let you leave again without giving me your number today, did you?”

Samarah blushed as he handed her his phone and she typed in her number. Once she handed the phone to him, he typed a contact number for her.

Aaron: “I’m going to save you as Gorgeous.”

Samarah: (smiling) “Samarah would have been just fine.”

Aaron: “Not in my world. Everyone deserves to know how gorgeous you are – including you.”

He gave her a gentle peck on the cheek.

Aaron: “Bye, gorgeous. I’ll wait for you to enter before I leave.”

She couldn’t believe that she felt like that again – so alive. She felt way better than she did with Langa. It just hit differently

knowing that there were such real guys out there. She felt that Langa was hiding his true self whenever he was around her. She walked out of the car and once she was inside, he really only started driving off as promised. She felt those goosebumps visit her yet again. Her heart was skipping beats every few minutes and her legs felt so wobbly. Lydia was already in their room, staring down from the window at her friend until she walked in. Once she walked into their room, she was full of smiles.

Lydia: "So? How was it? I mean, I know you had a great day, I mean even Ntate Tau noticed."

Samarah: (laughing) "Stop it. It was amazing. I mean, I can't believe I feel this way

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you know. I mean, I know we're just friends and all, but man. I never thought I could ever meet someone so amazing and handsome too."

Lydia: "I told you; this world is full of fish. It isn't just full of Maskandi-listening and Carvella-wearing, cheating taxi drivers."

Samarah: "Lydia."

Lydia: "Okay, askies (sorry) then. It is just a little personal to me. He hurt my best friend. The sweetest person he had ever met. Dickhead."

While she was eating her wings with Samarah shaking her head in disapproval, a phone call came through. She didn't have his number, and all thanks to Truecaller, she wasn't surprised to see his name appear on the screen "Incoming call from Aaron Moeng". She smiled to herself immediately and Lydia knew who it was.

Samarah: "Hello?"

Aaron: (chuckling) "I thought you'd be saying something like "Hello, handsome".

Samarah: (giggling) "How was I supposed to know that it was you calling?"

Aaron: “Come on, Gorgeous. I know you have Truecaller. You can’t fool me.”

Samarah: “Well, in that case, hello, Mr. Moeng.”

Aaron: “I love that. I just called to tell you that I have arrived safely at my place.”

Samarah: “Well, thank you for letting me know.”

Aaron: “May I call you later? I’m about to have supper with Mr. Tau.”

His fondness of Mr. Tau made her knees weak.

Samarah: “Well, you must greet him for me yet again.”

Aaron: “If I do, we’ll end up talking all about you. I wouldn’t want him to scout you for one of his sons. They are all light and handsome – and he’s got three!”

They both started laughing altogether.

Samarah: “Well, should he dare to try, you tell him that Samarah Moloji only has eyes for Mr. Moeng himself.”

Aaron: “I’ll hold you to that. We’ll talk later. Bye, gorgeous.”

Samarah: “Bye.”

The moment he hung up, she threw herself on the bed and put the phone right against her chest and looked up at the ceiling.

Samarah: (sigh) “Where was he all along, Lydia?”

Lydia: “He was in your dreams waiting for you to leave that cheating fuck.”

Samarah: “Lydia bathing (goodness).”

Lydia: (sigh) "You know I can't lie."

Samarah: "And who is Mr. Hotwings and how come you've never told me about him?"

Lydia: "He is some guy I met yesterday. Cute, isn't he?"

Samarah: "I saw him from a distance, but he seems really nice. What's his name? Are you two dating already?"

Lydia: "His name is Collin. And no, we're not dating yet. I told you, this year I am all about experimenting, boo. I won't date a man unless I have tasted his money – and his package."

They both burst out in laughter.

Samarah: "Lydia, you've only had sex with one guy in your entire life."

Lydia: “Exactly. That’s enough for me to know what I want and need. I am dying of salt, girl. You’ll understand one day after you decide to give it up. Knowing you, it will most probably be after a whole decade.”

They continued to chat about Collin and school work and the people they had met so far. Aaron did keep his promise and called Samarah later that evening just before bed. They spoke about everything and everything and with each phone call, they got to know each other a little better and slowly but surely he was peeling off one onion layer at a time. She prayed before bed time along with Lydia and they finally went to bed. She had the same dream of Langa and Aaron yet again, and it woke her up. This time, she decided to kneel down and pray before going back to bed. She realized she hadn’t spoken to her father in a long while and decided to try her luck and call him. He was unusually quiet.

Richard: “Sammy, my baby. How are you?”

Samarah: “I’m fine, Papa, how are you? You have been quiet. Is everything alright?”

Richard: "Oh, yes, yes. Everything is just fine. I am sorry I haven't been checking on you. I wanted you to settle in."

He seemed offish and she could tell.

Samarah: "Is everything alright? You seem a bit off."

Richard: "I am just fine, love. I am just lonely here at home."

Samarah: "Well, maybe I can come visit you this weekend."

Richard: "No! I mean, you wouldn't want to waste money you'll need on me, my baby."

Samarah: "Oh, okay."

She heard a rather familiar voice in the background.

Beatrice: "Richy, my love! Time for your bath!"

Samarah: “Who’s that? Is that – “

Richard: (interrupting) “I’ll call you tomorrow. Good night.”

He hung up so abruptly and Samarah had already concluded that her evil mother had come back into their lives to finish off what she started. This time, she was most probably going to convince him to sell off the house, but it was already in Samarah’s name. She yet again struggled to sleep after that phone call. She wished she hadn’t called him. The morning came and she was woken up by a sweet text from Aaron. “Good morning Beautiful. I hope you had a peaceful night’s sleep. I could hardly sleep because you kept invading my dreams. I don’t mind being sleep deprived at all, because an angel kept visiting me throughout the entire night. I’ll talk to you just before you first class. Love, Mr. Moeng.”

She smiled though she felt a bit tired.

Lydia: “Wake up, Samarah. You know you’re the slow one amongst us. Come on, now.”

She followed Lydia to the bathroom who was way ahead of her. Upon walking towards the bathroom, she stumbled into one of the res girls Mapule. She was tired and sleep-deprived and the corridors were so busy, she didn't bump her on purpose, but Mapule was as mean as they had come. While Samarah was trying to assist her to pick up her things from the floor, Mapule had other ideas.

Samarah: "I'm so sorry. It really wasn't my intention."

Mapule gave Samarah a good kick and she fell onto the floor completely.

Mapule: "Watch where you're going, Sdudla (fattie)!"

A few other girls laughed instead of assisting her, while Mapule never even bothered to pick up her things that fell amongst Samarah's things. She was a bit hurt since she thought that bullying was left behind in high school. She never really experienced any bullying since her school was completely strict and totally against it. It was her very first time going through

something like that. She was hurt and that incident dampened her mood. Once she arrived in the bathroom, she found Lydia had booked one of the showers for her.

Lydia: (frowning) “Why do you look so sour?”

Samarah: “Ag, I just didn’t sleep that’s all.”

She didn’t tell her friend about it. She felt she could handle and fight her own battles. She also didn’t think that Mapule would do it again, yet she was wrong. They finished getting ready and she wore a pair of high-waist jeans and a crop top. She looked really gorgeous and she was still trying to maintain the little bit of confidence she still had.

Lydia: “Hehe, I love love, guys. Aaron is turning you into a bad bitch, hey.”

Samarah: “Ai wena (oh, you).”

They proceeded to the dining hall as always and had their breakfast there. Once they got on Campus, they went their separate ways. She found Aaron waiting for her just outside the entrance of the lecture halls. She looked happy to see him, but her face had a tinge of sadness.

Aaron: (frowning) "What is it?"

Samarah: "It's nothing, really. I just didn't sleep much."

Aaron: "Are you sure that's all there is to it?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

He dug in his bag and handed her one vitamin booster pill.

Aaron: "Here, take this. It will keep you going."

Samarah: (sigh) "I hope so."

While he gave her a hug before leaving her, Mapule walked by with two of her friends and made a rude comment, completely upsetting Aaron.

Mapule: “Oh, look, it’s the fat ginger bread lady getting a sympathy hug from a hot guy.”

They all laughed and proceeded to walk by. Samarah’s silence was alarming.

Aaron: (firmly) “Who’s that?”

Samarah: “No one.”

Aaron: “I won’t ask again, Samarah. Who is that?”

Samarah: “Her name is Mapule. She’s a third year who lives in our res.”

Aaron had a very dark look on his face.

Aaron: "How do you allow her to treat you like that?"

Samarah: "It's nothing. I am used to people making snark comments about my weight."

She omitted to tell him about that morning's incident. He didn't like it at all. His face had changed completely.

Aaron: "Well, you have to stop it. It's not nice and I don't like it at all. I'll sort her out."

Samarah: "Please don't."

Aaron: "Anyone who messes with those I love, messes with me. I'll see you later."

He gave her a peck on her cheek and walked away. Samarah was too tired and too upset to take a good look at Aaron's face. He looked really upset and his breathing had changed. It seemed like a small incident for her, but little did she know that Aaron meant what he said about sorting her out.

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Despite everything that was going through Samarah’s head, she really enjoyed her lectures. She loved studying and learning and though it was a completely new ball game, she enjoyed learning something new. So far, her lecturers were really nice and knew what they were doing and loved what they were doing. She only had three classes, much like Aaron. Their time table was the same on most days – except for Wednesdays. They were done at the same time and she texted Lydia who told her she was going to chill with Collin and she was going to see her later. Aaron asked her to wait for her at the Cafeteria where he went running towards her soon after his class. He was so excited to see her and hugged her from behind. That morning’s incident left her a little demotivated and with a little less self-esteem, but Aaron wasn’t about to let that dampen her mood. He hugged her from behind and gave her a brief kiss on the cheek. Everyone was watching, and both of them had no idea how many girls wanted to be her at that moment. Samarah was a little taken aback and she was uncomfortable because of the stares.

Samarah: (surprised) “Oh, hey. You gave me a little fright there.”

Aaron: “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to. I was just happy to see you, that’s all.”

Samarah nodded and looked down the moment she realized they were all talking about her. Aaron noticed and was a little saddened by her reaction.

Aaron: (frowning) “Are they bothering you?”

Samarah: “No, I just don’t like attention, that’s all.”

Aaron stood up and did the unexpected.

Aaron: (clearing throat) “Attention everyone. I don’t know what you’re gossiping about nor why, but just so you know, this is the woman of my dreams and if any of you had any other

ideas or are truly unhappy about it – you can piss off right this moment!”

Samarah: “Aaron, don’t – “

Aaron: “And if you have a problem with what I have just said – you can come straight to me and tell it to my face!”

He sat back down and kissed her hand, leaving her blushing in embarrassment. What they both didn’t realize was that Mapule was amongst the shocked and irritated people in the cafeteria. They chose to mind their own business, knowing how serious Aaron was.

Samarah: “You didn’t have to do all that, you know.”

Aaron: “Why not?”

Samarah: “Well, now everyone will know that about me... about us.”

Aaron: "Is it a bad thing?"

Samarah: "Uhm, no... It's just that..."

Aaron: "What is it?"

Samarah: "I didn't know we're dating."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Let things happen naturally. Give me time, you'll know when we are dating for sure. That's if you want that to happen?"

She just blushed and looked down.

Aaron: "What do you say we get out of here?"

She nodded in perfect agreement and they both walked out hand in hand, leaving Mapule frustrated along with her

friends. Aaron was a very impulsive lover. He enjoyed spending time with those he really loved and he fell for Samarah the moment he saw her, even his mother knew from that day that her son was hooked. He opened the car door for her as usual.

Aaron: "Where's Lydia today?"

Samarah: "Oh, she said she's spending time with Collin."

Aaron: (smiling) "Perfect. That gives us enough time to spend time alone."

She blushed and found it really hard to look him in the eye. He was so affectionate and enjoyed eye contact. As they say; "the eyes are the windows to the soul". He drove around and went to the mall yet again. She assumed that they were going to eat lunch at the nearest mall, but he had a nice surprise for her. They walked out and he went food shopping with her at Woolworths. He took a basket for convenience and held her hand as they walked into the shop. It took her a while to get comfortable with everyone, she always felt as if people were

staring at her. They picked up a few foods, along with some desserts and a bottle of wine and non-alcoholic champagne which he had chosen for her. While they were waiting for their products to be scanned at the till before paying, he noticed Samarah starting to be withdrawn, so he occasionally moved her dreadlocks out of her face and kissed her cheek yet again. He would whisper “you’re so beautiful, gorgeous” in her ear, making her smile and giggle. It was important for him to help her realize how much of an impact her presence had on his life. He wanted and desperately needed her to gain her confidence. After they were done paying, they went back to his apartment. Mr. Tau wasn’t there, it was his day off. He went up and took out one Apron for himself, and one that still smelled new which he handed to her. She unwrapped it and it had “I’m Gorgeous and I can cook!” written on it.

Samarah: (Smiling) “Really Aaron?”

Aaron: “What? I thought you’d like it.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “I do, it’s just so surprising.”

Aaron: "Well, I am full of surprises."

That he was.

Samarah: "So, what are we making?"

Aaron: "Today, you'll be Bruschetta with me. It is a mixture of chopped tomatoes, balsamic, basil and garlic, and we'll be spooning over olive-oil brushed slices of toasted baguette. You'll love it since you're not allergic to anything."

Samarah: "That's a lot of tomatoes."

Aaron: "You'll love it, I promise and it won't even take that long."

He assisted her to do everything by standing behind her, with her given permission of course. He helped her cut everything and brush over the olive oil on the bread, and once they were done, they neatly placed the Bruschetta in a picnic bowl. Feelling his warm breath on her neck increased her

blood flow, making her feel secure and calm and incredibly loved. They weren't even an item yet, but they had been involved in so many intimate activities together. They packed everything in the picnic basket, along with two champagne glasses with the wine and non-alcoholic beverage, and off they went to the garden downstairs. He lay a blanket for them and placed the food on the blanket. He poured them each a drink and made a toast.

Aaron: "A toast. To the most gorgeous woman with a loving soul that I've ever met."

They toasted and drank. She actually enjoyed the food and the non-alcoholic champagne. He refused to let her taste the Bruschetta before the picnic and it was worth her while. They enjoyed themselves until the sun set. When it was finally time to go home, he drove her back to res. Lydia had been checking in on her during the day and got to res before her, little did Samarah know what awaited her.

Aaron: "I'll call you once I am home, okay?"

Samarah nodded and he kissed her cheek. They said their goodbyes and she walked into the res building. He waited for her to go in as usual before driving off. Her smile soon disappeared from her face when she saw Mapule waiting for her up the stairs along with her friends. Samarah walked up the stairs and once she was met with Mapule, she blocked her way.

Samarah: (nervously) "Can I please pass?"

Mapule: "Look at you. Why on earth would such a rich and handsome guy like Aaron Moeng fall for a fat, dark and broke bitch like you?!"

Samarah: "Excuse me?!"

Mapule: (mimicking) "Excuse me?! You heard me. We all know your crippled father has no money. You don't fit in Aaron's world, baby girl."

Samarah was hurt though she tried to pass, but Mapule was so annoyed with her non-response.

Mapule: “You will always be nothing but a fat chick whom he felt sorry for in his eyes. Her friends assumed that she was just going to scare her and that was it, and yet they tried to tell her to stop and leave her alone, but Mapule enjoyed playing with Samarah. When Samarah tried taking one more step and push them out of the way, Mapule did the unthinkable. She pushed Samarah so hard that she missed a step and fell down the stairs. She fell all the way down, while one of the two friends screamed out in shock.

Friend: (screaming) “Yoooh! What have you done?!”

Luckily, Samarah’s room was right before the stairs, and when Lydia heard the screams she rushed out of her room.

Lydia: “What the fuck is goin on here?”

Mapule: “Your friend missed a step and fell down the stairs.”

Lydia rushed towards the balcony and saw Samarah at the bottom of the stairs. There was no blood in sight, luckily, but it could also have been a danger sign signalling internal bleeding. She was very concerned and rushed down to her, while Mapule simply walked back to her room as if nothing had happened. The one traumatized friend stood there, as more ladies walked out of their rooms and were met with the horrific sight.

Lydia: (worried) "Sammy! Sammy

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can you hear me?! Someone call the house mother or an ambulance, dammit!"

Everyone was shocked and started panicking, but thankfully those who were there were able to assist. One brought a pillow to elevate her head for support, while one dialled the ambulance. When the house mother appeared, she was in a state of shock.

House mother: "What happened here?!"

Most people claimed they had no idea, although one of Mapule's friends was still standing there in deep seated shock. She could tell that she knew something and was afraid.

House Mother: "Give her some sugar water and take her to my room, please."

The ambulance arrived within ten minutes and Lydia went with the paramedics and held Samarah's hand while she was unconscious. She was frightened, but in her mind she tried to ask herself what on earth happened. Samarah's phone was right next to her, and Lydia thankfully picked it up. When it rang, Aaron was the one calling and she answered immediately.

Lydia: "Hi, Aaron. It's Lydia."

Aaron: "Hey, is Samarah around?"

Lydia: "I'm afraid I have some bad news."

She never beat around the bush.

Lydia: "She is unconscious. We're currently on our way to the Wits Gordon Private Hospital."

Luckily it wasn't very far from Res.

Aaron: (worried) "What happened?"

Lydia: "She apparently fell down the stairs."

By apparently she also raised a few flags on Aaron's side. He didn't believe that she fell down the stairs on her own nor by mistake.

Aaron: "I'm on my way."

Once the ambulance arrived, they took Samarah in to assess her while Lydia waited for the outcome in the waiting area. Within literally 5 minutes, Aaron had arrived.

Aaron: "Hey, I'm here. Where is she? Is she okay?"

He gave her a tight hug.

Lydia: "I don't know. She wasn't bleeding or anything, but what if she is bleeding internally or something?"

Aaron: "What happened?"

Lydia: "I don't know. I was in my room and then I heard one of the girls screaming."

Aaron: "It's really important for me to know each and every detail, Lydia. I know you're still shocked. Let me get you something to drink and then you can tell me what you recall exactly."

She nodded in agreement while Aaron went to the hospital cafeteria and got her a coke. She had a few sips and calmed down.

Aaron: "Tell me what happened."

Lydia: "I was in my room when I texted her to find out where she was. She wasn't responding, so I waited, yet she was online. Within a few minutes, I heard one of the girls scream."

Aaron: "Which girls? What exactly came out of the screams?"

Lydia: "I think it was Mapule's friend Emelda."

Aaron's face immediately changed again.

Lydia: "I heard someone scream and then I think she said, 'what have you done?'"

Aaron: "Anything else?"

Lydia: "That's when I walked out and asked what happened. Mapule was still there with both her friends when she told me that Samarah fell down the stairs. Emelda looked so shocked that even when the Ambulance came she was in a state of shock. The house mother asked someone to take her to her room probably to question her on what happened, but she refused. She wanted to see Samarah up until they took her away."

Aaron: "Is that all?"

Lydia: "Yes."

Aaron: "Okay, let's wait for the doctors to come and give us the verdict."

The entire time Aaron was holding Lydia's hand for support but his mind was completely dark. He could only think of hunting down the perpetrator. After about 20 minutes, the doctor came out of the ER.

Doctor: "Are you Samarah's family?"

Lydia: "Yes. I'm her best friend and this is her boyfriend."

She didn't even think of calling Aaron her friend.

Doctor: "Very well then."

Aaron: "How is she, doctor?"

Doctor: "She is unconscious at the moment. We won't know for sure what her state is until she wakes up. We managed to stop some minimal bleeding from the back of her brain. Thankfully there is only a minor part of swelling in her head."

Aaron: (angrily) "Why the fuck are you even doctors? Did you check her scans?! Did you double check?! I mean what if she

has memory loss or something when she wakes up?! What caused this?!”

Doctor: “I can understand that you’re upset, but we can only know for sure when she wakes up.”

Aaron: (shouting) “You’re supposed to be one of the best doctors in this fucking country! What you’re telling me now is bullshit! In fact, I’ll transfer her to my own hospital!”

Lydia: “Please, Aaron. Trust them. They know what they are doing.”

Aaron: “Fine. But if anything happens to them – it’s on you.”

Doctor: “We will need family to take care of the bill – “

Aaron: (interrupting) “That’s all you fucking care about! I’ll sort it out. No need to stress out her father.”

Lydia: “Aaron, she won’t be too happy about you doing this.”

Aaron: “I don’t have a choice, now do we? We both know what her father is up to with her evil stepmother.”

Aaron was never told of Samarah’s thoughts of the possibility of Beatrice not being her biological mother, yet he knew all that. Samarah was open with Lydia and even Lydia knew that Sam would not have told Aaron that. Could she have told him that and she wasn’t aware? Or could he have done a little digging of his own? Who exactly was he? Lydia had all those questions running in her mind. Something big was brewing, but ultimately Lydia knew she could trust Aaron. While Aaron went to pay for Samarah’s admission out of his own pocket, Lydia patiently awaited the doctor’s approval to allow them to see her. Once he was done, they were allowed to go into her ward. They both went in and she had a bandage wrapped around her head while hooked onto drips and machines. The entire time she thought that her friend wasn’t going to make it, while Aaron thought that she would have had some sort of damage on her brain – all because of some jealous bitch.

Aaron: "Hey, Lydia. Are you okay being here alone for a while? I need to make a few calls."

Lydia: (nodding) "Sure. I'll be here."

Aaron: "Thanks. Don't call her father – please."

She nodded in agreement while he left. She sat there and prayed for her friend while waiting for her to wake up. It felt like a really long wait, but after about an hour, Aaron came back looking like he had been sweating. He had even changed his set of clothes.

Lydia: "Where were you?"

Aaron: "Oh, I was talking to a family doctor about her condition. He said that we really should wait for her to wake up to know for sure what the status is."

Lydia: "Oh, okay. You went back to your place? I see you have changed your clothes."

Aaron knew that Lydia was observant – but he had no idea how observant.

Aaron: “Oh, yes. I took a shower too, just felt like I needed to blow off some steam.”

Lydia nodded while they prayed for Samarah. She was very impressed that he knew the Bible like that.

Aaron: “Father God, I thank you so much for saving Samarah. Only you know what could have happened had she passed on. God, I ask that you please protect her and heal her soul. So many people are jealous of her, yet she has done nothing to them. You created us out of your image, lord, so why do we have to suffer? 2 Corinthians 9 verse 8 says; “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” I have been faithful to you, lord. I may not be perfect, but I have tried to be close enough to perfect. The only perfect person amongst us right here, right now is the one lying in this bed. After what happened to me, I never thought I’d ever meet someone who would make me so whole again,

lord. I ask that you please shine your light upon her and bring her back to us, whole and safe and sound. Proverbs 16 verse 7 says; “When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” I have changed my ways, indeed Lord, surely this is enough to make my enemies be at peace with me. I have asked and pleaded for mercy and forgiveness from you. If this is my enemies’ way of punishing me, then take me instead. Phillipians 2 verse 13 says: “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” I plead with you, Lord, to work in this young woman’s body, in her spirit, revive her and heal her and bring her back to us. Forgive us for what we have done to you, for it was not our intention. We ask this in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen.”

While Lydia was reeling at the love Aaron was showing her, Collins had texted her as well saying that he was on his way to support her at the hospital. While she was trying to respond to him, she saw a very disturbing post on her Facebook News Feed.

Lydia: (shocked) “Oh, my goodness!”

Aaron: "What is it?"

Lydia: (reading) "I can't believe what I just saw. A fellow student has jumped to her death from the fifth floor of the Wits Female Res building about an half an hour ago. It is said to have been SRC member and third year student Mapule Mogashoa. Rest in peace Mapule. #MentalHealthIsReal."

Aaron: "Hmm, that's rather sad news."

He was unbothered and untouched of which Lydia noticed. Mapule wasn't very likeable, but for him to react that way? What was it that Aaron wasn't spilling?

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”

While nearly everyone on Campus was rather astonished by Mapule’s sudden death, her two best friends had become fearful of their lives. They felt as if Mapule was paying for her sins, which were her actions towards Samarah. Samarah was in a coma and Mapule was dead. So, two of the female Res mates had suffered a tragedy within a day. It was just a mess. Messages came flooding all over social media; some good and some very bad as they were all expressing their feelings about Mapule and how they knew her. Lydia was shocked as well, but rather unbothered. Her main concern was her best friend. Aaron on the other hand was very calm. He was patiently praying for his love to wake up so that he could cease the moment. He never took well to the news of their loved ones being hurt unprovoked. After he spent nearly an hour praying for her, he asked Lydia to stay and watch her though she had been sleeping on the couch opposite her bed.

Aaron: “Hey, Lydia, I’ll be right back, okay? I just need to make a quick phone call.”

Lydia: "Alright."

He quickly stepped outside and ensured that he was outside the hospital, where no one could really see him and dialed the one person's number who understood him the most. She knew that he never called more than once in a day, so his phone call meant it was serious.

Rachel: "Aaron, my son. What's happening? You never call me more than once in a day."

Aaron: (sigh) "Ma, she's in a coma."

Rachel: (shocked) "Who? Samarah?"

Aaron: "Hmm."

Rachel: "What happened?"

Aaron: "Some jealous bitch threw her down the stairs."

Rachel: "What?! Why?! Oh, my goodness! Will she be okay?"

Aaron: "She'll be fine. I took care of it."

Rachel: "Please don't tell me you did what I think you did."

Aaron: "I had no choice. I just got so upset."

Rachel: (angrily) "Aaron! We are God-fearing people! Now you went and killed the poor girl?!"

Aaron: "She was never going to learn her lesson had I not done it."

Rachel: "Aaron, I don't know what I did wrong with you. You just had to go and turn out like your father. You just had to go and do it again."

Aaron: "Don't make me out to be some sort of killer. I'm not like that. I just did what I had to do to protect her."

Rachel: "If you want her to be yours that badly, you need to surrender and submit yourself fully to God. You can't go around doing such things, Aaron."

Aaron: "I'm sorry, Ma. I know I promised not to ever do it again."

Rachel: "You need to come home so that we can sort this out. Otherwise, that girl's spirit will haunt you. You need to ask for forgiveness."

Aaron: "You taught me to ask for forgiveness when I am ready and when I feel sorry. At the moment, I don't feel sorry."

Rachel: (deep sigh) "God help me."

Aaron: "I have to go. Samarah needs me."

Rachel: "Fine, but call me as soon as you get home."

Aaron: "I know what to do. Bye."

He hung up and went back upstairs and found Lydia a little weary.

Aaron: "Is everything alright?"

Lydia: "Still, no response. We need to call her father. He needs to know."

Aaron: (shaking head) "Not right now. We can't have him disrupting her life without knowing her prognosis."

Lydia: "What if she doesn't wake up? Or what if she wakes up after a week?"

Aaron: "Then we'll wait. I should really get you back to Res. You need some sleep."

Lydia: (shaking head) "She needs me now. I can't leave her and besides, I don't think I can sleep at res knowing that Mapule died there."

Aaron: "You can sleep at my flat. I'll be here in the morning to check on her."

She didn't dispute. She was really exhausted and needed some sleep. She went with Aaron to his flat and he offered her one of his Tshirts.

Aaron: "You can take a shower. There are new towels and everything else you might need in there. You can wear this Tshirt and use the spare bedroom."

Lydia: "Thanks so much for everything. I really hope you're the real deal for my friend."

He was confident he was since he too had been having dreams of her. Samarah had no idea, though. Right after he did what he did to Mapule, he burned the clothes he was wearing and bathed in water with sea salt and jeyes fluid. He knew it wasn't going to be enough to lift the curse he had bestowed upon himself, but he had done it before, so it wasn't as bad as the first time. He struggled sleeping, so at about 5am, he got up and took a shower. He left a note for Lydia and headed straight to the hospital. He waited right next to Samarah's bed and began reading his Bible. He was a prayer warrior, despite his dark past and impetuous character. He stumbled across Jeremiah 17 verse 14; "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise." The same way Jeremiah prays to God in this verse, asking Him to save him from his enemies and heal him from his sufferings since he has been a faithful servant, Aaron believed that God would save Samarah from her suffering and pain. He was quite faithful and believed in God like no other. He prayed yet again.

Aaron: (praying) "Father God, I know I may not be worthy of your kindness, love, mercy nor grace

Lord, but all I ask is for you to deliver my Samarah. I have been a bad person, I do admit, though it was not purposefully. I admit my faults, my flaws and all my past mistakes and deeds. I still have no regrets, but I do Love you and loving you means surrendering to you and forgiving myself and others, while asking for forgiveness as well. For Jesus says “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a person sows, that shall they also reap” in Galatians 6 verse 7. For Jesus says; “There is more to forgiveness than just saying we’re sorry. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” in John 1 verse 9. I plead with you Lord, forgive me and forgive her and heal her, so that I too can be whole again.”

He hadn’t realized how much he had been crying until he felt a warm touch on his hand before he could even say Amen. He quickly opened his eyes and saw Samarah’s eyes opened. She couldn’t smile since she was still drowsy and had an oxygen mask covering her nose and mouth. He didn’t even want to hide his tears from her; he wanted her to see him in his most vulnerable form. He slowly removed the oxygen mask from her face and forgot about calling the doctors for a minute.

Aaron: (teary) “How are you feeling? Are you alright? Are you in any pain?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “My throat is just a bit dry. I am thirsty.”

He quickly jumped up and poured her a glass of water and provided a straw to aid her. He helped her sit up by elevating the bed and helped her sip the water slowly.

Samarah: (sigh) “Thank you. How long have I been here?”

Aaron: “Not that long, not even a full 24 hours, I’d say. This is a miracle.”

Samarah: (smiling) “No, you are the one who saved me. I followed your voice instead of the bright, white light and I came back to you.”

Aaron frowned a little as he was taken aback by that statement. “What does she mean because her mother is still alive?” he thought to himself.

Aaron: “What do you mean? What kind of woman?”

Samarah: “She was a beautiful woman; so beautiful that I could see my resemblance in her. She looked about middle-aged or so. A woman in my dreams who called me her child kept telling me to go back and just listen to your voice. I was lost. There were no corridors or anything. I guess that’s what heaven looks like.”

Aaron chuckled along with Samarah who was still speaking very slowly. He hadn’t even realized that the sun was already out by then. Lydia walked in and was in tears when she saw her friend awake and speaking.

Lydia: (relieved) “Oh, thank goodness, you’re awake! Aaron! Why didn’t you call me the minute she woke up?!”

Samarah: "Come on, now. I literally just woke up. Believe me, he would have called you."

She seemed a lot calmer than the Samarah she was before she fell down the stairs.

Lydia: "Do you remember what happened to you? Do you know why you're here?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes. Mapule pushed me down the stairs. I don't even know why she was always so mean to be, but somehow, she appeared in my dreams also dressed in white. She asked for forgiveness. She was in immense tears and I forgave her."

Lydia and Aaron both looked at one another before they could answer her.

Samarah: "What? What is it?"

Aaron: "Mapule is dead, Samarah. She jumped off the fifth floor."

Samarah was beyond shocked.

Samarah: "How? When did this happen? I don't understand."

Lydia: "She probably felt bad for nearly killing you, so she did us the honours by exiting this world herself and by choice."

Little did she know.

Samarah: "Lydia, that's such a mean thing to say."

Lydia: "Sorry, but it is the truth."

Samarah: (teary) "I can't believe it. I mean, I was literally conversing with her soul. Oh, no. Did she commit suicide because of me?"

That was not the turn Aaron was hoping it would take.

Aaron: “No, she did that out of choice. Don’t blame yourself. You are the victim here, remember that. You could have been disabled or have lost your memory. Who knows what the extent of the damage is that she has caused you?”

She knew he was right. Lydia had classes much like the both of them, and she begged them to go to their classes. Aaron ensured that he would let her lecturers know of her unfortunate state and get someone to take notes for her. He didn’t want to leave, but she forced him to. The doctor had assessed her and said that he still didn’t know the extent of the damages in terms of her memory, but physically she was fine. Lydia and Aaron had agreed that it was time to let her father know of the unfortunate incident that had befallen his daughter before the media got to him first. After their lectures, they headed straight to the hospital. It was about 1pm and it didn’t take long for Richard to appear along with Beatrice beside him.

Richard: (angrily) “How could you not have told us about my daughter?! Lydia! I entrusted you with her life!”

Lydia: “Sorry, Ntate (father), I was still in shock. I wanted to ensure that she was fine before calling you.”

He looked at Aaron and didn't like what he saw for reasons known to him.

Richard: “And who are you?”

Aaron: “Oh, Dumela Ntate (hello father). My name is Aaron. I am Samarah's friend.”

He took one look at his hand and refused to shake it. The Richard Samarah had gotten back before Varsity was once again a gone boy.

Beatrice: “You see?! I told you that she only came here to become nothing but a whore. I told you.”

Aaron gave her one look which sent chills down her spine. She wasn't sure if she knew him from somewhere or if it was just a deja-vu moment. All that was happening while Samarah was about to be brought back to her room after more X-rays were conducted by the doctors at Aaron's request. When she came back she was very happy to see Lydia and Aaron.

Richard: "Oh, ngwanaka (my child). I leave you for a good few weeks and you nearly die. I am so glad you're finally okay. Are you well? Is this hospital treating you right?"

As if he could even afford it. Samarah looked at him and then at the nervous Beatrice and frowned. The more she looked at them, the more she frowned.

Samarah: "I'm sorry, do I know you?"

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“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

While Richard was staring at his daughter in pure disbelief, along with Lydia, Aaron couldn't be bothered by it all. Beatrice was looking at the entire situation as if it was a dream come true, whilst forgetting the damage she had already caused.

Richard: (shocked) “My darling. It's me – your father.”

Samarah looked at him with so much shock in her eyes and the more he tried to touch or come near her, the more frightened she became.

Richard: “You really can't remember me? I am your dad.”

Aaron: “I think you need to step back a little bit. You're scaring her.”

Richard: "This is not your child! I don't even know you!"

Aaron was not backing down.

Aaron: "With all due respect, sir. Samarah has just suffered a really serious head injury. Perhaps you could speak to the doctor to get more insight on the situation."

Richard was getting angered by the minute, while Aaron was very calm.

Richard: (angrily) "Don't you tell me what to do! Who are you anyway?! Did you cause this?! Are you the reason this happened?!"

Lydia: "Papa (father), please. I don't think we should agitate Samarah even more than she already is. Aaron is our friend. He's been looking out for us ever since we got here."

While Richard was breathing heavily in frustration and eyeing Aaron in disgust, Beatrice saw it as a great opportunity. She gently placed her hand on his shoulder and spoke softly.

Beatrice: “My love, I honestly think we should listen to him. I mean, she remembers only Lydia and him amongst all of us, so surely her brain recognizes the both of them as good people to her. If anything, we should really be thankful that she had such good people surrounding her.”

She nearly sounded convincing – even for Lydia, but she wasn’t buying that act. If anything, she was concerned about how Samarah could have potentially been subjected to manipulation all over again at the hands of Beatrice. She too believed that there was no way she was her biological mother. What she failed to understand was as to why Richard was so understanding and even gave her another chance despite her leaving him destitute when he needed her most. She frowned in disbelief at the both of them but they weren’t bothered.

Richard: (breathing heavily) “Fine, but after speaking to that doctor, I’m getting MY child out of here!”

He spoke as if he could even afford it. He wasn't even grateful for the comfortable setting his daughter was in at that hospital. Aaron gave them both one firm look before Beatrice quickly wheeled him out of there.

Aaron: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, I just don't understand why he is so angry at me. I really don't know who he is."

Aaron: "Hey, it's okay. In due time you'll remember. Don't beat yourself up about it, okay? Lydia and I are here to ensure that everything goes well with you."

Samarah: "Okay. When will I leave this place?"

Aaron: "I think the doctor will allow you to leave soon. Once he has surely cleared you, then we will most definitely leave."

Samarah: "Are we going to go home?"

He was stuck there for a minute as to which home she was referring to.

Lydia: "Which home, Samarah?"

Samarah: (shrugging) "I don't even know which home I live in. I only remember Res and your place, Aaron. Surely you don't expect me to go and live there again. I can't. I refuse."

She looked really worried and seemingly frightened.

Aaron: "Okay. You and Lydia can stay in my building."

Lydia: "But, our bursaries have already paid our fees."

Aaron: "Don't worry about it. I'll sort it out."

Lydia had no idea whom he actually was, but she believed he was really capable of doing that. She entrusted him. He really wanted to be with Samarah, though he had other things to take care of.

Aaron: "Why don't you rest for a little while? I'll come check in on you a little later."

She nodded in agreement.

Samarah: "Okay, after I eat. I am feeling a little hungry."

The doctor walked in with Richard and Beatrice right behind him.

Aaron: "Perhaps we should wait for the doctor to assess you first, okay?"

She was very secure in Aaron's presence and she was very sure that he was there to protect and take care of her.

Doctor: "Oh, I am very sorry for coming back at this time. It's been rather busy. I wasn't even aware that my patient had woken up."

Aaron: "She just woke up not so long ago."

Doctor: "I see. How are you feeling, Samarah?"

Samarah: "I'm fine."

Doctor: "You had quite a bad fall, but luckily it is nothing too serious."

Richard: (angrily) "How can you say that when she can't even remember her own father?!"

Doctor: "It is pretty normal based on the concussion she suffered. She should be able to recover her memory in a few weeks if not months."

That really frustrated Richard even more knowing that someone else will be playing the important role he was supposed to have been playing in Samarah's life.

Richard: "This is insane! Can't you do anything?"

Doctor: "I am afraid not, although you could try another holistic approach such as hypnotherapy."

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, I am not going to get hypnotized. If you are really as important as you say to me, then I will remember you in due time."

Her father was beyond shocked but heartbroken more than anything.

Richard: "Oh, my daughter. Okay, then. I don't want to pressurize you, but I will have to keep in touch with you. At least allow me that so that I can help you regain your memory."

Samarah: (nodding) “Fine.”

Doctor: “You must be famished. I’ll get the kitchen staff to prepare you something.”

Aaron: “There’ll be no need. I’ll order her some food. She can’t possibly stomach hospital food after all the stress she endured.”

Richard: (angrily) “Look at him shouting orders as if he is her husband! Doctor, I want to transfer my daughter to another hospital!”

Doctor: “There’ll be no need, sir. Mr. Moeng already paid the bill for the duration of her entire hospital stay.”

That sent shock waves through Richard’s body as he really noted at that moment that Aaron was rich – something he wasn’t any more. He was left dumbstruck for a moment. Beatrice could see that he was temporarily humiliated, so she tried to save the moment.

Beatrice: “Love, he did something good for our daughter. She is in good hands. Come, let’s go and give her some space. You don’t want to overwhelm her, now do you?”

Richard shook his head briefly in disappointment, instead of properly thanking Aaron for paying the bill. He gave Samarah one sad look and said goodbye, as Beatrice wheeled him out of that ward with a heavy heart. She was all smiles deep within her heart because she knew that it was her time to shine and fully manipulate Samarah. Little did she know that it would have been impossible to do with Aaron by her side. Aaron might have been quite a lot and he surely had a lot of skeletons in his closet, but God brought him into Samarah’s life for a big reason. Once Richard left, Aaron stepped outside and ordered some food for both Samarah and Lydia. His phone kept ringing and he kept on ignoring it, until Lydia came out of the ward to check on him.

Lydia: “Hey, are you alright?”

Aaron: "Yes, I am. Actually I am glad you came out here. Can you do me a favour and watch her for me for a while? I need to go do something at home really quickly."

Lydia: "Okay, are you going to be long? Because I need to go change my clothes."

Aaron: "I'll sort that out for you as promised. I won't be long. Just an hour, two tops."

Lydia: "Okay."

Aaron: "Thanks. I owe you one."

They said their goodbyes while Aaron rushed outside the hospital to answer his phone.

Aaron: "Hello."

Rachel: "Oh, is that how you answer your mother's calls now?!"

Aaron: “Eish (Oh), I am very sorry, Mama. I was just pre-occupied. I am however on my way.”

Rachel: “You know, this thing of sending children to white schools! Le re boledisa sekgoa bjanong (you speak English with us now)! Bona mo (Listen here), Ntate Buda (Mr. Buda) has been waiting for you for over an hour now!”

Aaron: “I apologize dearly, mother. I am on my way.”

He hung up before she could even say anything more. Knowing his mother, he would have never heard the end of it. He needed to have been there an hour ago already, but because he cared about Samarah, he didn’t want Richard and Beatrice to leave her confused. He quickly started the car and off he went to his home in Ferndale, which was actually not very far from Samarah’s house. That would have explained to someone, why he knew her and her family so well, particularly Beatrice. He knew her like an open book – she was just unaware. Once he got home, he rushed in without removing his shoes. His mother was a serious neat freak and everyone who entered her house had to remove their shoes and leave them right outside the door. She believed that people carried

the evil they stepped on from outside and she didn't need that brought into her house.

Rachel: (angrily) "Hey! You know my rules!"

She was pointing at his shoes and he immediately removed them and went back to place them right outside the doorway.

Aaron: "Kopa tshwarelo, Mme (I am very sorry, Ma)."

Rachel was standing right next to Ntate Buda, their family traditionalist. She was a pastor – yes, but also a firm believer in culture and protecting oneself.

Rachel: "Hmm, Ntate (Mr) Buda, this is my tenacious son. I believe you have met him before."

Ntate Buda: (nodding) "Yes, we have met before. Do you still remember me, son?"

Aaron was raised well. He spoke to Ntate Buda without staring him in the eye.

Aaron: (looking down) "Yes, sir. I still remember you."

Ntate. Buda: "You may look at me, son."

He slowly raised his face and stared at him. Ntate Buda shook his head almost immediately, making Aaron ponder his head.

Aaron: (frowning) "Is something wrong?"

Ntate Buda: (chuckling briefly) "Hmm, your short temper will get you into trouble. Tell me, was it really necessary to kill that girl?"

Aaron: "I didn't technically kill her. She slipped when I pushed her."

Ntate Buda: (shaking head) "Rachel, this one is truly his father's son."

Rachel: "No, please don't say that. He cannot possibly take his father's ways."

Ntate Buda: "Well, he is not entirely his father, but as I have said his short temper will get him into trouble. It will cost you dearly. You will end up losing to your least expected opponent."

It was as if Aaron's mind just switched on that very moment.

Aaron: "Please, don't tell me about Langa."

Ntate Buda: (laughing) "You're a mind reader I see."

Aaron: (shaking head) "No, I just know that you're talking about him. He should not even be considered an opponent."

Ntate Buda just shook his head once again and shrugged in disbelief. In his eyes, Aaron was rather cocky, much like his father. No one could beat him, but then, he was beaten by his very own son – Aaron.

Rachel: “Please, Ntate (Sir), can you help him?”

Ntate Buda: “Thankfully for you, your ancestors are rather in favour of you, Aaron. They really appreciate what you did for your mother – saving her from your father. But, I must say that Samarah’s ancestors do not take lightly to violence and murder – no matter how much you love her.”

That was enough to make Aaron panic.

Aaron: “But I really love her, Ntate (sir).”

Ntate Buda: (raised eyebrow) “Oh? Now you seem afraid all of a sudden? What happened to the fearless, cocky boy I saw walking in just now?”

Aaron: (sigh) “I apologize, Ntate (sir). It was really not my intention to come across as cocky or rude. It is just that I really love Samarah and I don’t want anything standing in the way of that. I do admit I went a little overboard with Mapule, but had I not gotten rid of her, she would have kept on tormenting Samarah. She is truly a gem, someone who is yet to realize her worth in this life. I couldn’t possibly allow someone like Mapule to stay alive and hinder her progress.”

Ntate Buda: “I can see that you really love her, my son. The question is that are you truly going to go around killing everyone who wrongs your wife?”

Aaron shook his head in shame?

Ntate Buda: “Then let this be the last. Remember, I am a peace maker – not a voter for killing.”

Aaron: “Yes, Ntate (sir).”

Rachel: "So? Can you help?"

Ntate Buda: "You know I can, but it won't come cheap."

Rachel: "Money is not a problem. Aaron will pay for himself, now won't you?"

Aaron: (sigh) "Yes, Ma."

Ntate Buda: "Good. Let's get started then. Rachel, you may leave us."

She knew not to ask as she had done that before. Once she closed the bedroom door, Ntate Buda could finally speak at ease. He looked at the worried Aaron and started laughing, causing Aaron to have a frustrated look on his face.

Aaron: "Uh, am I missing something, Ntate?"

Ntate Buda: (laughing) "You still don't see it, do you?"

Aaron shook his head in confusion.

Ntate Buda: “You really don’t remember the kind of man your grandfather was like?”

Aaron: “I do.”

Ntate Buda: “What did I tell you the last time I saw you?”

Aaron: “You told me a lot of things, Ntate. It is quite a lot to remember.”

Ntate Buda: “Don’t patronize me, son. You know very well you have photographic memory. What was the last thing I told you about your grandfather?”

Aaron: “You said to me that I am exactly like him and I am bound to do what he mostly would have done in nearly every situation.”

Ntate Buda: “See? You are not stupid. Exactly that. He is not angry at you – he is actually far from it.”

Aaron: (frowning) “You have kind of lost me, Ntate. You just said – “

Ntate Buda: (interrupting) “Yes, I know what I said, but I only did that so that your mother could be at ease. You know very well how she feels about these things.”

They both started laughing together once Aaron realized that Ntate Buda actually lied to Rachel.

Ntate Buda: “Not so loud, she might hear us having fun and spoil it.”

They laughed again.

Aaron: “What exactly do they think of what I did? I mean, I am not proud of it, you know, but I just pushed her a little.”

Ntate Buda: “We both know that you did more than just “push her a little”. She was going to kill herself in any case. Yes, what you did was not a very good choice, but your grandfather spoke to the rest of the ancestors on your behalf soon after you did it. Remember now, he is a very strong ancestor. You need to appease him, though, and it doesn’t mean that just because he is your guardian that you need to do every wrong thing under the sun.”

Aaron: (smiling) “Please tell me what he thinks of my Samarah.”

Ntate Buda started making some funny sounds and burped. Aaron knew that whenever he started doing that, he was channeling spirit and that someone close to him was coming through.

Ntate Buda: (groaning) “Yes, my grandson. It is I, your grandfather.”

Ntate Buda's voice had suddenly changed and he looked down. He was not himself as spirit had taken over his body. Aaron was already used to that since he had been through it countless times before.

Aaron: "Dumela Ntate (Greetings, Father)."

He greeted looking down. His grandfather taught him well.

Ntate Buda: "You may speak to me with ease, my son."

Aaron: "I know I have wronged you. Forgive me."

Ntate Buda: "We both know you know that it was wrong, but you are not sorry about it. I sometimes ask myself why God made you exactly like me in this sense."

Aaron smiled briefly.

Ntate Buda: "I see you want to know what I think of your lady?"

Aaron nodded.

Ntate Buda: “You should know by now based on the dreams you always have. I told you before I died that I’d protect you and that you were always my favourite grandchild. I chose her for you. I went as far as approaching her kraal members, but this relationship won’t be easy for you.”

Aaron: (frowning) “What do you mean? Please don’t tell me it is all because of Langa.”

Ntate Buda: “Did she tell you about the dream she had of you?”

Aaron: (frowning) “No, she didn’t.”

Ntate Buda: “It will be hard for her to explain it now since she doesn’t remember everyone in her life.”

Aaron: “Do you mean that she doesn’t remember him either?”

Ntate Buda: “Yes, that is exactly what I mean.”

Aaron was about to smile in excitement when his grandfather’s spirit just burst his bubble.

Ntate Buda: “Don’t get too excited. As Buda told you, your temper will land you in hot water. You have found someone pure – the purest of them all, but she has her own troubles, troubles that go back from her family and how she was born.”

Aaron: “I can fix that surely, right?”

Ntate Buda: “You can only do so much. Once we find her mother and connect her spirit with hers, then all shall be well.”

Aaron: “How do I do that?”

Ntate Buda: “Sadly, she has to be the one to find her, although you will find her mother first. You will be fine, I know you will.”

Aaron: “But, where do I start?”

And just like that, Ntate Buda came back to reality and Aaron’s granfather’s spirit had left his body.

Aaron: “Just like that? He leaves me with a question mark just like that?”

Ntate Buda: (laughing) “Humans. You never try to at least understand how spirit works. The answers lie before you. You just have to open your eyes.”

Aaron was still speechless and confused, but he allowed himself to listen to Ntate Buda for once and allowed him to work. He performed a ritual for him, by cleansing him and pleading for forgiveness from the ancestors, though they weren’t really angry at him. It was to ensure that they wouldn’t turn against him for what he did to Mapule. At the end of the day, he did take a life. It took longer than expected, about two hours and he was growing anxious. Once he was done, Ntate Buda had to leave. Rachel asked him to have some dinner with her, but he

asked to be excused as he needed to do some things. She understood and let him be. He drove off and hurried back to the hospital, where Lydia and Samarah were chatting away as if she wasn't in a coma just hours before then. He rushed into her ward and found them laughing.

Aaron: "Oh, I came here so fast thinking you'd be angry at me or something."

Lydia: (laughing) "Why on earth would we be?"

Aaron: "I don't know, I mean this is a hospital and I did leave you two alone."

Samarah: "Don't be silly. You had things to do. You can't possibly be around us all the time. And besides, you only got to know us just yesterday, so how can we expect so much from you?"

Aaron saw so much change in Samarah – good change that is. She was a lot more confident. That bump on her head did

her good because she was slowly breaking out of her shell. He found himself briefly smiling at her as she smiled back in awe.

Lydia: “Yoh, aowa (oh, no). If you two are going to go all lovey-dovey on me this time, I swear, I am going to lose it.”

They both laughed.

Aaron: “I just came to see if you two were okay before rushing back to res to get your things.”

Samarah: “What things?”

Aaron: “Oh, I thought you two decided to take me up on my offer to get you guys a flat near mine. The one next to mine is vacant so to speak.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Aaron, how will we possibly pay you back? I mean, you paid my hospital bill and now you want to pay for the flat as well? No, Mr. Moeng. We can’t let you do that.”

Aaron had to come up with a suggestion they'd believe.

Aaron: "Don't be silly. I have connections at Wits. I'll get your bursary to refund you guys and pay for the flat. It will take about a week tops."

Lydia: (frowning) "I've never heard of that."

Aaron: "There's nothing a little money can't fix. So, are you two in?"

Samarah: "On one condition."

Aaron: "Name it."

Samarah: "Get the doctor to discharge me right this instant – and Lydia and I will be moving into your building tonight!"

She seemed so fiery, so confident. Aaron wasn't too sure if he should be happy or reluctant because her real self had potential of coming back to her once her memory did too. All in all, he was delighted to see that side of Samarah. She smiled often and wasn't so afraid to look him in the eye any more. If anything – the past 48 hours had been really wonderfully scary for him. He enjoyed seeing that beautiful flower blossom in front of him – despite the challenges they were yet to face.

“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

As promised, Aaron managed to get Samarah discharged right after getting her and Lydia the flat right next door to his. They had no idea how he managed to get them in there and out of Res so quickly, as he even showed them proof of the bursary redirecting payment towards the flat they'd be staying in. He even managed to move all their clothes and belongings from Res to their new flat in just under three hours. How he managed to do that – no one knew. Most people just assumed that it was the money that opened doors for him like that, but they had no idea how much money he actually had. While Richard was drowning in his own frustration – more especially since Samarah was not answering his phone calls. He was torn between having to keep calling or having to let her be, while Beatrice was reeling in the new situation.

It was going to be hard for Richard to adapt – more especially since he had hardly been an active role in his daughter's life for the recent few days. Samarah was enjoying her time surrounded by those she loved and cared for, and in turn,

Aaron got to introduce her to his world – the world of prayer. He had done a lot of things, but prayer always remained his number one duty of the day as his mother had always taught him. It saved him from becoming a savage himself and he intended on roping her in and finally telling her how he felt about her. While Lydia and Samarah had expected that they'd be moving into an empty flat, they were quite shocked to find the flat fully furnished, with rather neutral colours; black and lime and a few red objects around. It even had a few cutlery and a brand new bed. While they were still trying to get a new feel of the flat, they were rather stunned to see that everything was quite new.

Lydia: (surprised) “Aowa (no), le ge ba reng (I don't mean to be funny), but everything in here looks and smells new too.”

Samarah: “I second that. Aaron, what on earth did you do?”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Do you guys like it?”

Lydia: (frowning) “I don't know what to say, I mean, we just asked you to help us move out from Res – we didn't ask for an

entirely new flat. I mean, don't get me wrong, I flipping love this, but wow. I don't think it is right."

Aaron: (frowning) "Did I overstep my mark?"

Samarah: "No, what she means is that it is just too much, man. Why on earth would you spend so much money on us? We're only students. How on earth will we pay you back?"

Aaron: (laughing) "Did I ask you for a repayment of all this?"

They both shook their heads.

Aaron: "I did this out of pure love, for my woman and her best friend. I mean, unless you don't want this – I can take it all back and we can all be comfortable."

Lydia: "No! No! No! Don't be silly, now. I absolutely love this. While you guys sort your feelings out, I'll be checking out the rest of the flat."

She briskly walked away while they were left talking.

Samarah: “Aaron, please don’t get me wrong. I absolutely love and appreciate what you do for me – actually I appreciate all of it.”

Aaron: “But?”

Samarah: “But I don’t want to find myself in a compromising situation where I will have to pay you back or something.”

Aaron was a bit offended by her statement, but he got where she was coming from. So, he held both her hands and requested that they sat down on the couch.

Aaron: “Samarah, I know you’re not used to such. You’re not used to guys spoiling the living daylights out of you. You are not used to being showered with love so much. Okay, I admit it. I might have gone overboard, but I didn’t want you to move into a flat without any furniture. Perhaps I should have spoken

to you first about it, but I just wanted to surprise you. If you really don't like it all, I can take it back. I just did all this for you – so that you could be comfortable around here.”

Samarah: (smiling) “I really appreciate that, really, Aaron. I do like it – I mean, I absolutely love it, but I don't want you to think that you have to buy my love.”

Aaron: (raising eyebrows) “Does that mean you love me?”

Samarah: (chuckling) “I never said that, Mr. Moeng. I mean, I don't recall you asking me out.”

Aaron: (laughing) “What if I did and you just don't remember?”

Samarah: “Then it is your duty to surprise me and sweep me off my feet all over again. You're good at surprises, aren't you? So – surprise me.”

It was at that point that Aaron felt Samarah confirm her feelings for him. He thought that it was rather late for them to

start cooking, so he opted to get them takeouts. Lydia came out of the bedroom and started browsing through the fridge.

Lydia: (surprised) “Yoh (oh)! Even the fridge is fully loaded! Sammy, mo o tshwere lepara sesi (you’ve got yourself a keeper here)! I’m in the mood to go out, you know, distress a little. I mean we need to celebrate my friend coming back from the dead, don’t you think?”

Samarah: (smiling) “Lydia, don’t you get tired of celebrating every little thing?”

Lydia: “Life itself is an excuse to celebrate, girl. You know me – I don’t waste a moment. I wouldn’t even dare. So? A re we game?”

Aaron: “I’m up for it if you are, love.”

By love, he was talking to the blushing Samarah.

Samarah: "Okay then. But please, can we just not stay up until late because I have a lot of catching up to do."

Aaron: "Yes, mam."

Lydia: "Good, I'll tell Collin to meet us there."

Aaron: "Why don't you just tell him we'll pick him up on our way there?"

Lydia: "And risk catching feelings? I dare not."

Samarah: "You act like you don't even like this guy, but deep down you know you do."

Lydia: "Baby steps, girlfriend, baby steps. He still has big shoes to fill, you know."

Samarah: (laughing) "You're just being difficult. You've been single for like two years."

Lydia: “Look who’s talking. Let’s go already. My throat is already drying up just by talking about this guy.”

They laughed altogether as they walked downstairs to the parking lot. Once they got in, they had a great drive to the mall. Indeed, Lydia insisted on Collin driving himself to the restaurant. Unlike Samarah, he insisted that the man who’d win her heart would sweat for it. She had already been burnt badly by her highschool sweetheart. By the time the three of them arrived at the mall, Collin had already been waiting for them. He greeted Lydia with a gentle kiss on the cheek and a hug. He was very polite, charming and incredibly neat. He was quite light and also tall, just like Aaron. Lydia was not really into light guys, but well, it is never a bad thing to try something new. Lydia was so comfortable around Collin, that seeing them together seemed rather natural. They walked together hand in hand into the restaurant

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and Aaron stared Samarah deep in her eyes, and opened his arm for her to take.

Aaron: (smiling) “Shall we?”

She smiled right back as he took her arm in his and they walked in together. They sat down at their table and started their orders.

Lydia: (excitedly) "I'll have a Savanna, please."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Aowa (no), Collin. O tshwere bothata mo (you have got yourself a serious problem here. My friend drinks, hey."

Lydia: (laughing) "Just like you, he loves me just the way I am. Don't you, babe?"

Samarah smiled as she stared at how cosy they seemed with one another. She said they weren't dating, but yet they had pet names for one another. One couldn't even tell that they were still in the "wooing" stages as she mentioned.

Collin: (laughing) "Of course I do. Happy wife, happy life."

They chuckled together and gave one another a brief kiss on the lips. It looked so nice, as Samarah was still afraid to express herself with Aaron. Their relationship was still new and had room for development, though they clicked.

Aaron: "Well, I'll have a glass of Chardonnay."

Waiter: "And for you, miss?"

He was referring to Samarah.

Samarah: "Oh, I'll have an appetizer."

Waiter: "Very well, then."

Collin: "So, Samarah. You really don't drink?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No. I've never really enjoyed the taste of alcohol. I've tried a few and well – they were just not my thing."

Lydia: “Ah, baby. She means that she has tried cheap stuff. Some men have no quality, wa bona (you see)?”

Colling laughed with her and Samarah took no offence though she knew she was talking about Langa.

Aaron: “Well, I don’t mind the fact that my wife doesn’t drink. As you said, happy wife, happy life.”

Collin: “That’s also true, but then, what will happen should she feel like she would want to drink one day, after many many years together?”

Aaron: “I’ll still love her with every fibre of my being.”

The conversation flowed, and they spoke of one another and one another’s girlfriends as if they were already within the marriage stage. If anything, Samarah was content. The subtle movements Aaron made and brushes on her skin soothed her and put her at ease to the point where she would occasionally

brush his arm and put her hand on his thigh. Once she noticed that she had done that unwittingly and removed it, he carefully placed her hand right back on his thigh and brushed it gently. It was as if they were communicating telepathically while conversing with their friends. A few drinks down and Lydia and Collin were all over each other, but in a very elusive way. Besides their over indulging public displays of affection, they were whispering in one another's ears and kissing every now and then. Aaron was a very intimate lover; he craved that so much yet he didn't want Samarah to run off. He could sense that she yearned for that devotion as well; her body was speaking to him and he could sense her longing for affection by her rise in temperature each time those two would kiss. She would occasionally look away and smile all to herself.

Aaron: (whispering) "Are you alright?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

Aaron: "I think we should pay the bill and go out for a walk. Would that be okay with you?"

She smiled excitedly. It was exactly what she needed. After their succulent meal, they walked out hand in hand, right behind Collin and Lydia.

Lydia: (clearing throat) "I think I'll see you guys a bit later on. I'm taking a drive with Collin."

Samarah: "Okay, just don't get lost."

Lydia: "I wouldn't dare. Bye."

Collin: "It was lovely to meet you guys. We should do this again some time."

Lydia: "Collin, a re ye (Let's go) before I change my mind!"

She playfully pulled him towards her and they walked away laughing at each other.

Aaron: (shaking head) "Is she always this crazy?"

Samarah: “Crazy is an understatement. So, where to?”

Aaron: “To see the moon.”

Samarah frowned in confusion but decided to go with the flow. They walked to Aaron’s car and drove to the roof top parking of the mall. He switched off the ignition and stared at her. He got out of the car and opened her car door for her.

Samarah: (chuckling) “Life is such a movie in your eyes, Aaron.”

Aaron: “Well, love, if you allow me – “I’ll give you a life of a movie star.”

She smiled as they sat on the bonnet of his Golf 7. He looked up and she followed.

Aaron: "You know what they say about the galaxy? It has billions of stars and they all have a purpose. Can you imagine what the night sky would be like if the stars weren't around?"

Samarah: "No. I think it would be rather bland and no one would even have the time to stare at the sky."

Aaron: "Can you imagine the sky without the moon?"

Samarah: "Oh, no. I think we'd all go into panic mode should that be the case."

Aaron: (laughing) "Well, then. I think that the moon and the stars compliment one another. You see, the moon is the protector of the stars, while the stars make the night beautiful. Without the stars, the moon most probably wouldn't even exist and without them, the night would be something horrific to look at."

Samarah: "Wow, very poetic of you, don't you think, Mr. Moeng?"

Aaron: “What can I say? You bring out the best in me, Samarah Moloji.”

He said that as he gently held her hand and looked into her eyes.

Aaron: “Sam, I have honestly never met anyone as beautiful as you. You are what I would call the star that brightens the darkness in my life. You see, before I met you, I was in a very dark hole in my life. It took me quite some time to be the bubbly guy you see before you. Even my mother could not get me to break out of my shell again – hence she forced me to come to varsity and study. Little did I know that I’d meet you. You are such a pure soul, Samarah. Ever since I met you, my heart has been dancing instead of beating; I have been dreaming of you each and every night. You make me want to strive to be the best version of myself. I know, you have been through quite a lot, but I’d like to be the man that helps you get out of that dark pit you have been thrown into. God has been there in my life, but after meeting you, I finally saw what God meant when He said; “Trust in me, and I’ll give you all the desires of your heart.” I know, I might sound and seem cheesy

and seem as if I most probably say this to every girl I meet, but I'd like you to please give me a chance. Please allow me to show you what love really is. Allow me to let you feel love and not just see it; experience it and believe it. I guess what I am saying is; I'd like you to be my girlfriend. Do you agree?"

Samarah: (teary) "Yes. Yes, I'll be your girlfriend, Mr. Moeng."

He smiled and walked closer to her. Their hearts were beating a lot faster than usual. He leaned down towards her and gently placed his lips on hers. Their hearts instantly intertwined, and their souls became one. They were both overwhelmed with fear, excitement, adrenaline and serenity all at once. It was a beautiful thing to experience and for Aaron to finally let go of all his fears. And just like that, they finally belonged to one another and were officially a couple.

“or nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.”

The following morning, Samarah was awoken by the loud noise her alarm clock always made. She wasn't instantly annoyed as usual and didn't take forever to get out of bed. She was excited; so much that she hardly slept. One of the obvious reasons for her excitement was her new relationship with Aaron, but the other was because she had dreamt of her late twin, Amarah. She looked as beautiful as ever, much like her. Though she was lighter, she looked just like Samarah and looked as if she had grown since she looked exactly Samarah's age. Spirit grows – though people are not aware of it. The dead do grow in spirit and much like children who die while young, they grow up in the spiritual world. The previous night, she and Aaron went back to her flat after their beautiful kiss and spent another hour talking.

He finally let her be and allowed her to catch up on some sleep before another day back on Campus. Right after her alarm clock woke her, she saw a beautiful message from her new boyfriend. “Good morning, future Mrs. Moeng. I can't wait to

see you again. I hope you slept well, as for me – my heart can't get the thought of you out of it. I can't wait to see you. Xoxo Your Future Husband." She smiled to herself. It is always amazing how one never gets exhausted when in love. She got up and noticed that indeed Lydia didn't sleep home as she went to check in her room. She went to the bathroom and did her business. Once she was finally dressed, she received a text from Lydia herself. "Don't worry about me. I'll meet you on Campus after lectures. Love you!" She took her bag and as she was about to leave, she found Aaron right at the door about to knock.

Aaron: (chuckling) "Sorry, I hope I didn't rattle you."

Samarah: "Oh, no, not at all. I was about to leave as you can see."

Aaron: "Well then, good morning, pretty lady."

He gave her a quick peck on the cheek.

Aaron: "Slept well?"

Samarah: (nodding) "And you?"

Aaron: "Oh, like a baby. You should invade my dreams more often."

Samarah: (blushing) "Careful now. If I keep on doing that, you might never focus on your studies."

Aaron: (laughing) "You motivate me to keep going so that I can give you the world. Please, do keep invading my dreams."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I shall keep doing so, at your request, sir."

Aaron: "Shall we go?"

Samarah: "Yes, please."

Aaron proudly held her by the hand without a care in the world as they walked to the lift heading down to the parking lot. They were wrapped in their own world, and had forgotten completely about the outside world. Mapule's memorial was that evening, but Aaron had already ensured that Samarah was going to be busy with him catching up on her studies. With Lydia being busy with Colin, she had absolutely nothing to worry about as Samarah was in good hands. As they were about to drive out, they met Ntate Tau right at the gate. It had been a while for Sam.

Ntate Tau: (smiling) "Dumela masebotsana (Good morning, beautiful lady)."

He gave her such a broad smile, it was impossible for her to not return the smile.

Samarah: "Dumela Ntate Tau (Hello). Le kae na (how are you)?"

Ntate Tau: "I am much better now that I am seeing you."

Aaron: “Hao (Goodness), Ntate Tau. I am also still here, aren't I?”

Ntate Tau: “Butle pele wena (Wait a minute you). Mona ke wa eng (what's with the jealousy)?”

His relationship with Aaron intrigued Samarah so much, she couldn't stop laughing.

Ntate Tau: “You know, whenever I see you smiling, my heart jumps for joy. You are such a blessing for this young man. I do hope and pray that God keeps you for him.”

Samarah: (frowning) “I do hope you're not saying that because he asked you to, Ntate (sir).”

Ntate Tau: “A man as old as me, child. Why on earth would I listen to this thin stick of a man?”

They both laughed, leaving Aaron shaking his head in amusement. He took Ntate Tau as a father and loved him dearly.

Ntate Tau: “Well, then. I do hope you’re doing something about those dreams you always have, my dear.”

Samarah was a bit alarmed by his statement, while Aaron was not so much worried. Though he was dying to know what her dreams were actually about and what they meant.

Samarah: (surprised) “What do you mean, Ntate?”

Ntate Tau: “Nothing. I just mean that you should take all your dreams seriously. You’re one of a kind. One day, I’ll tell you all about it. I shall not keep you any longer. You’re getting late for class.”

Samarah nodded in confusion and wonder, while Aaron greeted him goodbye. After a minute or so, Aaron could see that she

was still confused and trying to wrap her head around the entire conversation.

Aaron: "What are you wondering about so much?"

Samarah: "Oh, nothing. Is Ntate Tau a special person?"

Aaron: "We're all special, love."

Samarah: "I mean, is he like, gifted or something?"

Aaron: "Oh, you mean that."

He knew exactly what she meant, he just didn't want to give it all away.

Aaron: "Yes, he is. He is a seer."

Samarah: (surprised) "I've never met one before. So that means he can see the future or something?"

Aaron: "Well, he can see the past, present and future. At times he has visions just by looking at you."

Samarah was intrigued.

Samarah: "Sounds quite interesting."

Aaron: "Are you telling me that your father never took you to a seer or a sangoma, a prophet or something like that?"

Samarah: (shrugging) "I wouldn't know, since I don't remember much of my life."

Aaron: "I see. But surely you do remember something or someone. What about your late sister?"

He was secretly testing if she did indeed remember her. That way he could start tapping into her mind and help her heal.

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes. I remember her very well. Amarah. She was always the bubbly one. Quite feisty too.”

Aaron: “Hmm, but she passed away years ago.”

Samarah: “Yes. Odd, isn’t it? I mean, I can’t recall my own father and mother, as they claim to be but I can remember my own sister who passed on when I was ten. Those two might not be as important to me as I’d like to think.”

Aaron: “Doesn’t it worry you?”

Samarah: “Which part?”

Aaron: “That you can’t remember them?”

Samarah: “Oh, no. Something tells me that you’re a lot more important to me than they are right now. I don’t know why, but that’s how I feel.”

He was settled enough by that answer. He kissed her hand before parking his car. They arrived on Campus.

Aaron: “I’ll see you later then. You still remember your way around the place, don’t you?”

Samarah: “Don’t be silly. I might have forgotten a few people, but I do remember Campus. Now, leave. I’ll be fine.”

He was reluctant to leave her, but not doing so would have resulted in her using him as her crutch – which he didn’t want.

Aaron: “Okay then. Call or text me as soon as you feel lost or uncomfortable.”

Samarah: “I can’t do that all the time. Believe me, I’ll be alright.”

He gave her another kiss – this time on the lips before they parted ways. Samarah was quite confident within herself – despite all eyes being on her. She thought that they were all stunned to see her alive and out of a coma, but they were actually reeling and quite shocked over the news that they had seen trending on Aaron’s Instagram story, which she hadn’t seen as yet. She never added him anywhere on social media. She went about her business, though she was surprised at how everyone was now greeting her by name. She tried to recall but then she remembered that she wasn’t that famous before she went into a coma. After her lecture, her lecturer gave them rather surprising news.

Lecturer: “Oh, first years, before I forget. We have the annual Wits Pageant coming up and it is compulsory for all first year’s to partake. Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Wits will be chosen and a small monetary prize will be up for grabs. You can get a pamphlet on your way out.”

She was so bored by the idea. She never really liked pageants because she was never thin. She was hardly comfortable in her own body and had resorted to wearing jeans and Tshirts. She

used to love dresses back in the day, but she slowly had outgrown them, though they were her first love. She didn't bother to take a pamphlet for herself as she wasn't planning on participating, but Aaron had other ideas. She saw him waving at her just outside the lecture hall.

Aaron: "Love, have you seen this?"

He showed her the pamphlet.

Aaron: "Our lecturer told us all about it. Apparently us first years are compelled to participate."

Samarah: "Oh, that. Yes, ours also told us about it."

Aaron: "You don't seem too excited about it."

Samarah: "That's because I'm not going to do it."

Aaron: "Oh, I see what this is."

Samarah: “What is what?”

Aaron: “Never mind. Let’s go back to the flat and grab a meal.”

Samarah: “What about my school work?”

Aaron: “We’ll do it together once we’re done. Even smart women need to eat, right?”

She agreed and off they went. Ntate Tau greeted them once again and they went to Samarah’s flat for a change. He cooked for the both of them; he made a very quick meal – chicken risotto. She was in the kitchen along with him assisting and having a good time. After they ate, they got started with their books and helped one another. Aaron was unwittingly and rather willingly spending more time at Samarah’s flat than at his own flat. They enjoyed it that way. Once they were done with their school work, they began bonding all over again, over a movie.

Samarah: “Hmm, this guy just decided to hide such a big secret from the woman he loves and he claims to want her back? I mean, just like that?”

Aaron: (frowning) “Is that a bad thing? I mean, I get that he lied to her, but he did that to protect her. So, all he has done for her gets overruled? Just like that?”

Samarah: “I’m not overruling anything. I mean, I just feel that he could have been a lot more considerate, you know. If he really loved her, he would have been honest with her from the start. If she didn’t get along with what he would have told her, then it wouldn’t have been meant to be. I just think that sometimes people are so afraid of facing reality, that being in a phantom relationship is better than nothing for them.”

Aaron was becoming increasingly worried by his own truth.

Aaron: “I see. So, if I kept a secret from you because I was afraid to lose you and you find out about it. Would you forgive me?”

Samarah: “It depends; I mean, if I were to hear about it from someone else, it would probably take a lot of time to forgive you. But if you choose to tell me, then I would forgive you – no matter how hectic the secret.”

Aaron was a little relieved by her response and he sighed in relief.

Samarah: “Why does it seem as if you’re taking this a little too personal? Is there a big secret you’re hiding from me?”

Aaron: (chuckling nervously) “Oh, no. If I was, you’d have no choice but to forgive me.”

Samarah: “Oh, really? On what grounds?”

Aaron: (softly) “On the grounds of love...”

He went closer to her, leaning in with his warm breath tainting her lips. He gently kissed her and she responded without hesitation. They kissed yet again, embracing one another with

both their hands. It felt truly magical, considering how long they had both last kissed anyone for that matter. They grew increasingly hot, with fluctuating temperature sending mixed signals all over their bodies. Her nipples felt hardened – and so did his penis. While kissing her, he gently rubbed himself in between her legs, causing her to moan in his mouth. He pulled away from the kiss to catch a breath and gently kissed her neck. She responded by grabbing his Tshirt and nearly ripping it apart. After another kiss, he pulled away and stopped. His eyes were burning with passion.

Aaron: (breathing profoundly) “I’m sorry...”

Samarah: (hyperventilating) “What for?”

Aaron: “I didn’t mean to get so carried away...”

Samarah: “It’s okay. We both participated in that, didn’t we?”

Aaron: (nodding) “Yes, but I don’t want you to find yourself in a situation where you feel forced by me to do something you don’t want to do.”

Samarah: “Aaron, I have never felt like this about anyone. I might not recollect anything of my past, but what I can say is that I doubt I have ever felt like this ever before. I might be a virgin, but if anything and should the time come for me to choose – I’d choose you. Over and over again, I’d choose you.”

He smiled and gently kissed her forehead as he pulled her head closer to his chest and allowed her to put her head there. Deep within his mind he was enthralled with the thought of losing her over his secrets. He had many, but one would most definitely cause her to run away from him

according to him. He needed to figure out a way to tell her as soon as possible and he needed to do it fast.

After his intense moment with Samarah his mind drifted away and thankfully Lydia had come back from Colin’s arms to spend time with her friend. That was the perfect moment for Aaron to escape and go back to his flat. He decided to give his mother the usual daily call.

Rachel: “Yes, my son. How are you doing today?”

Aaron: “I’m fine, Ma, how are you doing?”

Rachel: “I’m alright. I see that girl is keeping you quite busy. You hardly even call nowadays.”

Aaron: “Eish (oh), I am sorry, Ma.”

Rachel: (chuckling) “I’m just teasing. I know what young love does to a person – especially when you both click. Tell me, when am I meeting her?”

Aaron: “Mara (but) Ma, we haven’t even been dating for a week and you already want to meet her. You’ll make her run away from me.”

Rachel: (laughing) “Trust me, every girl wants to meet their mother in law.”

Aaron: "I don't think she'd want to meet you once she finds out."

Rachel: "How will you know if you have never told her?"

Aaron: "It's not so easy, Ma."

Rachel: "Nothing is easy, my son. The first kill is always the hardest. You did what you had to do."

Aaron: "You are making it sound so easy to do."

Rachel: "That's my job."

Aaron: "And if she finds out about my age? What then?"

Rachel: "Age is just a number, Aaron. You had your reasons. And honestly speaking, if she can't understand why you did

what you did then it would be her loss. You are a real gem and she is lucky to have you – she just doesn't know it yet. These things take time. And with every relationship comes trials and tribulations. Rome wasn't build in one day, nor was any relationship. So, just like anything else in life – give this thing between the two of you time.”

Aaron: (sigh) “I hear you, Ma. I really do. I guess I just need to be patient.”

Rachel: “Yes, you take your time to get to know her and enjoy her.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “I will.”

Rachel: “Alright then. Take care and bring her to church this coming Sunday.”

Before he could even respond she hung up the phone. Nonetheless, he had a rather fruitful conversation with his mother. He tried not to dwell so much on the past and all the

negatives, and in turn, he decided to delve into one of his many talents – writing. He started writing from an early age and so, from the moment he met Samarah, he started writing about the new lady in his life. An hour and a half later, he called her.

Samarah: (excitedly) “Mr. Moeng.”

Lydia playfully rolled her eyes as she saw Samarah giggle all by herself.

Aaron: (chuckling) “Hey, gorgeous. How are you?”

Samarah: “You just saw me a few hours ago.”

Aaron: “Moods do change, you know.”

Samarah: “Well then, I am great now that you called. What are you up to?”

Aaron: "I have just finished another chapter of my latest venture. What about you?"

Samarah: "I'm just chilling with Lydia. Oh, what latest venture? I'm curious."

Aaron: "Well, it is still a fresh piece."

Samarah: "I'd love to hear what you wrote, if you don't mind."

Aaron: (nervously) "Okay, but as I have said – it's still fresh."

Samarah: "Yeah, yeah, I got that part. Now get on with it, please."

Aaron: (clearing throat) "I never believed in the saying, until I actually saw it happen to me on that very particular day. "Good things come to those who wait. I finally understood what God meant when he said; "When the time is right, I the Lord shall make it happen" in Isaiah 60 verse 20. She looked so beautiful, with her beautiful, melanin skin – the colour of royalty. She

represented so many things from the moment I first saw her. She looked so timid, so full of thought and scarred from hidden pain, that I just knew she was the one for me. When she first smiled at me, my heart literally rejoiced and I knew then that my dreams were correct. I'd always see this beautiful melanin queen in my dreams and little did I know that I'd finally get to meet her. My ancestors have always been on my side and I thank God for that. She was not aware from that day that she'd be mine one of these days, but indeed, the heart wants what it wants.

I vowed to my heart to protect her at all costs; I vowed to my God that I'd ensure I buy her the world, for she doesn't deserve to just live in it – she deserves to own it. Royalty may mean a lot of things, but she is indeed the queen of my heart. One day, when we're old and gray, I'll reminisce with her on these days while we're watching our grandchildren play on our porch. When I nearly lost her, I could not function – the clear possibility of her not even living in my world any more terrified me beyond any explanation. When God said that “love is patient, love is kind” in the book of Corinthians, I knew what he meant. I have never prayed so hard in my entire life – even in my darkest hour. If I could have, I'd have traded my life for her during that difficult time. When she woke up and instantly

remembered me, my heart was finally at ease. God wasn't trying to be funny when he took Adam's rib and used it to create Eve.

Many say that God knew how powerful a woman's presence and existence is hence He never created one for Himself. A woman makes you vulnerable – which is far from being weak. Had this world been full of men without women, where on earth would we be? Where would we have learnt to love, to be compassion, to be the total opposite of violent and inconsiderate? Women fill a man's heart with love and desire; they give us the world. They trade their lives just to make us happy – to bear us children and to give us a home. The right woman's presence and existence into a man's life automatically enforces change into his life. I can't wait to expose her to my world and to delve into hers. I hope the day I read all my thoughts, fears and feelings to her, that she'll understand the real me, and my deep love for her.”

Aaron's silence and deep breathing was a clear sign of anxiety. He had no idea Samarah was in tears just by listening to him speaking of her like that.

Samarah: (teary) "Aaron, no one has ever spoken so beautifully about me before."

Aaron: "That's because none of those people actually realized your worth and how remarkable you really are."

Samarah: "How can you be so sincere and so sure of me when you have just met me?"

Aaron: "Because my heart knows what it wants and it wants you. I don't have to know you for a life time to know that you're meant for me."

Samarah: "I'd like you to read each chapter to me every night before bed, please. I love the way you construct your words and I cannot wait to see the finished product."

Aaron: "I'll be sure to do that, my love."

Samarah: "There's a call coming through. Can we talk later before bed?"

Aaron: "Absolutely. Bye for now."

They both hung up and when she looked at her screen the incoming call was from Richard. She was reluctant to answer, but she realized htat she couldn't hold him hostage for her own memory loss.

Samarah: "Hello."

Richard: (relieved) "Oh, my child. Thank goodness you have answered! I've been so worried that you wouldn't even want to take my calls."

Samarah: "Oh, sorry about that. I've been a bit caught up with school work."

Richard: "I didn't mean to disturb you. Listen, I am afraid I have some rather startling news."

Samarah: "Yes?"

Richard: "Baba is very ill. Apparently he has been struggling to cope after the stroke."

Samarah: (frowning) "Who is Baba?"

Lydia was immediately alerted and stopped whatever she was doing.

Lydia: (whispering) "Loudspeaker."

She put him on loudspeaker, while Richard was rather disappointed to hear Samarah's response.

Richard: "Langa's father. You don't remember him?"

Samarah: (confused) "No. Who is Langa?"

Richard: "Oh! This is worse than I thought."

Beatrice was heard speaking from the background.

Beatrice: "Hand me the phone. Let me speak to her."

Richard: "I don't think that's a good idea – "

She grabbed the phone from him and started speaking to Samarah in the necest tone she has ever done most probably, leaving Lydia completely unphazed.

Beatrice: "Sammy, my darling. It's your mother. How are you?"

Samarah: (frowning) "I'm well, I guess. How are you?"

Beatrice: "Oh, I could be better. Your father and I are so worried about you. Please, forgive him. He didn't mean to bombard you with people you can't seem to remember."

Samarah: "Okay."

Beatrice: "Listen, Baba is ill. You might not remember him, but he was – is your future father in law. I know, it is a lot to take in, but it would really mean a lot to him if you went to see him."

Lydia shook her head in disapproval.

Samarah: "Okay, uh, I'll think about it."

Beatrice: "Okay, no pressure, love. You keep well, okay?"

Samarah: "Alright."

Beatrice: "We love you."

Samarah hung up without responding to her sentiments.

Lydia: (clapping hands) “Tjo (wow)! Mosadi o o tletse mehlolo (this woman is truly something else)!”

Samarah: (frowning) “Who are these people she is even talking about?”

Lydia: “Are you sure you even want to know?”

Samarah nodded her head though she was full of uncertainty.

Lydia: (sigh) “Ai (oh) well, Langa is your recent ex. He was your first boyfriend and you were engaged – though he didn’t really buy you a ring.”

Samarah: (shocked) “Engaged? How long were we dating?”

Lydia: “For nearly two years – that’s before he cheated on you with his baby mama. He impregnated her during your relationship and you found out on his birthday at your house. It’s a long story, babe, but just know that you did a lot for him and he returned it with a plate of shit.”

Samarah: "Wow, my life must be really something."

Lydia: "Believe me, you did get over him."

Samarah: "And Baba?"

Lydia: "Oh, he is Langa's father. Both his parents love you dearly, believe me. When his father found out about him having the baby behind your back, he had a stroke and they both told you to choose you and leave his asshole self behind. Basically, they saved you a lot of heartache. If anything – you need to be thankful to them."

Samarah: "Well, they sound like genuinely nice people."

Lydia: "They are, hey. They adore you. It is not a lot of in-laws that would save someone's child from marrying their piece of shit son, but they did it."

Samarah: "Do you think I should go see him?"

Lydia: "Oh, no, please don't. Firstly, you are not in the right state of mind because you can't remember them. Secondly, I don't know why Beatrice was being so nice to you. It is probably a ploy to get you to do something. I don't trust her and neither should you."

Samarah: "I know she's my mom, but is it weird that I don't feel any connection to her at all?"

Lydia: (shaking head) "No, babe. You guys have never really had a relationship. Be patient, it will come back to you. Just don't go see people you don't remember. I don't want you being coerced into doing something you don't want to do or being fed lies. Nka bolaya motho (I'd kill someone)."

Samarah chuckled briefly but she valued her friend's advice. She was hardly wrong and saved her from a lot of mistakes.

Samarah: “Well, just to be clear – I never slept with Langa, did I?”

Lydia: “Honey, as far as we’re both concerned – you’re still sealed down there.”

They both laughed.

Samarah: “Well, I don’t know how I have managed to stay sealed for this long because wow – Aaron is something else.”

Lydia: “What happened?”

Samarah: “Nothing really. We were kissing and things got pretty heated. I don’t think I have ever felt so wet down there before.”

Lydia: (laughing) “Trust me, you have. But between you and I, I’d rather you give it to someone like Aaron should you want to give it up. No rush.”

Samarah: "What is sex like, though?"

Lydia: "If I tell you it's nice, you'll want to do it. Wait until you experience it yourself when you are ready."

Samarah: "Well, have you done it with Colin yet?"

Lydia: (laughing) "Of course. How do you know me?"

Samarah: (surprised) "Lydia! You barely know the guy."

Lydia: "YOLO, babes."

Samarah: "What's he like?"

Lydia: "He is amazing! I have never clicked with someone like him before. He gets me, you know. I mean we have the same interests, we party together, we even smoke weed together

sometimes and when we study, we study hard, but when we play – we play even harder. You want to hear the bonus?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Do tell.”

Lydia: “He has quite an alright dick, hey.”

Samarah: (blushing) “Lydia, man!”

Lydia: “What? I need to tell you these things. You’re my bestie. I never thought that yellow bones could be so gifted. And his tongue can do magic, my friend! Never have I ever thought that a man could suck my clit so hard that I squirt in his face!”

Samarah: “I think I have heard enough.”

Lydia: “Keep doing me like that until you experience it yourself.”

Samarah: “Hayi (no), that’s my queue to go to bed.”

Lydia: “It was nice talking to you!”

Samarah: “Good night.”

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

One month later...

It had been a busy month, and with everything going on, Samarah was coping just fine. Her relationship with Aaron was blooming and so was Lydia's with Colin. Samarah had been having dreams of Langa and Aaron, but she still had no recollection of whom he was. She couldn't remember the Dladla's either, and as much as Richard had tried to get involved, she was struggling to remember him too. Aaron ensured that she wasn't pressured into doing anything to remember anyone and reassured her that it would come to her. Nonetheless, life was moving smoothly and Aaron was beaming with excitement because the Varsity pageant was nearing and so was Samarah's birthday. Meanwhile, Samarah was not feeling the pageant at all. She was growing increasingly anxious – despite everyone around her's reassurance. No one was gossiping about her or making her feel unworthy anymore - well, at least not to her face. But she

was not that confident to rock a swimsuit in the middle of a crowd.

As of the week before, Aaron woke Samarah with a purple Orchid attached to a sweet note and a Bible verse to start her day. He was the pastor's son – after all. Purple was significant since it was her favourite colour. He appreciated Orchids instead of the usual roses since they were rare and unique. On that particular morning, which was also one week away from the pageant with her birthday the day after the pageant was scheduled, she woke up to a particularly unique note from Aaron. She always found it right on the kitchen counter. How she and Lydia could never hear anyone come in while they were asleep still baffled the both of them. The note read; “You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. – Song of Solomon 4 verse 7. You are so beautiful – in more ways than one. I hope that you get to see it for yourself one day. See you soon beautiful. Xoxo Mr. Moeng”. She always loved the verses and would store each and every note he handed her in a special note box she had bought weeks before. She had a special vase in which she stored all the flowers she received from him. She headed out and found him just about to lock his apartment. He smiled at her with his usual excitement and greeted his love with a kiss.

Aaron: (smiling) "How are you, my love?"

Samarah: "I could be better."

Aaron: (frowning) "What did I do now?"

Samarah: (chuckling) "You did nothing at all. I am just so anxious with the pageant coming up. I mean, can't I act sick or something?"

Aaron: "Let me ask you this; if I take you out somewhere and we have to swim, will you not wear your swimwear?"

Samarah: "Come on. This is different."

Aaron: "How so? I mean, they are just people and they'll be watching you just as the people who'll be watching us when we'll be swimming. People are just people, Sam. You should not fear anyone but God."

Samarah: "That's easy for you to say. I mean, look at you. You have the perfect body."

Aaron: "Who said you don't?"

She looked down in worry.

Aaron: "Okay, tell you what. Let's meet up after lectures today."

Samarah: "I have a date with Lydia."

Aaron: "I'll talk to her. Can you do this for me, please?"

Samarah: (sigh) "Okay."

They walked downstairs together and got into his car as usual. They greeted Ntate Tau as always and he stopped them as usual.

Ntate Tau: (smiling) “Le kae na (how are you)?”

Aaron: “I’m alright, Ntate.”

Samarah: “Dumela Ntate (Hello, sir).”

Ntate Tau: (frowning) “Aaron! What did you do to upset this beautiful flower of yours?!”

Aaron: “I swear I did nothing. She is just anxious about the Varsity Pageant coming up.”

Ntate Tau: (chuckling) “Oh, I see. You people of today. My dear, if only you knew what a gem you are. The fire that is burning inside of you is just waiting for you to release it. Trust this man, for he holds the desires of your heart, much like God intended. You are so beautiful and those who always tell you

bad things about your looks, have the incredible desire to be you. You just haven't figured it out yet. It is such a pity that this world is controlled by the devil in more ways than one, but ultimately, God always wins. We are after all created by the one and only God."

Samarah looked at Aaron.

Aaron: "Don't look at me. I didn't say anything to him. I swear."

Ntate Tau: (lauging) "My dear, have a lovely day. I'll see you later."

They greeted him goodbye while Samarah still gave Aaron the look.

Aaron: "Baby, I swear, I didn't tell him anything."

Samarah: "Okay."

Aaron: “Hao (oh), so it’s like that now? You won’t talk to me now?”

Samarah remained quiet up until they got to Campus. She didn’t even wait for him to open the door for her.

Aaron: “Bathong (goodness) baby. You just decide to do me like that?”

Samarah: “Bye.”

Aaron: “Okay then. I love you, baby.”

She didn’t say it back, leaving Aaron to chuckle a little. He had a very good surprise up his sleeve and he knew that she wouldn’t be angry at him forever. She didn’t even want to walk beside him and he let her be. By the time their lectures were over, Aaron was already waiting for Samarah right outside her lecture hall.

Aaron: (smiling) “Baby wa ka (my baby)!”

Samarah approached him without saying anything.

Aaron: (frowning) “Ao (oh)? So it’s like that now? I don’t recall any man going shopping with his woman while they weren’t on speaking terms.”

Samarah: “I’m not going shopping.”

Aaron: “Really? Even if I show you this?”

He showed her his card and she managed to chuckle briefly.

Aaron: (laughing) “The person who said that a way to a woman’s heart is through your pockets, sure wasn’t lying.”

Samarah: “Stop it.”

Aaron: "Let's go."

Samarah: "Where to?"

Aaron: "It's a surprise."

Samarah went with it. They got into the car and off they went.

Samarah: "Did you speak to Lydia?"

Aaron: "Yes, she's okay. She'll see you later."

Samarah: "Alright then."

Aaron: "Are you really mad at me when I didn't even do anything?"

Samarah: "Hmm."

Aaron: "I do hope our kids don't take after you. The house would be so against me."

Samarah let out a faint laughter. They finally made it to the mall and he took her hand in his as always. They walked into one of the boutiques. It seemed as if he and the owner were fond of one another, because they greeted each other on first name basis.

Aaron: (smiling) "Sylvia, how are you?"

Sylvia: "Bonjour (Hello) Aaron! What a lovely surprise!"

She was a typical white, French lady with the most beautiful legs Samarah had ever seen on any woman. They hugged one another.

Sylvia: "Oh, this must be your woman, no?"

Aaron: "Yes, this is my Samarah."

Sylvia: “You weren’t lying when you said she was a beaut!”

She gave her a warm hug as well. She was quite friendly.

Sylvia: “How are you, my dear?”

Samarah: “I’m alright, thanks, how are you?”

Sylvia: “I’m always good good! Come, come, come! I have the items you will need. You – sit right there!”

She ordered Aaron to sit on one of the couches, as she dragged Samarah to one of the racks that had quite a lot of items.

Sylvia: “Aaron tells me that you have a pageant coming up. Are you excited?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, I mean – if anything, I wish I could just not do it at all.”

Sylvia: “Nonsense! You are so beautiful! I have never seen such beautiful skin on anyone! You must tell me your secret!”

Samarah: (chuckling) “I just use plain old Vaseline.”

Sylvia: “No, no. Vaseline will never work on this old face! Come, come, come. I have few items for you to choose from. Let’s start with your main outfit and then we can get to the swim suits later, okay?”

Samarah nodded anxiously. She wasn’t really a shopping girl and if she did do any shopping, she’d always go to Pick n Pay clothing since they had her sizes and she was comfortable with their material. She enjoyed being dressed in stretchy outfits to avoid feeling oversized. She had never seen such beautiful clothing, of which some were crop tops.

Sylvia: “We can start off with this one.”

Sylvia had taken a gorgeous bandage skirt with a matching crop top. It looked really small for Samarah.

Samarah: (shaking head) “Oh, no, Sylvia. I couldn’t possibly fit in that.”

Sylvia: “My dear, you’ll never know unless you try. Dig deep within you – your inner goddess is waiting for you to unleash her. Come on, I am with you and I shall wait for you right outside the fitting room, okay?”

Samarah was reluctant, but Sylvia was not taking no for an answer. She knew that Aaron had been planning that. Sylvia dragged her to the fitting room and shoved her gently in there.

Sylvia: “I’ll be right outside, my dear, okay?”

The thought of her in such a skimpy outfit as she thought of it, was already stressing her out. When she looked at the tag she nearly fainted. “R800 for this?!” she thought to herself. She

took a leap of faith despite looking at herself in the mirror and taking her time. Once she was undressed she had a hard time staring at herself like that. She wasn't out of shape; she wore a size 36 and didn't have a big tummy. She had a beautiful pear shape, though she had trouble adjusting to being that size all her life. Once she put the skirt on, she was rather shocked to see how good it looked on her. It was a high waist skirt and knee-length. She was starting to feel a lot more comfortable.

Sylvia: "How are we doing in there, my dear?"

Samarah: "I'm almost done."

Sylvia: "No problem."

Samarah put on the crop top and was in total awe of herself. She had never looked that good, most probably because she had never worn anything like it. She had always worn dresses, mostly polka dot dresses and jeans. She confidently walked out and smiled at Sylvia.

Sylvia: (smiling) “Oh, I know that smile! My mother always said that shopping is therapeutic, you know. You walked in here looking like you’re about to die and look at you now! How do you feel? Do you like it?”

Samarah: “Oh, I really do like it.”

Sylvia: “Well, let us not keep Aaron waiting! Let’s go show him.”

She walked out of the fitting room and he was facing her as he sat right next to the full body mirror. Her glittering smile made him smile.

Aaron: (smiling) “My goodness! You look amazing! Do you like it?”

Samarah: “Honestly, I thought I would hate it, but I love it.”

Sylvia: “Good, then. Let’s go fit the rest.”

She dragged her away yet again and after a few more outfits, Samarah had become so relaxed and Aaron could hear her laughing while inside of the fitting room. By the time she got into the first swimsuit, she never believed she could look that good in a bikini.

Samarah: "My goodness! I never knew that they made such for plus size girls!"

Sylvia: (laughing) "Plus size girls can wear anything now, my dear! This is no longer the 60s!"

When she went to show Aaron, he even stood up with pride.

Aaron: (clearing throat) "Wow... I might just have to hide you from the world. I wouldn't want anyone stealing you from me."

Samarah: (laughing) "Stop exaggerating Aaron."

Aaron: "I'm serious."

The look on Aaron's face was salivating yet beaming with pride. She tried on about four pairs of swim suits; and a lot more outfits. She had no idea that right after her saying she liked the outfits, Sylvia was packing them right away. By the time she was getting dressed back into her original outfit, Aaron had paid for all the clothes. He knew that she would have refused had she stood there next to him and saw the price. When she walked out of the fitting room, she was surprised to see Aaron holding about five paper bags.

Samarah: (frowning) "What's happening?"

Aaron: "What do you mean? We're done."

She looked at Sylvia in confusion.

Sylvia: "Bye bye, Samarah! It was lovely to meet you. Do come again real soon, okay?!"

She waved goodbye at her and they walked out.

Samarah: "Don't tell me you bought all those items I fitted."

Aaron: "I did."

Samarah: "Aaron... I told you – "

Aaron: "Sam

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it is what I want to do. Besides, who should I spend my money on if not on you?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "You've got to stop. I told you, I enjoy the simple things. The daily flowers and messages are just fine. I don't want you going bankrupt all because of me."

Aaron just laughed as he took her to a nearby restaurant where they had lunch. He only took off his glasses whenever he was eating. Samarah could always get a good glimpse of him that

way. They had a good chat and he managed to persuade her to do the pageant.

Aaron: "Just do it, my love. Besides, you would be considered a coward if you don't do it. Look at it this way; you don't want to think back one day and ask yourself what would have happened had you done it, do you?"

Samarah: (sigh) "I hate it when you are right."

Aaron: "I'm always right. Come on, live a little. You're almost 19."

Samarah: (frowning) "Is that your way of telling me you have a few tricks up your sleeve?"

Aaron: "I always have tricks up my sleeve."

Samarah: (shaking head) "Seriously though, Aaron. I've been telling you to stop spending money on me."

Aaron: "And I've been asking you; if not on you then on whom? Don't be so dramatic. Tell me then; what would you like for your birthday?"

Samarah: "I don't really know, just being around those I love is enough for me."

Aaron: "I see. And your parents?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "I don't think I am ready to spend any time with them yet, though they still call me and beg me to go see them."

Aaron: (nodding) "I see. Alright then. Let's head back to our flats. We have a lot to do."

Samarah: "What do you mean?"

Aaron: "No big deal. Come on."

They proceeded to the car, leaving Samarah in wonder. They indeed went back to the flat and when she walked into hers, she found Lydia waiting for her beaming with excitement.

Lydia: (excitedly) “Finally! Kgale sela ke eme (I’ve been waiting)!”

Samarah: “What’s going on?”

Aaron placed the paper bags on the kitchen counter with a wide smile on his face.

Aaron: “See you later, babe. Love you!”

He waved goodbye at her and left.

Samarah: (frowning) “And then Iona (you two)? What’s happening?”

Lydia: “What do you think is happening, baby girl? You and I are getting ready for the pageant.”

Samarah: (frowning) “I don’t get you. I mean, the pageant is literally a week away.”

Lydia: “Exactly why we should start now.”

Lydia rushed to the kitchen counter with so much excitement and started placing all the clothes out of the paper bags onto one of the couches.

Lydia: “Wow! Aaron has style, I must admit. I mean, you won’t find any of this ko (at) Legit or Mr. Price! Let’s get started, oh, wait! Before we do – I have a nice cold bottle in the fridge calling both our names.”

Samarah: “You know I don’t drink.”

Lydia: “Oh, relax, honey. Your man sent over this bottle. He specifically asked me to let you try it. If you don’t like it, then you’ll have some juice.”

Samarah was not sceptical at all because the bottle looked a bit expensive. Lydia could tell she was analysing the price by the expression on her face.

Lydia: “Relax, would you. It is not that expensive. Peter Falke Kailani Cabernet Sauvignon. It is one of the best wines out there. I’ll pour you a little bit. I don’t want you to go rogue on me.”

They both chuckled as Lydia poured them both a glass. After the first sip, Samarah was hooked.

Samarah: “Yoh (oh)! I’ve never tasted such good alcohol in my life!”

Lydia: “That’s because you once dated a broke man without taste.”

Samarah: (laughing) “Lydia stop it. I still don’t remember him, did you forget?”

Lydia: “With good riddance, hey. I mean, he is not really worth remembering after all he put you through. Imagine making you drink Savanna when you can get all this!”

Samarah: (laughing) “I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that. Besides, you did say I never really drank around him or at all.”

Lydia: “Yes, thank goodness for that. You are not a drinker, we’ll call you a very occasional drinker since you’ll only be drinking if I’m around or if Aaron is around.”

Samarah: “Oh, is this the pact you guys made?”

Lydia: “You’re stuck with us, babe. For better or worse.”

They laughed and started trying their clothes on once again. Lydia had also gone shopping, all thanks to Collin. He didn't buy her clothes from a Boutique, though and she didn't mind. She was happy to share the experience with her best friend and was so happy to see Samarah glowing and starting to embrace her body. One hour later, they had gone through the entire heap of new clothing and they were left in one pair of their new bathing suits. They were playing music and dancing away. The wine was flowing and it felt good seeing herself in front of a mirror – in a swimsuit. Lydia had been teaching her how to walk in heels and she was loving it. After a few more hours, the bottle was empty though Samarah only had about two glasses. She was in a euphoric state and feeling really good and happy about herself. Aaron knocked on the door before coming in. He smiled to himself after seeing the two of them dancing in their swimsuits. He hadn't really seen her half naked. It was a refreshing sight.

Aaron: (smiling) "Well, well, well. There's nothing a good bottle of alcohol can't fix."

Once she heard his voice she turned around and quickly tried to hide her body.

Samarah: "Aaron! You scared me."

Aaron: "I'm sorry. I did knock."

Lydia: "Aaron, tseya motho wa gao le tsamayeng, asseblief (take your woman and leave, please). My man is coming over in an hour."

Samarah: "I'll go change."

Lydia: "Hai wena (no). Just put on your robe, I mean you're just going next door."

Samarah: "But – "

Lydia: (interrupting) "Tsamaya (leave)."

Samarah just grabbed her robe and left with her Aaron. He wanted to cook for the both of them as usual and he handed her the custom made apron he had made for her.

Aaron: "Gorgeous, why don't you take off your robe? I mean it is very hot, you know. I don't want you ending up in hospital."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I don't know if you've noticed, but I am wearing nothing but my swimsuit underneath here."

Aaron: "So? What's wrong with that?"

Samarah: "It's just..."

Aaron: "Tell you what, why don't I get half naked too? That way you won't feel out of place. What do you say?"

Samarah: (Shrugging) "I guess."

Aaron wasted no time. He took off his jeans and tshirt and was only left in his briefs. Samarah had never really seen a man half naked before, though she couldn't even remember much from her previous relationship. She felt all sorts of feelings all over her body.

Aaron: "Does this make you feel better? I'll wear my apron and cover my bits so you don't indulge in me."

Samarah: (laughing) "Oh, please."

She took a few seconds but eventually removed the robe. Aaron tried very hard not to salivate. That girl was a goddess to him and no one topped her. She felt a bit weird with him staring at her like that, and she quickly tried to put on her apron but he quickly stopped her gently.

Aaron: "My love, please. I did all this for you today so that you could embrace how beautiful you are. Why do you try so hard to hide it?"

Samarah: (looking down) “I don’t know, Aaron. I mean, I’m not sexy and I don’t work out like you.”

Aaron: “Leave that apron and come with me for a second. Please.”

She placed the apron on the counter and let him lead the way. He pulled her gently and they went to the bedroom. Her heart was starting to race a bit faster as she thought he was ready to go all the way with her, but luckily he wasn’t like that. He pulled her towards the huge mirror he had in his bedroom – right across the bed. She had been in there a few times, briefly, but that was the very first time that she actually took the time to look around and embrace that room. She was standing before the mirror dressed in a swimsuit, with Aaron right behind her. She tried to put her hands over her bra, but he gently removed them.

Aaron: “Look carefully in the mirror and tell me what you see.”

Samarah was very nervous and Aaron could hear her racing heartbeat. He gently placed his warm hands around her waist and whispered softly in her ear.

Aaron: "Tell me, love, what do you see?"

Samarah: (nervously) "I see myself..."

Aaron: "Tell me what you really see..."

Samarah: "I see big hips, big breasts, I don't know..."

Aaron: "May I tell you what I see?"

Samarah nodded.

Aaron: "I see the most striking eyes placed on the most elegant face."

He planted a kiss on her neck with each compliment.

Aaron: “I see the most amazing breasts I have ever seen that will one day be a nurturing vessel to my children. I see the perfect waist that will one day be the seamless epitome of a mother. This waist will one day carry my children. I see beautiful curves that become more elegant with each sway you take. You possess the most gorgeous melanin skin I’ve ever seen. I see the cutest feet; tiny yet chubby. I see the most magnificent smile God has ever created. I see a woman with a beautiful soul and an entire body that embodies all that. Do you now see what I see, Samarah?”

That was enough to bring Samarah to tears. He wiped her tears away.

Aaron: “You are the perfect embodiment of Song of Solomon 4 verse 1 – 7; “Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your

mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,

I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. Do you see what I see now? Do you?"

Samarah: (teary) "I'll try."

Aaron: "All this; everything I did today – I did for you. I wanted you to embrace yourself. I know, it is a tough journey, but I am here. Why would I let you go onto that stage without feeling good about yourself? I'll be there rooting for you more than anyone there. You might feel this way, but you'e not the only big girl there is in this world. From now on, I'd like to see you actually wearing clothes I picked out for you. I want to see you in crop tops and shorts. I want you to see that the world is a lot more supportive and open now than it was fifty years ago. I want the world to see my beautiful girl and how proud I am to show her off. Will you do that? For me?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, I will."

They embraced one another and shared a passionate kiss. After all that, leaving their bodies steamy hot, they broke the kiss and proceeded to the kitchen. By then, she was a lot less worried about her skin and didn't mind being in her swim suit. Aaron decided to make one pot roasted chicken. They made it together as usual. Samarah was now indulging in water, after feeling a little tipsy.

Samarah: "You know, I've never told you this, but I am really glad I met you."

Aaron: "Well, then, I am eternally grateful to God for allowing you into my life."

Samarah: "You really bring out the best in me, Aaron. I pray each night that God ensures that you and I do not get divided no matter what."

Aaron: "Well then, He brought us together, so He shall keep us together."

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

One week later...

It had been a blissful week as always, with Samarah feeling less anxious about the upcoming pageant and with Aaron making her smile every chance he got. Things were looking good with Samarah actually glowing and being open to wearing everything else other than jeans and a oversized top and polka dot dresses. Things were really great. She had no idea what Aaron was planning for her throughout that entire week. It was indeed the morning of the pageant and big surprises were up Aaron's sleeve. She was still living life without Beatrice and Richard. Aaron was making sure that they didn't bother nor hinder her progress in life. Her studies were fine and she was excelling academically, which is all Aaron wanted her to focus on. On that particular morning, Sam and Lydia had already gone to Campus to get ready for the first year's pageant, when

Aaron remembered he had forgotten the key item for his birthday surprise. He decided to call Lydia.

Lydia: "Hello."

Aaron: "Hey, Lydia. I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

Lydia: "Mara wa reng na (what do you even mean), Aaron? Aren't you supposed to be here too? Getting ready for the show?"

Aaron: "Yes, I'll be there soon. I just forgot something really serious. It's been a hectic week."

Lydia: "What is it?"

Aaron: "Do you two have passports?"

Lydia: “Bathong wena (Goodness)! O (are you) serious?! I mean when you said we’re flying I assumed you’re taking us to Cape Town or something.”

Aaron: “No, I am going big.”

Lydia: “Ai, ai, ai (oh, oh, oh). We don’t have any.”

Aaron: “Okay, I just need your ID’s, along with Collin’s.”

Lydia: “Collin has a passport. He’s also not here yet, though he did call and say he was on his way. You can go to my bedroom. You’ll find a pink bag right on the bed. My ID is in there. Samarah’s is always in the dressing table drawer. Don’t ask me why she always leaves it at home.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “You’re the best. You owe me.”

Lydia: “Just give my bestie a birthday to remember. I gotta go. Sharp (bye).”

She hung up and continued to get ready with the nervous Samarah.

Lydia: "Bathong chomi (Goodness, friend). Please don't tell me you're so nervous you're planning on chickening out."

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, not really."

Lydia: "Look around you. There are so many fat girls here and they love their rolls."

Samarah: "Eish (oh), I don't know, but I promised you and Aaron so I don't really have a choice."

Lydia: "No, hun. Despite you promising us, you need to do what you want to do. We can't chicken out of this show, but well, who knows? After this you might feel differently about it. Besides, you look hot in those jeans, baby girl. Aaron has style shame."

Samarah: (chuckling) “What makes you think I didn’t pick this one out myself?”

Lydia: “I know you, remember? Come on, let’s get ready. It is almost time.”

It was quite full as all the first years had to participate. Luckily there were only three rounds; firstly they had to walk around the stage once and introduce themselves briefly, what they are studying, where they come from and what they like. Second round was the swim wear round, where they had to parade in their swimsuits and the third round was the talent show case, which was optional. It was a big thing each year and everyone looked forward to it. Once Samarah heard the crowd cheering as the host began addressing them, she grew a bit worried. A text quickly came through her phone before she went ahead. Girls and boys were kept separately, so Aaron was not around her. “You look beautiful as always. Chin up and show them that mona lisa smile. Love, Mr. Moeng.” She smiled immediately and Lydia could tell that she was becoming a little more at ease. The host called them out and they all began walking on stage. Samara was anxious, while Lydia was just a natural. Soon after she heard people clapping and rooting for her, while the boys were whistling at her, she began to feel a

lot better about herself. They all gave a self-introduction. She couldn't see Aaron, but she heard him speak from the room they were changing in. She could hear how the girls were shouting his name. The swim suit challenge was up, and that gave the boys even more motivation to shout Samarah's name. She was never famous even at school and she preferred it that way. After the second round, she was glad that was off her bucket list, but she couldn't wait to get out of that room. She and Lydia joined the crowd as they were about to show case the talent round.

Host: "Fellow students, you know what time it is now, don't you? It is pure tradition for those who want to join in to participate in a talent round. I mean, not only is this a fun way to officially be a part of our University, but it is the perfect way to score some points and become Mr. or Mrs. Wits."

The crowd cheered and clapped. The first act was introduced while Samarah and Lydia were enjoying themselves. After about five acts, Samarah was ready to go back to the flat.

Samarah: "Aren't we leaving now?"

Lydia: “No, not yet. We’ll leave after this one. I promise.”

Samarah was quite tired, but she had no idea what Lydia was hiding from her.

Host: “And now, for the next item, Aaron Moeng!”

That was enough for her to put her phone away and focus on the stage. Everyone was cheering and the girls were simply head over heels. He got onto the stage dressed in simple jeans, Gucci sneakers and a Louis Vuitton Tshirt. Everything he wore looked good on him because of his fit body. It was as if he could only see Samarah from where he was. He sat down on a high stool with a guitar in his hand and a mic before him.

Aaron: “This is for the most beautiful girl in the world, the girl who captured my heart. In case you’re not sure, Samarah Moloji, this is for you.”

Everyone stared at her briefly, leaving her really anxious. She had no idea he could sing. She would hear him hum every now

and then, and he had told her that he was part of the youth choir at church back home, but had no idea he could actually sing. There was complete silence. He started playing a few strings on that guitar and started singing Vuma by Sans. She had no idea what was in store for her. The lights were slowly dimmed while one particular light from the stage was shining on her. At that point it felt like they were the only two people in the room. About 1 minute into the song, Lydia handed her a blue Orchid that had a note on it. She looked at Lydia who just smiled and continued to listen to the song. Samarah opened the small note which read "You're beautiful." The second flower came from someone amongst the crowd who gently handed it to her with a smile; it read "You're intelligent." And so, the flowers all came with a message which completed the entire message he had for her. "You're Intelligent", "You're pure", "You're the quintessence of love", "When God thought of love, He had you in mind", "I have many regrets in life, but you eliminate all that in my life", "I fear God and then losing you", "You've only been in my life for a short while and already you have made it so colourful", "The next time you look in the mirror, I want you to remember this day", the last message came with a bunch of blue Orchids and the best message indeed. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." – 1 John chapter 4 verse

18. Your love for me is perfect, Sam and you drive out all fear in my life. I become a better person with each day that you are in my life. I can't wait to spend the rest of my life with you. Happy pre-birthday – for the best is yet to come, my love. Love, Mr. Moeng.”

After she was done reading the last message, she was already in tears. Aaron had just finished singing.

Aaron: “Happy Pre-Birthday, babe.”

He blew her a kiss while the crowd went mad. It was the best feeling she had ever experienced. Aaron walked down the stage towards her as they all made way for him until he reached her. He gave her a kiss and hugged her. They walked out with Lydia and Collin right behind them. Once they got to the parking lot, Samarah had to stop herself from crying.

Samarah: “Aaron! Why put me on the spotlight like that?!”

Lydia: “Because – what’s love if he doesn’t show you out in the open?! Come on now, Sammy! No time for crying, we have a plane to catch!”

Samarah: (frowning) “What plane?”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Lydia le wena (you though).”

Lydia: “Askies (Sorry).”

Aaron: “She’s right, though. We do have a plane to catch.”

Samarah: (shocked) “Where to?”

Aaron: “Don’t you worry about that. It’s a surprise.”

Samarah looked a bit anxious.

Aaron: “Hey, do you trust me?”

Samarah nodded.

Aaron: "Are you ready to have the birthday of a lifetime?"

Samarah: "Yes..."

Aaron: "Then let's go."

Samarah: "We haven't packed any clothes, and passports..."

Aaron: "I have all that sorted out. In fact, both Collin and I sorted it out, haven't we?"

Collin: (nodding) "Yep, all we need is you on board, Sam. We all know Lydia is on board."

Lydia: (frowning) "Collin bathong (goodness)!"

Collin: (laughing) “The truth hurts, baby.”

He gave her a peck on the lips. Samarah decided to go with it. All Aaron needed was her permission and willingness to go with. They drove to their flat; with Lydia in Collin’s car alongside him and Aaron with Samarah in his. Once they arrived, they had a ride waiting for them – a black Mercedes Viano was awaiting them right at the gate.

Aaron: “You ladies go in while Collin and I park the cars, okay?”

Lydia: “Sammy, come man! You need to relax. Woza (come), baby girl.”

They walked in and had the driver greeting them from his seat. There was some snacks and champagne in a bucket with ice right in between the seats.

Lydia: “Ja, neh. You’ve got yourself a high roller, babes.”

Samarah: "This is really nice and scary at the same time, Lydia. I mean, can his parents really be this rich?"

Lydia: "Girl, you just enjoy what God is serving you on a silver platter. This is a major upgrade from that horrible, useless man Langa."

Samarah: "You think so?"

Lydia: (nodding) "Any man who loves you so openly deserves to be celebrated girl. You've been through a lot. This is your time to shine. Own it."

Samarah: "So you don't think he is a gangster or something like that?"

Lydia: (laughing) "If he were, would it change anything?"

Samarah: "No, of course not."

Lydia: "Then you have nothing to worry about baby girl. Let us go and have fun!"

Samarah: "Why do I get the feeling you knew about this?"

Lydia: "What do you mean? Of course I know about everything before you do. That's why it is called a surprise you know."

Samarah: "Then where are we going?"

Lydia: "Do you want to ruin the surprise?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No."

Lydia: "Then less questions and more fun!"

Lydia popped the champagne just as Aaron and Collin walked in.

Aaron: “Ah, Collin. Motho wa gao setse a butse champopo mei bra (your woman has already opened the champagne).”

Collin: (laughing) “O e shiyelang hierso (why did you leave it here)?”

Lydia: “Ah (oh), the airport is literally not that far from us. How do you leave a bottle here and expect me not to open it?”

Aaron and Samarah laughed while Collin just shook his head.

Lydia: “Anyway, I saved you the trouble, Aaron. Aren’t you going to make a speech or toast before we sip?”

Aaron: “Well, if you insist. To new adventures and a life time of friendships and relationships.”

Collin: “To the most amazing chicks we’ve ever come across!”

Lydia: "To a life time of partying with my life partner!"

They kissed yet again. All that was left was for Samarah to make her toast.

Samarah: "Well then, in that case, to a life time of celebrations, love and to life, man!"

Lydia: (cheering) "Yes, girl! Now you get it. Aaron, I think you may have just unleashed the real Samarah."

Collin: "Samarah 2.0!"

Aaron: "Well then, to Samarah 2.0!"

They all laughed together and continued to sip on the champagne. They arrived at the airport and Samarah was surprised to see Aaron take out her traveling bag from the boot.

Samarah: "You know, you have too much access to my flat, shame."

Aaron: "Are you trying to kick me out?"

Samarah: "Maybe."

Aaron: "I am afraid I have some bad news for you, baby. You are stuck with me."

They both chuckled as they walked into the airport with Lydia and Collin.

Samarah: "Are you really not going to tell me where we're going?"

Aaron: "It's meant to be a surprise."

Samarah: "Alright then."

Aaron: "Be right back. You relax with Lydia."

They sat and waited for him to check in their tickets and within 15 minutes it was time for them to get onto the plane. She was rather surprised as she had never been on a plane before. He could afford way better, but it was best for him not to show all that to her as yet. It might have scared her off if he had. They did fly business class, though.

Lydia: (shocked) "Tjo, tjo, tjo (wow, wow, wow)! AA, lepara ke wena, sani (you are one badass, dude)! We're flying business class?!"

Samarah: "Is that a good thing?"

Aaron: "Well, it is a lot more comfortable than regular, babe. We have a very long flight."

Samarah: "Okay then, although I have never been on a flight before."

Lydia: “Neither have I, but I intend on being lekker (nice) tipsy before we get there.”

Aaron: “It’s alright. I’m right here. I won’t go anywhere. You’ll see. It’s actually not as bad as you think it is.”

Samarah nodded and indeed, it felt a bit weird being off the ground, but it wasn’t as bad as she thought. They flew and had their rest and exchange flight in another country before flying again to their destination. The flight was really soothing for her, that she ended up sleeping. Unlike Collin and Lydia who were chatting away and indulging in everything that was served on the planes. While she was asleep, Aaron indulged in writing his daily chapter about his love. He also explored another hidden talent of his – drawing. He hid his talents from her because he loved keeping her on her toes. He had a bit of sleep, but a 24 hour flight was no joke, so after writing briefly in his journal, he decided to take out his pencil and draw a picture of his love. After a while, they were almost there. He decided to wake her up.

Aaron: “Wake up, sleepy head.”

Samarah: "Are we there yet?"

Aaron: "Yes, please, open your eyes. I'd like you to see the world."

She indeed opened her eyes and was amazed and the beauty before her. It was still a bit dark, but she could see the beauty of it all.

Samarah: "I doubt this is any place I've ever seen. Where are we?"

Aaron: "We're in Bali, Indonesia, my love."

Samarah was so shocked, she could hardly speak. It was exactly 12 hours later, which was 3am since they only flew from South Africa at 3pm.

Aaron: "Happy birthday, my beautiful Orchid."

They finally landed and had a taxi which took them to their accommodation - Alaya Resort Ubu. The place was incredibly beautiful – even in the early hours of the morning. Nonetheless, they had a few days to discover the place and they needed to rest a bit. They checked in and were led to their rooms. Samarah fell asleep almost immediately after arriving, which was expected. She was jet lagged. Aaron was just happy to spend Samarah’s birthday with her and actually share a bed with her. He cuddled her while she was asleep and he had the best sleep he had ever had in months. After a few hours, she was awoken by the blasting heat of the sun. Aaron was not next to her, though, so she took the time to indulge in the beauty of the rising sun. While she was staking right outside the room’s balcony, she saw Aaron jogging towards her. He waved at her with a wide smile on his face as she waved back. When he finally arrived at the room, he gave her a long kiss.

Samarah: “Really, Mr. Moeng? You just kissed me full of sweat.”

Aaron: “Ouch, I thought you loved all of me.”

Samarah: (chuckling) "I wouldn't trade that for the world. Why did you leave without me?"

Aaron: "You've never showed interest in working out. But if you'd like, we can do it tomorrow morning."

Samarah: "As long as you're not trying to get me skinny."

Aaron: "I love you just the way you are, as Bruno Mars said."

Samarah: "Alright then. Where to from here?"

Aaron: "You're finally awake, so it is time for today's activities. Go shower, I'll wait for you out here."

Samarah: "No, you go first. I'll have some breakfast first."

Aaron: "Ouch, so you don't want me to eat with you on our first baecation?"

Samarah: (laughing) "Fine, I'll go but you'd better wait for me."

Aaron: "Of course, I wouldn't want to return back home in a body bag."

She just laughed at him and went to take a quick shower. Once she was done, he went into the bathroom and she got dressed quickly. She was amazed to see that her clothing and toiletries were packed so neatly. She would have thought it had been a female packing her things like that, but it was all Aaron. He was really OCD. She got into a long-sleeved, flowey dress with sandals, while he wore shorts and a Tshirt. She couldn't remember picking that dress from the boutique. He sat next to her on the balcony where their breakfast was served.

Aaron: "Shall we bless the food, my queen?"

He prayed for the food and it was time to eat. There was such a variety of food on the table, it was really hard for her to pick. She swore to herself to be grateful and not even ask Aaron how it was possible for him to afford that trip.

Aaron: "Your dress is so cute. It just accentuates your lovely bosom."

Samarah: "Hmm, funny enough I don't recall picking this dress out at the Boutique."

Aaron: "That's because I bought it for you just two days ago. It's from Gucci."

Samarah: (sigh) "Aaron – "

Aaron: "I don't want to hear it. I just want you to embrace everything. Life is absolutely too short, you know."

She just chuckled and shook her head.

Samarah: (sigh) "I'd give anything to wake up seeing such beauty for the rest of my life."

Aaron: "Just say the word and it shall be done."

Samarah: "Come on, Aaron. You can't possibly think of marrying me right now."

Aaron: "If I were mad, I would, but I want us to enjoy life together before getting too serious. I don't want you to have any regrets once we get married, you know."

Samarah: "I see. What's your mom saying about all this?"

Aaron: "My mom wanted you to be my wife from day one already."

Samarah laughed out loud. They finished their breakfast and went ahead with their first day at the lodge. They received

their own private tour around the hotel, and then went to the nearby market. They went Elephant riding and went on a tour to see the nearby caves. It was the greatest trip for her, and she ensured that she took as many pictures as she possibly could. Once they came back, they were famished. They had gone to the Bamboo bar, which was a bar right inside the lodge, with a thatched roof top near the poolside.

Samarah: "I feel so bad, I mean I always spend my birthday with Lydia."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Do you honestly think that she's worried about that right now? She and Collin are making sure that they have as much sex as they possibly can in another country and on new sheets."

Samarah: (laughing) "Le wena (you, though)!"

Aaron: "Besides, I already made a deal with Lydia a long time ago. We'll all spend time together tomorrow. Today it is just you and I."

They quenched their thirst with great cocktails and fed themselves with the gorgeous Indonesian cuisine. From there, they indulged themselves in swimming and laying beside the pool. Later on that evening they showered and had a candle-lit romantic dinner at Joglo Manisan, with a backdrop of dancing candles. It was so beautiful, that she didn't want it to end. Thankfully, she had left her phone back at the hotel as she didn't want any disturbance.

Aaron: "Did you have a good day?"

Samarah: "Are you kidding me? Any day in another country with the man you love is a great day!"

Aaron: (laughing) "Well, then. Are you ready for what's coming up next?"

Samarah: "You must be joking. Are you telling me that there's more to come?"

Aaron: "How do you know me?"

Samarah was rather excited. Once their romantic dinner was over, they went back to Bamboo bar, where they met Lydia and Collin who were quite tipsy. Lydia was excited to see her best friend and hugged her immediately.

Lydia: "Happy Birthday, bitch! My goodness, it's been such an awesome day!"

Samarah: "How so?"

Lydia: "Oh, I've been getting laid all damn day just about everywhere and drinking everything under the sun!"

They both laughed.

Lydia: "What about you? Did you enjoy your birthday?"

Samarah: "Oh, my goodness, Lydia. I never thought that life could be this good, you know."

Lydia: "Life is amazing once you accept what God has dished up for you. Embrace it. That is a good man you got right there. And to top it all off – he's rich."

Samarah: "Do you think that this will last, though?"

Lydia: "Why wouldn't it?"

Samarah: "I don't know. Sometimes I just pinch myself because I feel like it is just too good to be true."

Lydia: "Baby girl, our parents never got to experience such love. It is our time. Embrace it because there is a lot more to come."

Samarah: "What do you mean?"

Samarah had been completely oblivious to what was happening around her. While the music stopped playing, one of her favourite artists arrived on the stage.

Host: "Ladies and gentlemen, I give you all – Bruno Mars!"

Samarah heard that and immediately faced the stage. Indeed, it was him.

Bruno Mars: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I was invited by one of the guests who just wanted to give his girlfriend a memorable and yet unforgettable birthday. So, this is for you, Samarah. Happy Birthday."

Bruno and his band started playing the intro to Versace on the floor, one of her favourite songs and she just went berserk as she looked at Aaron with teary eyes. They communicated from a distance, whispering at one another.

Samarah: "How?"

Aaron: "As I said, I'm a man of many talents."

She shed a tear, a tear of many joys.

Samarah: "I love you..."

Aaron: "Dance with me."

She didn't hesitate as she walked towards him. No one was dancing, as it was their moment. She was sure that he had planned it when Lydia was taking a live video of the entire thing.

Samarah: "I can't believe you did this for me."

Aaron: "One day it will be a pre-requisite for me to spoil you like this. You'll no longer be surprised, but you'll be surprised if I don't do it. I told you Samarah, your name carries more weight than you think. I just want to show you the world."

Chapter 39

1 Corinthians 13:4 – “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant.”

The four of them had an amazing time that they even partied the entire night through. Samarah was care free because she was around those who loved her and ensured that she was safe from all harm's way. She had a few cocktails – more than she could count. That's Bali for you. By the time the sun was rising, Aaron decided not to go work out since he knew that she'd be hungover. He however did not enjoy sleeping more than she should have.

Aaron: “Good morning, sleepy head.”

Samarah: “Yoh aowa (oh, no). Aaron, please let me sleep.”

Aaron: “Ah, baby. How can we when we have so much to do today?”

Samarah: "Please tell me that our plans today entail me sleeping all damn day."

Aaron: (laughing) "Well, partially. Come, eat some breakfast. I specifically asked the chef for an Indonesian hungover cure."

Samarah: "Come on."

Aaron: "If you sleep then you'll blame me for a lousy birthday weekend."

She indeed dragged her feet but got up any way. She had to take a shower and a cold one at that – instructed by Aaron and it made her feel a lot better. She took the hungover cure which was very nasty to taste, but after an hour or so, she felt seemingly better. Once they were done with breakfast, he took her to the spa.

Samarah: "This is the only reason I am forgiving you for letting me drink like that last night."

Aaron: (laughing) “You did insist on drinking and said to me that the cocktails were really nice, despite me warning you.”

Samarah: “Eish (oh).”

Aaron: “But those cocktails did something really good for me.”

Samarah: “Which is?”

Aaron: “They made you dance and get down. Even Bruno was surprised. Baby, I never knew you could dance like that.”

Her head was immediately raised despite her back being massaged.

Samarah: (blushing) “What the fuck?! Bruno as in Bruno Mars?”

Aaron nodded mischievously while she buried her head into her pillow.

Samarah: "This is so embarrassing."

Aaron: (lauging) "Oh, baby. Your Insta viewers didn't think so. In fact, they loved it."

Samarah: "What are you talking about?"

Aaron: "Ah, you asked Lydia to post everything on a live video."

Samarah: "I hate you two."

Aaron just chuckled away, allowing her to feel bad and sorry for herself. While they were enjoying their massage, Aaron's phone rang.

Aaron: "Eish (Oh)."

Samarah: "What is it?"

Aaron: "It's my mom, she's video calling me."

Samarah: "So what's the problem?"

Aaron: "She's going to ask me a lot of questions, you know."

Samarah: "If you don't answer it, it will be worse."

Aaron: "I guess you're right."

He answered the video call.

Aaron: "Hi, Ma."

Rachel: "Yoh (oh)! Aaron, weh (goodness)! How come you have not been answering my calls?"

Aaron: "I'm sorry, Ma. It wasn't intentional. I've been busy planning Samarah's birthday and everything."

Rachel: (excitedly) "I can see you are some place that doesn't look like South Africa. Where are you? Are you with her?"

Aaron: (reluctantly) "Yes."

Rachel: "Let me talk to her."

Aaron: "Mara (but) Mama – "

Rachel: "Let me talk to her."

He reluctantly handed the phone over to the obviously nervous Samarah and she took it in her hands.

Samarah: (nervously) "Dumela Mme (greetings Mom)."

Rachel: (excitedly) “Oh, Finally! I finally get to see the goddess my son has been raving about! How are you? My goodness you are such a charmer! He was so right about you! Is he treating you well? I hope he isn’t as much of a nuisance as he is with me, you know!”

She was a mouthful and Samarah could barely get a word in, but that was her personality. She managed to put Samarah at ease, while Aaron was rather anxious.

Aaron: “Ma, stop it. You’ll make her run away!”

Rachel: “See what I mean? I gave birth to a nuisance. Don’t mind him, let’s talk. Are you well?”

Samarah: “Yes, Ma. I am well.”

Rachel: “Good. I can’t wait to see you. Aaron tells me that you guys are in Bali. How’s that for a birthday present, huh?”

Samarah: (chuckling) “He can be so unnecessary at times. I mean he really goes out of his way and out of his pocket to impress me.”

Rachel: (laughing) “That’s my Aaron for you. I told him that he’ll end up bagging himself a gold digger if he doesn’t watch out. Luckily, he found you. My goodness, you’re such a looker!”

Samarah: (blushing) “Thank you, Ma.”

Rachel: “Please do tell him that you guys are invited over to my house this the moment you get back, okay?”

Aaron: “I can hear you, you know.”

Rachel: “Ignore him. If you don’t come, I’ll forcefully come to you. It is high time I get to meet my daughter-in-law!”

Samarah: “Okay, I’ll most definitely tell him.”

Rachel: “Oh, and please, do not be shy to use his money. I mean, if he doesn’t spend it on you – who else will he spend it on? He takes so much offence whenever a woman of interest refuses to spend his money. Go big, baby girl.”

Samarah couldn’t help but chuckle the entire time.

Rachel: “Okay, now. Don’t let me interrupt your good time.”

Aaron: “You already have, Ma.”

Rachel: “Bye-bye, my darling. Be safe, okay?”

She blew Samarah a kiss and hung up.

Samarah: “Is she always like this?”

Aaron: "I'm sorry, she gets a bit much at times. I was going to tell you about her."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Are you kidding me? She is such a vibe. Are you sure she really is a pastor?"

Aaron: (nodding) "Yes, she is. You mean you're not offended or worried about her?"

Samarah: "No, of course not. Why would I be? I mean she is so lovely. I was a bit worried that she'd think I am a gold digger after her son's money or something like that, you know."

Aaron: "Wow, now I am relieved. She's been nagging me about meeting you. I've been dragging my feet. She is just a bit – "

Samarah: "Eccentric and welcoming. I like her already. You should not have wasted time."

Aaron was pleased to see Samarah's reaction.

Aaron: (smiling) “Well, now I can really be at ease. I can already see you two becoming besties. It’s high time she finds someone else to call every day.”

Samarah: (laughing) “That’s not very nice.”

Aaron: “I don’t mean it in a bad way, I love her, but all we ever talk about is you. She will always remain my mother, but she’s always wanted a daughter.”

Samarah: “So, where to from here, Mr. Moeng?”

Aaron: “Cooking class it is, love. It comes with the package and I can see you love cooking. I’d love to see you make us an Indonesian dish one day.”

She chuckled as they finished getting their messages. Once they were done, they went back to their room to freshen up. As always, Aaron allowed her to go in first, and then he went to the bathroom after her. How so chivalrous, it just made her

love him even more. They went to a cooking class with Lydia and Collin and from there, they went diving together.

Samarah: (anxiously) “Aaron, you didn’t tell me about this. I can’t swim that well, you know. I mean the last time I went swimming was – I don’t even know.”

Aaron: “It’s okay, you’ll be safe. Do you trust me?”

Samarah: “I swear, if you keep using that line on me every time you attempt something dangerous with me, I’ll kill you.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Okay, I’m sorry, baby. I promise you, I won’t let you out of my sight.”

Samarah: “Fine, but just so you know, if I get eaten by a shark, I’ll come back from the dead and haunt you til eternity.”

Aaron was trying so hard not to laugh because it was annoying Samarah. He was just having so much fun seeing her so worried about diving. They put on their gear and went into the

water. She was amazed to see that she could actually manage. Aaron didn't let go of her – not for one minute. Lydia and Collin were there as well and together they had the adventure of a lifetime. They took videos and pictures underwater and it was a very surreal experience for them. They stayed in Bali for one more day and returned the Monday morning. While Lydia was worn out from all the sex she was having with Collin, Samarah and Aaron were fresher than ever. The moment they got back to the flat, Lydia went to bed immediately.

Samarah: "Is that what sex does to a person?"

Aaron: (laughing) "Only if you over indulge."

Samarah: "Hmm, ai (oh), I feel for her. Luckily we don't have any classes today."

Aaron: "Yes, which is why you and I have to go see my mom."

Samarah: “Well, I won’t say no to that. Let me just freshen up quickly and I’ll meet you in a bit.”

Aaron: “Alright.”

While Aaron was waiting for his woman in the lounge, Samarah went to the bathroom to quickly freshen up and wipe her face. Upon finishing, she received a call from an unsaved number.

Samarah: (frowning) “Hello?”

Voice: “Hey, Sthandwa sami (my love).”

Samarah: (surprised) “Ke bolela le mang (who am I speaking to)?”

Langa: “It’s me, Langa.”

Samarah was not sure how to react because she could not recall him at all.

Samarah: "Can I help you?"

Langa: "Wow, you're so formal, but I understand after what I did to you. I am really sorry about that."

Samarah: "I'm sorry, I don't know who you are."

Langa: "Oh, are you really going to play that game with me, Sam? Really? Baba is ill and the only person he wants to talk to is you."

Samarah: "I'm really sorry, but I have to go."

Langa: "Wait – "

She hung up and decided to let it be. When she left the bathroom she had a confused look on her face.

Aaron: (frowning) "And then? What's wrong?"

Samarah: "Ag, it's nothing."

Aaron: "Are you sure?"

Samarah: "Yes. I'm sure. Shall we go?"

Aaron wasn't too convinced by her answer but he let her be.

Aaron: "Alright then."

Samarah: "Can we please stop by the mall to get your mom a simple gift?"

Aaron: "Hao (Oh), baby. She's just inviting us over for some lunch. It really is not that deep."

Samarah: "It is for me. Don't be like that. I simply can't rock up there empty handed."

Aaron: (shaking head) "Makgoa a le ruta dilo tse snaaks (white people are teaching you funny things). What if you're invited over and you're broke?"

Samarah: (laughing) "Then you just take a salad with you. Don't act like you don't know this."

They left and they of course met Ntate Tau at the gate.

Ntate Tau: (smiling) "Ah, Dumela Mma sebotsana (Greetings beautiful lady)."

Samarah: (smiling) "Dumela Ntate (Hello, sir). Are you well?"

Ntate Tau: "I am now that I am seeing you. How was your trip?"

Samarah: "Ah, he also told you about it?"

Ntate Tau: "Yes, that's how proud he is of you."

Samarah: (chuckling) "It was the best I've ever had. I wish I could stay there, you know."

Ntate Tau: "Well, he could make it happen if you just say the word."

Samarah: (laughing) "That's exactly what he told me."

Aaron: "Tjo bathong (Goodness), are you two going to ignore me every time we meet?"

Ntate Tau: "Oh, sorry about that. The jealous Aaron is making his presence. You'd better make your way to your future mother-in-law, my dear."

Samarah: "Keep well, Ntate."

Ntate Tau: "You too."

They drove off and then Samarah's phone started ringing again. She looked at it and noticed that it was the same number that called her moments prior. She ignored it and blocked it immediately.

Aaron: "Who's that?"

Samarah: "Someone I don't know. He called me and I hung up on him. I'm blocking him as we speak."

Aaron: "Did he say who he was?"

Samarah: "Langa or something. He told me that Baba is ill. I don't even know him."

Aaron immediately felt his pulse rate increasing.

Aaron: "Hmm, I see. Is that all he wanted?"

Samarah: "He told me that he is sorry for the way he treated me. This is probably the same Langa Lydia told me about. Either way, I don't remember him and I have no desire to."

Aaron: "Hmm, if he calls you again, you can give me the phone."

Samarah: "Okay."

Aaron's mood was a bit off ever since he realized that Langa had been calling Samarah. He knew that someone close to her had to have given him her number. He tried not to show it, though she noticed that he was no longer himself. They had stopped by the mall as promised to get his mother something. He was really unbothered by anything Samarah chose, as he was thinking about Langa the entire time, and he was secretly hoping he'd call so that he could tell him where to get off. The moment they arrived at his mother's house, he

was all well again. Rachel heard the gate opening and she rushed outside to see them in.

Rachel: (excitedly) “Oh finally! You’re here!”

She didn’t even give Samarah the chance to introduce herself properly as she attacked her with a hug and a kiss on the lips.

Aaron: “Bathong (goodness), Mama. How can you kiss my girlfriend?”

Rachel: “Oh, please. Black people kiss one another all the time. Oh, I’m so excited that you two finally came to see me. Come, come, come. Let’s go inside.”

They walked in and she had cooked up a feast.

Rachel: “I hope you don’t mind. I might have gone a little over board with the food.”

Aaron: "Mama, who's going to eat all this now that you stay alone?"

Rachel: "I have neighbours and a congregation, ngwanaka (my child) man. Please, do sit. What can I get you to drink?"

Samarah: "Uh – "

Rachel: "I have wine, whiskey, gin, I can even whip you up a nice cocktail or a mimosa."

Aaron: "Samarah doesn't drink, Ma. I believe I told you."

Rachel: "Nonsense, you said she drinks only if you're around, so let me quickly go whip you up my famous sex on the beach. I'll be right back."

She was a very beautiful woman in Samarah's eyes. Aaron most definitely didn't get his dark complexion from her. She

was quite light, very curvy and had a huge bust, and quite a tiny waist. She was relatively short and had a good dress sense. She was dressed in a Guccie dress with matching sandals.

Aaron: "I'm sorry. I told you she's a bit much."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Nonsense. She's alright. She is just lovely."

Rachel came back and handed Samarah a cocktail and had one herself. She handed Aaron a glass of whiskey.

Rachel: "There you go. Aaron, don't you have somewhere to be? I mean I need to catch up with my daughter in law."

Aaron: "Are you seriously chasing me away, Ma?"

Rachel: (laughing) "That's exactly what I'm doing. She doesn't have a problem with being alone with me, or do you, Sam?"

Samarah: "Oh, no. I'm okay. I'll be fine."

Aaron: "Ai (oh), fine. But please, do not scare her away."

Rachel: "I wouldn't dare."

Aaron knew that Rachel would tell him to leave the two of them alone of which wasn't a problem. The problem was that he needed to get Samarah's phone in case Langa called, but asking her for her phone would have been a bit dodgy.

Aaron: "Babe, may I please make a phone call with your phone? Mine just died."

Samarah: "Oh, I thought you charged it on our way out."

Aaron: "Yes, I also thought so too but I didn't switch on the plug."

Rachel: “Ag, he gets like this when his heart has been captured. Etsa ka pele le wena (make it quick) Aaron.”

Samarah quickly handed him her phone and he kissed her on the cheek before leaving.

Aaron: “I’ll see you guys later.”

While he walked out, Rachel took the opportunity to get to know her daughter in law on a more personal level. She needed to know if Samarah was willing to say should shit have really hit the fan.

Rachel: “So, how are you really, my love? Aaron told me about the incident that occurred and that you lost your memory. How are you coping?”

Samarah: “Oh, I’m coping alright, Ma. Aaron and Lydia have been so supportive, it is just so unbelievable.”

Rachel: “That’s my son for you. He was raised by the best.”

Samarah: (chuckling) "He truly was."

Rachel: "Do tell me about yourself. I know my son always tells me about you, but I'd like to hear about you from the horse's mouth."

Samarah: "Well, I don't really have much to say because I don't remember much, but I do know that I had a twin sister who passed away when I was ten and that I come from Ferndale as well."

Rachel: "Oh, you also live around here? That's amazing. Who are your parents?"

Samarah: "Richard and Beatrice Moloji. Sadly, I don't remember them much. If I was in another realm, I'd say they weren't my real parents, you know. I struggle connecting with them now if that makes sense."

Rachel: “Oh, you mean the Richard who was involved in a car accident not too long ago? He was a good guy, you know. I know him from around. That’s not what I can say about your mom. She’s a bit of a mean person. You look nothing like her, though. I can honestly say that if you really don’t remember her, then your mind is saved from a lot of negativity.”

They both laughed. Samarah was used to people telling her that she looked nothing like her mother.

Samarah: “I’ve been living here ever since I was born apparently, and I honestly don’t recall ever meeting you guys. Not even Lydia has ever seen you guys before.”

Rachel: (nervously) “Oh, well. Ferndale is a big neighbourhood and besides, you know how everyone keeps to themselves, right? Everyone in this neighbourhood is basically anti social.”

Samarah: “Oh, yes. That’s true.”

Rachel: “Besides, we moved here after his father died. It was a bit rough, you know.”

Samarah: “Aaron doesn’t really say much about his dad.”

Rachel: “With good reason, love. Things haven’t been easy for him.”

Samarah: “May I ask what you mean by that?”

Rachel: “He’s been through quite a lot. Some things might even scare you hence he is not really opening up, but give him time. He’ll tell you when he’s ready.”

Samarah nodded in agreement.

Rachel: “Come, let me take you on a tour around my lovely house. I don’t know about your thoughts but I’d like to think that I have quite good taste, don’t you think?”

Samarah: (laughing) “Oh absolutely.”

While Rachel was being acquainted with her future mother-in-law, Samarah’s phone finally rang as the call he had been waiting for had come through. Aaron picked it up without saying anything, playing one of the oldest tricks in the book.

Langa: “Oh, thank goodness you answered. Please, don’t hang up and listen to me. I know, I’ve wronged you, but the least you can do is give me a chance to explain. I know you don’t even want to hear from me, and I do deserve that, but all I ask is that you please come see Baba. He is really not coping and we’re all afraid that he will be leaving us. Things haven’t been the same ever since you left, and honestly when your father told me about your condition and begged me to call you – I knew that I still stood a chance. Will you please make time and come see him? Please.”

That was quite a mouthful without even hearing if she was on the other line or not. Aaron’s breathing became more prominent.

Langa: "Samarah? Are you there?"

Aaron: (angrily) "How dare you? How dare you call my girlfriend and speak to her after all you did to her?"

Langa: "Who's this?"

Aaron: "Who do you think it is? It's her boyfriend."

Langa: "Oh, her father told me about you. You're the bastard that is busy spending money on her and who took her away from her family. You can't win Samarah over, you know. She is not that kind of girl."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Langa Dladla, the infamous taxi driver who actually refused to go to school because he didn't want his friends finding out that he couldn't afford his fees. Who decides to leave an opportunity to study because they're embarrassed of a bursary? You're actually dumber than I thought."

Langa: (shocked) “How the fuck do you know about that?”

Aaron: “I know of a lot of things, like how you went to KZN to pay lobola with the money you intended on paying lobola with for Samarah. You’re nothing but a coward who just wanted to sponge off Samarah. Richard doesn’t like you – he doesn’t like either of us. I am warning you, you’d better stop using your father as a pawn in your little game. You’re no match for me, mfakanaka (my boy). I know all about you and what you do all day. Keep doing this, and you’ll see my worst side.”

Langa was about to insult Aaron again when Aaron just hung up and angrily threw the cell phone onto the ground. He would have had to come up with a reason why he did that. While he was about to drive back home and cool off, a very unexpected person called him on his phone.

Aaron: “Hello.”

Richard: (nervously) “Hi, Aaron. Are you well?”

Aaron: "I'm alright. Where did you get my number?"

Richard: "I'm a man of many talents."

Aaron chuckled to himself. He was absolutely surprised at Richard's confidence.

Aaron: "Oh, I see. How may I be of service?"

Aaron could read a person from a mile away.

Richard: "I'd like to speak to you, in person – please."

That please sounded so forced.

Aaron: "Okay, I'm on my way as we speak."

Richard: (nervously) "Oh, I thought you'd want to think it over."

Aaron: "No need. I'm in Ferndale as we speak. I'll be there in a few."

Richard: "You don't even have my address."

Aaron: "I'm a man of many talents."

He hung up, leaving Richard incredibly suspicious. He was right next to Beatrice.

Richard: "Are you sure this boy isn't some kind of a thug? I mean how did he know where we live?"

Beatrice: "Oh, come on, Richard. He doesn't have it in him. He probably got our address from the hospital or something."

Richard: (shaking head) "This just doesn't make any sense."

Indeed five minutes later, Aaron was right at their gate. He called Richard immediately after parking his car right outside.

Richard: "It's him."

Beatrice: "Answer him. Don't keep him waiting."

Richard: "Yes?"

Aaron: "I'm right outside."

Richard: "Okay, come on in. You can park the car right in the yard."

Aaron: "No need. I won't be staying long."

He hung up and walked right in.

Richard: (angrily) "This boy! Is he trying to make a joke out of my disability now?!"

Beatrice: (sigh) "You have got to be joking, Richard. It is honestly not that deep."

Aaron knocked briefly on the door before being allowed to walk in.

Beatrice: "Come in!"

He walked in confidently as always.

Aaron: "Greetings."

Beatrice: (smiling) "Hello, son. May I get you something to drink?"

Aaron: "No, thank you. I am here. You can start telling me why."

Richard: (deep breath) "I'd like to speak to you about my daughter."

Aaron: "What about her?"

Richard: "I know, you and I got off on the wrong foot, but I think we can reach an amicable decision and work together. It isn't right that she isn't a part of her family. You wouldn't want her to resent you one day for keeping her away from me – from us, do you?"

Aaron: "How am I keeping her away from you two?"

Richard: "You are not allowing us to be invited into her life so that she can remember us again."

He took a good look at Richard first and then at Beatrice before giving them a piece of his mind.

Aaron: "Let me ask you this; what is your real intention here?"

Richard: "I just told you – "

Aaron: “Oh, I get it. So you think I am just going to stand here and pretend that I don’t know what you have been doing to her?! How you both have been treating her?!”

Richard: “I don’t understand what you mean, but if you are going to waltz in here and treat me like I can’t fucking kill you while in this chair, you’re wrong!”

Aaron: “Mr. Moloji, by all means, do as you wish but it won’t stop me from telling you exactly what I think and feel about the both of you. You claim to love your daughter yet you went AWOL on her for months until you got a car accident that ruined you for life. You didn’t worry about her safety, but instead you left her to that vulture you call Langa. If it wasn’t for his sane parents, who knows where she would be right now? Don’t get me started on you, Beatrice. Have you told your husband what you did? What you really did 9 years ago?”

Beatrice: (nervously) “I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

Richard: “What’s he talking about, Richard?”

Beatrice: “He’s grasping at straws!”

Aaron: “Grasping at straws? Really? Have you told your darling husband over here what really caused his accident? Or he still doesn’t know? I mean, we all know that is what you’re good at, right?”

Richard: (angrily) “What is he talking about Beatrice?!”

Beatrice: “You piece of shit! You lying piece of shit!”

Aaron: “I greeted you both with respect the day I met you at that hospital and not once did you return it. You two are pathetic parents and you know it. Why do you think she can’t remember you? Why is that? She told me just yesterday that she can’t seem to connect with you guys and you think that is a coincidence? I also wouldn’t want to connect with people who’ve caused me nothing but trauma. Mr. Moloj, you’re married to a witch – a murdering witch, while you yourself have a lot of demons in your closet. Have you told this darling wife

of yours what really happened to Samarah's biological mother?"

Beatrice and Richard were so stunned at the bombs he was throwing at them.

Richard: "What? Who are you really?"

Aaron: "I am a man of many talents, a man who loves your daughter dearly despite the horrible family she was born out of. I vow to protect her with my life if I have to. If you still think I'm playing, ask your dearest wife over here. She knows exactly what I am capable of."

Richard: "I don't understand what's happening."

Aaron: "Give your daughter the space she needs and stay in your lane. The day you prove to me that you can respect me and actually love her, I'll put in a good word for you. Until then – you two had better fucking stay away before I tell everyone your deep, little secrets."

He turned around leaving them flabbergasted with their jaws on the ground.

Aaron: "Oh, before I leave, you'd better end this Langa thing before he too gets to know the dangerous me."

With that said, he walked out leaving them both with answered questions. Two people with very deep secrets could no longer trust one another. From that day on, the both of them slept with one eye open. Richard suddenly started to realize the person he had married and in turn, he couldn't leave her because of the leverage she had against her. It was a tit for tat situation and neither of them were willing to surrender without losing. As Psalm 44 verse 21 tells us; "Would not God discover this? For He knows the secrets of the heart."

“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

While Aaron was shaking people’s boots, Rachel and Samarah were having a great time. He had taken a detour to the mall to buy her a new phone since he had broken the one she handed to him, along with a new sim card before he headed back home. The moment he walked in he heard his two favourite women laughing together in the patio outside.

Rachel: “See, this here was Aaron when he was about 2 years old. His sister Stacie was 8 at the time.”

She spoke so happily and proudly of the both of them despite what had happened to Stacie.

Samarah: “She looks so much like you. If you don’t mind me asking, what happened to her?”

Rachel: “She was killed, unfortunately by a woman whom my husband had an affair with. That’s a very painful part of my life. One day, I’ll tell you all about it.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Well, she had your looks indeed.”

Aaron: “What are you two doing?”

Rachel: “Oh, I am showing her the charmer you were born to be.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Did you really have to?”

Rachel: “Of course, I did. What do you have there?”

Aaron: “Oh, this is your new phone, babe. I accidently broke the old one.”

Rachel frowned and side-eyed him while Samarah was surprised.

Samarah: "You could have just fixed the screen bathong (goodness) Aaron. I don't want you to spend money on me like this, I told you."

Aaron: "I swear, it wasn't intentional. Besides, you were due for a new phone."

Samarah: "Really now? I loved that phone. All my pictures and contacts."

Aaron: "Don't you worry. I have everything of yours backed up on the cloud, remember."

Rachel: "And besides, you also need to add my number on your new sim. And please, don't be irritated if I call you every now and then."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I won't be."

Aaron: "We need to get going."

Rachel: "Already? We haven't even had lunch yet. Besides, you don't have any classes today, do you?"

Samarah: "No, we don't."

Aaron: "Okay, fine. I can't say no to your food, can I?"

Rachel: "See? Raised by the best."

Samarah: "Which reminds me I really need the bathroom."

Rachel: "Oh, you can use any one, dear. Feel free to use the one in Aaron's bedroom."

Aaron: "Mama."

Rachel: "What?"

Samarah chuckled all the way to the bathroom, while Rachel took that as a moment to speak to Aaron.

Rachel: “Do you mind telling me what’s really going on with you?”

Aaron: “What do you mean?”

Rachel: “I saw you earlier on. You didn’t look like yourself. And what’s with the phone? Why did really break it?”

Aaron: (sigh) “That fucker Langa called her.”

Rachel: (surprised) “How?”

Aaron: “Turns out Richard gave him her number as a way to soften her up. Don’t worry, I dealt with all of them.”

Rachel: "What did you do? Please don't tell me – "

Aaron: "Relax, Mama. I didn't off anyone. I swore not to do that any more."

Rachel: (sigh) "Okay, good."

Aaron: "However, I did face that bitch and her husband. He called me and asked me to come over. I gave them both a piece of my mind."

Rachel: "I told you to be careful around her. She took one of the good things I had in my life and now I am left with you."

Aaron: "It's alright, I just told them that I know all about them."

Rachel: "You really need to slow down with that. You can't have them digging up on us. What if she recognizes you and starts telling people? We ran away for a reason, remember?"

Aaron: "Yes, I know, but I am tired of living such a life, Ma. What will happen if I need to pay lobola for Samarah? I mean, surely I need her to touch base on my home ground."

Rachel: "We'll deal with that when the time comes, but for now, you need to tell Samarah the truth. The entire truth."

Aaron: "I'm not ready for that."

Rachel: "I haven't told you, but you really need to go see Ntate Buda."

Aaron: (anxiously) "What did he say?"

Rachel: "Just make time to go see him or call him when you get the chance."

Aaron was left uneasy after what his mother had just told him. Samarah was back from the bathroom and they had a pleasant family feast.

Rachel: "Shall we pray and bless the food, please?"

Samarah nodded.

Rachel: "Father God, we come before you on this spectacular day. We thank you for making this day possible. We thank you for another day of life. I ask you personally, to bless and protect these two before me. I personally would like to thank you for blessing me with a wonderful daughter-in-law. Love doesn't come easily, Lord, and now that both these children have experienced it, I ask that you please protect them and embrace them in your hands. May they love each other with you as their pillar, may You form part of their family life and strengthen them as a couple. We ask that you bless this food in Jesus' name. Amen."

Aaron: "So extra."

Rachel: "Voetsek (piss off)."

Samarah laughed which caused the three of them to laugh.

Samarah: "I think Lydia would really get along quite well with your mother."

Rachel: "Any friend of yours is family to me, my darling. Now, onto serious news now that you are both here. Have you two had sex yet?"

Samarah choked briefly on her food, while Aaron was a bit embarrassed but Rachel didn't budge.

Rachel: "Oh, it is an honest question."

Aaron: "Mama!"

Rachel: "Hmm, I take that as a no. I am quite impressed that you have managed to stay a virgin for this long Sammy, not many girls value delaying gratification."

Samarah: (nervously) “Yes...”

Rachel: “But I don’t want you to feel trapped by me being a pastor and all. Should you two ever feel ready to have sex, be sure to get tested first and use a condom. Use contraceptives, so that you don’t have children you didn’t plan for. Your career needs to come first and my Aaron knows better than to make a woman forget all about herself. He knows that, but you know how men can be. They sometimes do stupid things all because of that stick between their legs.”

Samarah laughed briefly.

Rachel: “My point is Samarah, don’t ever feel uncomfortable or afraid to talk to me about anything – especially if this one is starting to go haywire. Too many girls come to me in fear of their own parents because they swore to write their daughters off if they fell pregnant before marriage. God lay the rules, but He never said give up on your children. I’d never force my daughter to marry someone just because she fell pregnant, had she been alive today. I have a new daughter in you now. God has given me a second chance to be a mother to a girl. Please,

do allow me the chance. Allow me to show you the love you should've been given long before you were born."

Samarah: (teary) "I most definitely will call you whenever I need to talk to someone, Ma. I won't forget what you did for me on this day."

Rachel: "That's what I am here for. You two are coming to church this Sunday, right?"

Samarah: "Oh, well, Aaron and I go to the church on Campus."

Rachel: "This boy of mine. He has a car so you guys can come down. Bring Lydia and Collin as well. We'll have a nice Sunday lunch too. It will be fun, plus it is our annual Baptism day. You'll love it."

Samarah was game while Aaron had quite a few things on his mind, moreso his mother's words to him on that day. After lunch, they went back to the flat, while Aaron wanted to sort out his issues really quickly.

Samarah: "Are you alright? You've been a bit quiet ever since we were on our way back."

Aaron: "I'm just a bit tired, that's all. It must be the jet lag."

Samarah: "I understand. You should rest then."

Aaron gave her a kiss.

Aaron: "I'll talk to you later, okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay."

She went into her flat while he went back to his and she found Lydia eating while watching tv.

Samarah: "Oh, you're finally awake."

Lydia: “Please, if I ever drink like that again and if I ever decide to get laid like that ever again, by all means kill me.”

Samarah: (laughing) “Aowa (no), I can’t do that. Who will be here to dish out all this gossip?”

Lydia: “Eish (oh), you really think I am joking. Ka painelwa (I’m in serious pain).”

Samarah: “Where now?”

Lydia: “Well, for starters my entire body feels like a train wreck and not to mention my pussy – “

Samarah: “I don’t want to hear that.”

Lydia: “But you’re my bestie. If I don’t tell you, then who else will I tell?”

Samarah: “Hayi man (No), I don’t want to hear about your vagina.”

Lydia: “One day you’ll be in the same predicament. Anyway, how was the lunch with mommy dearest?”

Samarah: “She’s amazing, Lydia. I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone as nice as her.”

Lydia: “Trust me, you haven’t. Dish it out.”

Samarah: “I got there and she was so nice. She immediately made me a sex on the beach and ordered Aaron to leave. She showed me around the house and we bonded, man. I don’t think I’ve ever felt so close to a woman that age before. I mean, with Beatrice, I can’t connect at all. Am I wrong to even call her by name though?”

Lydia: “By all means, trust me, you’re not wrong at all.”

Samarah: (sigh) “She told me about her deceased daughter, though.”

Lydia: (frowning) “Aaron had a sister?”

Samarah: (nodding) “She died when she was very young. Apparently his dad had an affair with someone and the woman killed her. She didn’t want to elaborate, though. She said it was a very difficult time in her life and she’ll tell me when she’s ready.”

Lydia: “Wow, that must have been very hard. I can’t imagine going through something like that, you know.”

Samarah: “Now I get why Aaron never really tells me about his life, hey. Do you think it’s weird that we’ve never really seen him around our neighbourhood, though?”

Lydia: “Not really. I mean most people there are introverts.”

Samarah: “That’s exactly what she said.”

Lydia: "Well, then I have a feeling I'd like her."

Samarah: "You will since you and Collin are both invited to church and Sunday lunch this Sunday."

Lydia: "Eish (oh), kereke vele (church though)."

Samarah: "We all need God in our lives. Don't be that girl."

Lydia: "I suppose you're right. Fine. I'll ask Collin. I hope he'll say yes. He's not much of a church person, though."

Samarah: "You don't need to be a church person, just a God person, hey."

Lydia: "My lady!"

While Lydia and Samarah continued conversing, Aaron decided to crawl into his silent space and call Ntate Buda. He answered after a long while.

Ntate Buda: “Hmm, you have finally called. I’ve been expecting your call.”

Aaron: “How are you, Ntate?”

Ntate Buda: “I’m alright. How are you?”

Aaron: “I’m okay.”

Ntate Buda: “Are you really?”

Aaron: “Yes...”

Ntate Buda: “Have you been sleeping alright?”

Aaron: "Yes, as far as I know."

Ntate Buda: "Hmm, you know you can't lie to me."

Aaron: (sigh) "It's just that... I keep dreaming I'm going to lose Samarah. That is my biggest fear – losing her."

Ntate Buda: "Hmm, don't forget what your grandfather told you, son. He is always by your side, but you need to keep your end of the bargain. Be open and honest with her. You need to tell her – everything."

Aaron: "What if she leaves me?"

Ntate Buda: "Then it would mean that she's not the one for you. If she can't accept you with all your flaws, then she is not the one for you. Do you honestly think that I'd encourage you to tell her if she was going to leave you?"

Aaron: "I don't know."

Ntate Buda: “You know me all too well. You were never a coward, Aaron. Don’t start now. Tell her about your life – your real life or someone else will do it for you. If that happens, it won’t end well.”

Aaron knew he was right.

Aaron: “I hear you.”

Ntate Buda: “The clock is ticking. Do the right thing and call me whenever you need to talk.”

Aaron: “Thank you.”

Ntate Buda said his goodbyes and hung up, while Aaron felt trapped between a rock and a hard place. He went to bed that night with a heavy heart. He was conflicted, though he knew he needed to do it. After battling to sleep for an hour, he decided to call Samarah.

Samarah: "Hey. What's up?"

Aaron: "Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you."

Samarah: "It's okay. Are you alright?"

Aaron: "I just miss sleeping next to you. I can't sleep."

Samarah: (chuckling briefly) "Do you want me to come over?"

He was hoping she'd say that. She was indeed becoming more confident.

Aaron: "Please."

Samarah: "Okay. Open up, I'll be there in a few. Let me just brush my teeth."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Okay."

After she finished brushing her teeth, she walked out and went to his flat. He was waiting right behind the door. After one brief knock

he opened and hugged her. The hug was so tight, Samarah could feel that he needed her at that moment.

Samarah: "Hey, are you sure you're okay?"

Aaron: "Yes, I'm just a little emotional."

Samarah: "Okay, let's go to bed."

They went to bed and lay next to one another. He let her put her head on his chest and she could feel his unsteady heartbeat subside and go back to normal.

Samarah: "What's really bothering you? You're never like this."

Aaron: (sigh) "I'm just so afraid..."

Samarah: "Afraid of what?"

Aaron: "Losing you..."

Samarah: "Why would you lose me?"

Aaron: "You'd leave me if you knew about the real me."

Samarah was a little anxious.

Samarah: "How will you know that if you don't tell me?"

Aaron: (teary) "I've done things I'm not proud of, Sam."

Samarah: "I believe we all have, but that shouldn't define you. You're a good guy, Aaron."

Aaron: "You won't say that once you know what I did."

Samarah: (softly) "Then tell me..."

Aaron: "I don't think I'm ready yet..."

Samarah: "Okay then. When you're ready will you tell me?"

Aaron: "Yes."

Samarah: "Then I'll wait for you to tell me. I'm not going anyway."

She looked him in his eyes and she could see his tears slowly dripping down his cheeks. She kissed him briefly on the lips and lay her head on his chest.

Samarah: "I'm not going anywhere."

That was enough to put him at ease and slowly they drifted off to sleep. The following morning came and he was already awake at 5am. He was playing with Samarah's dreadlocks, causing her to wake up as well.

Samarah: "Why are you up so early?"

Aaron: "Good morning to you too, gorgeous."

Samarah: (chuckling) "You didn't answer my question."

Aaron: "I couldn't sleep any further. Besides, you know I always get up early to exercise. How about you join me today?"

Samarah: "Yoh (wow). I don't know if I'll manage."

Aaron: "You will. I need a jogging partner and besides, exercise relieves stress. What do you say?"

Samarah: “Okay, it is worth a shot I guess.”

They got up and brushed their teeth. She changed into a pair of leggings and a crop top, while he wore his gym clothing and out they went. Ntate Tau wasn't around as it was his off day. They started off slowly by brisk walking and from there on, they started jogging slowly.

Aaron: “Are you okay?”

Samarah: “Yes, I think so. Just so you know, if I die today – it's on you.”

Aaron: (laughing) “You're not going to die. You'll thank me in a week.”

Samarah: “I don't know if I'll be able to do this for more than a day.”

He was starting to ease up daily ever since she had seen him that vulnerable the night before. He was slowly getting her out

of her comfort zone, while he was slowly opening up. Once they went back to his flat, she was tired. They had stretched outside, but she felt as if her body had done something completely strange.

Aaron: "I promise you, the next time will be a lot less painful."

Samarah: "I'm not so sure there will be a next time."

Aaron: (laughing) "I'll run you a bath. It will really soothe your muscles."

Once he was done, she went into the bath and found some of her clothes laid for her on his bed. She was wrapped in a towel and was quite surprised.

Samarah: "Aaron!"

Aaron: "Yes?!"

Samarah: “And this? When did you get my clothes?”

Aaron: “Oh, I went to your flat to get you some clothes. I hope you don’t mind.”

She chuckled all to herself. Once she was done she found he had already made them breakfast and had made her a berry and banana smoothie in a bottle.

Samarah: “So, you went to my flat and got my clothes, even my underwear? You’re weird.”

Aaron: (laughing) “I know. Eat up, babe. I’m going to take a quick shower.”

He kissed her and off he went. She couldn’t stop smiling to herself thinking just how lucky and blessed she was. After eating, she felt her muscles were a lot better. She scrolled through all the pictures and videos they took together on their Bali vacation. Aaron had even tagged her on the entire album

on his Instagram. He hugged her from behind and inhaled her beautiful scent.

Aaron: "What are you doing?"

Samarah: "I'm going through our millions of pictures and videos from Bali."

Aaron: "Well, I love the Bruno Mars evening. Classic."

Samarah: (clicking tongue) "Stop it. You'll never let that go, will you?"

Aaron: "Not even when we're dead and looking over our great-great grand children."

Samarah: (laughing) "Wa bora waitse (you're so boring, you know)."

Aaron: "What are you planning on doing for the holidays?"

Samarah: "I don't even know. What about you?"

Aaron: "I was thinking you and I could go on a trip together – to distress, you know."

Samarah: "Aaron, you have got to stop with the trips."

Aaron: "Okay, it is the last one."

Samarah: "Promise."

Aaron: "Eish, wena mara (you though). Fine."

Samarah: "If that's the case then sure."

Aaron: "Alright then. I'll start the booking."

Samarah: "But please – no more trips out the country."

Aaron: "That's too many promises. Let's go."

She knew he wasn't going to listen in any case.

Two weeks later...

It had been a rather busy two weeks and it was finally Holidays and Aaron couldn't wait to go on yet another trip with Samarah. She had no idea but he was planning on going bare and telling her everything. Her response would determine everything from that point. Their bags were packed and while Lydia was going to stay at her flat a little longer and enjoy her time with Collin, Aaron and Samarah were on their way to the airport.

Samarah: "Please tell me we're vacationing in South Africa this time."

Aaron: "Babe, I didn't promise that. Just so you know, I only did it because you asked."

Samarah: "Cool, so where are we going?"

Aaron: "To the Mother City."

Samarah: (excitedly) "Cape Town?"

Aaron: (nodding) "Yes."

Samarah: "Oh, this is so exciting."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Well, more exciting than Bali?"

Samarah: (laughing) "I told you, I appreciate the minimal things."

They got on their plane and she was not afraid at all. Being up in the air was rather exciting for her. They managed to talk the entire flight through as it wasn't as long as the one they took to

Bali. Once they arrived, they immediately booked into their home for the next week, Sanbona Wildlife Reserve. Once they arrived at the foyer, Samarah could immediately sense the rudeness of the receptionist. Her name tag was clearly visible.

Naledi: (smiling) "Good day and welcome to our Reserve. How are you?"

Aaron: "We're well thanks, how are you?"

Naledi: "I'm alright. My name is Naledi. Are you booking in?"

That was obvious.

Aaron: "Yes."

Naledi: "Oh, are you taking two single beds in your room? Or should I request for an extra large bed right next to yours?"

Aaron: (annoyed) "Do I look single to you?"

Naledi: “Oh, I’m sorry I just assumed – “

Aaron: “That’s the problem with girls like you – you like assuming. You can clearly see that I’m here with my girlfriend and all you had to do was ask for the name of the person who booked online. Or do I have to teach you how to do your damn job?”

Samarah: “Babe, it’s fine, really.”

Naledi: “I’m sorry, I really didn’t mean to.”

Aaron: “No, it’s not fine and yes, you really did mean to. It is girls like you that contribute to other girls having low self-esteem and committing suicide all because you simply are a horrible person from deep within. I came here to enjoy a great holiday with my beautiful girlfriend and you didn’t even find it in your heart to be kind? For a pretty girl like you, you sure are vile.”

Samarah: "Babe, stop it."

Naledi: (teary) "I'm really sorry."

Aaron: "We're not interested in that. You should have thought about that before speaking to me. May we have the keys to our room, please?"

Naledi handed the key to Aaron with her shaky hand. She was on the verge of crying and Samarah really felt bad for her.

Aaron: "Thank you. Do enjoy the rest of your day."

He and Samarah both walked to the lift, with Samarah truly shocked.

Samarah: "Did you really have to?"

Aaron: "Yes, I did. If I hadn't she was going to do the same thing to someone else."

Samarah: "Mara le wena (you though). You can be so dramatic."

Aaron: "I told you; no one messes with my loved ones."

Samarah: "Remind me not to ever get your bad side."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Stop playing and let's get ready for our picnic."

They got settled into their room and changed into their swimwear. Samarah wore a Kimono that Aaron got her in Bali.

Samarah: "So, we're going for a picnic and swimming but we don't even have any snacks? I'm starving."

Aaron: "They already have a picnic basket packed for us at the pool side. Let's go."

Aaron was so keen on leaving – despite them both being half naked and only in their swim wear.

Samarah: “Are we really walking out like this?”

Aaron: “You’re with me, aren’t you? That’s all you need to worry about.”

They walked out hand in hand and made it to the pool side. They took their picnic basket which had everything from gourmet snacks, fruits and wine, along with a blanket. They took a walk not too far from the pool side, just amongst the trenches and found themselves a cosy spot in between the trees on the beautiful grass.

Samarah: “This view is just so serene, don’t you think?”

Aaron: “Yes, I wish my mind could be as peaceful as this.”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Aaron: "Nothing. Let's toast; to a good life and new beginnings."

Samarah: "Cheers."

They gobbled up their snacks and the wine was flowing, while they were each reading a book. Once they were done with the books, they would discuss them together and let each other know what they really thought about it. Aaron's mind began drifting away. After their peaceful picnic, they went swimming.

Aaron: "Stay in the shallow side, I wouldn't want you drowning."

Samarah laughed. They had a great time in the pool and once they were done, they went back to the room to freshen up and he had a romantic outdoor dinner planned for the two of them. She had no idea as always.

Samarah: "Really, Aaron?"

Aaron: "Keng (what), baby?"

Samarah: "I could have dressed up, instead I'm wearing shorts."

Aaron: "You look good in anything. Come."

The waiter served them as they watched the chef prepare their food for their customized buffet. Halfway down the food, he started being serious.

Aaron: "Do you believe in second chances?"

Samarah: "Absolutely why?"

Aaron: "I'm about to do what I have been dreading to do ever since I have met you."

Samarah: "What is it?"

Aaron: "You are the most understanding person I have ever met, Samarah. I have always been afraid that if I let you into my world – into my dark world, you'd think twice about having a future with me."

Samarah: "What are you talking about? I'd never leave you – not even if you were a gangster or something like that."

That word triggered something in him and he looked away.

Samarah: "Aaron. Is it something I said? You're really scaring me."

Aaron: (deep sigh) "I never told you this, but my father wasn't a good man. He was one of the most notorious gangsters back home in the North West, in a small town called Christiana. He was known for doing horrible things to people who did him dirty. He had his own criminal gang and was involved in almost anything you could even think of; drugs, guns you name it. It was like living with Tony Soprano at one stage. I had no idea he was a gangster up until I was older. You know how children

get. I had everything they all wanted; we lived in a fancy house and had fancy cars, and other kids started calling me a gangster's son. He kept that life away from us, until he started messing around with whores and started beating my mother up – at times in front of us.”

Samarah got chills down her spine as she noticed how cold his face got when he was narrating his story.

Aaron: “By the time I was 16, I finished my matric. I started school at the age of 5 all thanks to him. He had killed all his rivals by then and was still the most feared gangster in town. My mother was a Nurse and a part time pastor. Things became worse when he started dating this woman. She didn't just want to be a side chick, no, she wanted him all to himself. When he told her that he couldn't leave his family for her, she organized someone to run my sister over.”

The hardness on his face faded away and was instantly replaced with sorrow.

Aaron: (crying) “Can you believe it? She was standing right outside the Hospital she had just started working at and a car came out of nowhere and ran her over. It was such a horrific scene that the car ran her over and reversed right on top of her again. By the time that driver fled away, my sister’s skull was so crushed, one could barely recognize her.”

Samarah started crying silently while holding his hand.

Aaron: “Can you believe where he was when my mother was hysterically crying trying to alert him of what had happened to his daughter? He was in bed with that very same bitch. Of course, there was no evidence that it was indeed her though we knew and the case went cold. My father never stopped his dealings after Stacie died. He continued and messed with a Drug lord from Mamelodi. The bastard stole that man’s entire stash and came back running at our house. When my mother and I knew that we were in deep shit, he beat her up so badly that I thought he was going to kill her. I recall him strangling her up until I could see her slowly slipping away. I did the unthinkable – without thinking twice. I stabbed him in the back. I stabbed him so many times until I could actually see him take his last breath right on that floor.”

Samarah: (shocked) “Oh, Aaron...”

Aaron: “We took what we could and fled. We fled and never looked back. We fled just in time because the Drug lord he fucked over had come to our house looking for all of us. They were going to kill us all had we not ran away.”

Samarah: “Oh, Aaron. That must have been so awful for you. I’m so sorry. You did what you had to do.”

Aaron: “That’s not all.”

She swallowed hard thinking what on earth could have been worse than him killing his own father?

Aaron: “My mother and I fled to the U.S. That’s where I obtained my law degree – six years ago.”

Samarah got the shock of her life.

Samarah: "I don't understand... You're 19, aren't you?"

Aaron: (shaking head) "No, I'm actually 26."

Samarah: (surprised) "But, how?"

Aaron: "We built ourselves a life with her inheritance from her family and my father's left over money that we had. We also had to flee because my father's family wanted to force her to marry my father's identical twin – who's also a low life gangster. We changed our identities completely and when we returned back home, I decided to change my age as well and become a new person. The plan was only to do it until my uncle is found."

Samarah: (shocked) "This is... this is just... wow."

Aaron: "I know, it is a lot to take in, but I had no choice."

Samarah: "So, is Aaron your real name?"

Aaron: "Yes, but no one knew about it – not even my father's family. It wasn't a name that was registered by birth."

Samarah: "Wow, this is just something else. I really don't know what to say."

Aaron: "I was afraid that you were going to run away if I told you the entire story."

Samarah: "I don't want to run away. It is not my intention – not even close. I am just – so heartbroken tht you had to go through all of that. I am really sorry."

Aaron got closer to Samarah seeing how much she was crying on his behalf. He knelt down and held her hands.

Aaron: "Now do you see why I am so over protective of those I love? If you are going to stay with me, you need to understand certain things; your phone needs to be on all the time. I need

to be able to know where you are at all times. I don't want you to land in danger – I can't afford that. You'll need to let me know where you are going every time, even if it is just a text. Will you be able to live with that?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Aaron, you've taken care of me even when you were not obliged to. You took me to the hospital and took care of all that – when no one asked you, when you barely knew me. Why would I have a problem with you keeping tabs on me for my own safety? As long as I won't have any weirdo following me every time? We're good."

Aaron: (chuckling) "So, you're not angry at me for keeping my age from you?"

Samarah: (chuckling) "No, although Lydia did tell me that you look a tad bit older than 19 the first time she saw you. Baby, I'm all for you. I have experienced real love with you, I have no desire to leave you – there's absolutely no way. I thank you for trusting me and being so vulnerable with me. It takes a lot of courage. I promise you that you won't ever have to feel like you can't tell me things. I might not know how to deal with

some things, but you're there to guide me. You're stuck with me, Mr. Moeng."

Aaron kissed both her hands and buried his head in her lap.

Aaron: "Thank you, thank you, baby."

Samarah: "I love you."

She said that to him for the very first time since they started dating.

Aaron: "I love you more."

And just like that, Aaron became bare and told Samarah almost everything. He finally got the burden off his chest, except for the fact that he had eyes and ears everywhere, and for the mere fact that he knew all about Samarah and her family; he also didn't tell her that the woman who killed his sister was right under their noses. He also didn't tell her the crucial part she needed to know – where her biological mother was. It was not time as of yet.

41

Chapter 41

Psalm 63:3 – “Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.”

Two years later...

It was exactly two years later when Samarah and Aaron were about to celebrate their two year anniversary. Things had been so great and Aaron had been happier. Their love grew stronger each and every day. They were open with each other just about everything and age was indeed nothing but a number. With Aaron turning 28 that year, Samarah was almost 21. They worked out every single morning and didn't miss a day, and she had even lost some visible weight which was really impressive to her as she thought she could never really lose weight. Her body was a lot more toned, though she was still big, but one size smaller. Her curves had become a lot more perceptible and the squats did no justice to her bums. She looked like the perfect plus size model, almost like Ashley Graham.

They went to church on Sundays and had Sunday lunch at his mother's house. Lydia and Collin had become part of that family too. At times, Lydia's parents would join them for the Sunday lunch and it was a big affair. Rachel enjoyed having guests over regularly and she loved Samarah just like her own daughter. In the mean time, she hadn't really visited her father nor Beatrice in those two years, though Richard had tried to call her. Beatrice had attempted many times, but she wouldn't answer her phone. Instead, she had found a family in Aaron and Richard. She had no idea that Baba had indeed succumbed to his illness. She still had no recollection of the people who were in her life previously before Aaron came into her life, except for Lydia and Amarah. He just never got better after his stroke. Langa never managed to contact her ever again, after Aaron made things very clear. They were very excited to have reached a year into their relationship and it was indeed time to celebrate. They had just finished their lectures that Friday and were ready to have fun.

Aaron: "Baby! Happy one year anniversary, my love!"

Samarah: (laughing) "You know, you did tell me that already – this morning."

Aaron: "I can never stop saying it."

Samarah: "So? What are we doing to celebrate? I'm thinking drinks and lunch?"

Aaron: (laughing) "How well do you know me?"

Samarah: "Oh, Aaron. Come on. You booked yet another vacation?"

Aaron: "Are you getting tired of them? Just say the word and I can call and cancel, but you do know that I won't get my entire refund back, right? And I know how you feel about money."

Samarah: (laughing) "You're so horrible. You can't be using that against me. Fine, where are we going?"

Aaron: "Well, it is a surprise this time. I can't tell you."

Samarah: "When will you allow me to surprise you?"

Aaron: "No one is stopping you, baby. Now, go pack. Pack everything and everything under the sun and I'll be waiting for you when you're done."

Samarah: "Okay."

Aaron: "I love you."

Samarah: "I love you too."

Samarah went into her flat and little did Aaron know that she had a surprise of her own for him. Lydia wasn't home, as she had plans with Collin, so she decided to call Rachel.

Rachel: "Hi, baby. Miss me already?"

Samarah: (chuckling) "Hi, Ma. Partially, I am actually calling you because I need some advice."

Rachel: "What is it? What did my boy do?"

Samarah: "Oh, no. He didn't do anything. As you know it is our two year anniversary."

Rachel: "Oh, yes. By the grace of God."

Samarah: "I think I am ready. Actually, I know I'm ready."

Rachel: "Ready for what?"

Samarah: "I'm ready to finally sleep with him."

Rachel: "Oh, you mean that."

She started laughing.

Rachel: "I'm sorry for laughing, it's just that I didn't really expect you to say that. I mean, I am quite surprised you held out for this long. I thought that by now you'd have given it up already. Aaron is strong, shame. All those blue balls."

Samarah: (laughing) "Mama!"

Rachel: "Okay, okay, sorry. I am really honoured that you felt the need to tell me about this, you know. I mean, I remember my first time – "

Samarah: "Mama, do we really have to talk about it?"

Rachel: "Yes, I won't bore you with the gorey details, but you just need to know a few things. It is nothing like the movies, you know. It is really painful and you should expect that."

Samarah: "Eish (oh), you're scaring me."

Rachel: "No, honey. I'm just stating facts. It is good to be realist. I'm saying that it will be the most sacred thing you will

ever give away of yourself. You're basically giving away a part of your soul and it should at least be special."

Samarah: "I hear you, Ma."

Rachel: "I know you want to surprise him, but speak to him about your feelings first. That way, he can make it special for the two of you. I mean you two have a lot of resilience. You've been sleeping in one bed for so long and have never seen one another naked. I'd have given it up a long time ago!"

Samarah: "Mama, thank you for the chat. We'll talk later."

Rachel: "Alright then. Good luck."

She hung up and finished packing. Once she was done, she found Aaron right in the kitchen.

Samarah: "Yoh (oh)! You scared me."

Aaron: "Askses (sorry), love. I didn't mean to. I thought you heard me come in."

Samarah: "No, I was on the phone."

Aaron: "Oh? With whom?"

Samarah: "Your mom."

Aaron: "Oh really? What were you two talking about?"

Samarah: "Aaron, you really need friends, man."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Shall we go?"

Samarah: "Yes, we shall."

This time, he decided to act a little normal and drove them to the airport for a change.

Samarah: "Hmm, I see you're driving us to the airport for a change. I like the new you."

Aaron: "Is there an old me?"

Samarah: (laughing) "Yes, the uptight Aaron is gone."

Aaron: (laughing) "Look who's talking."

Samarah: "Are you seriously not going to tell me where we're going?"

Aaron: "Nope, use your imagination."

They got into a flight and of course, they had to rest and take an exchange flight. She fell asleep on the plane and by the time she woke up, she was in another country.

Samarah: "Please tell me where we are now."

Aaron: (smiling) "Welcome to Tokyo, baby."

Samarah was getting excited, forgetting that she was fast asleep.

Samarah: "Baby, kgole so (so far)?"

Aaron: "I want you to remember these days one day when we're old and grey."

Once they landed from the airport, they got a taxi that took them straight to the Hilton Hotel. The service they received was rather splendid, unlike from Naledi back in Cape Town. Thus far, they had been to countless vacations. He had booked them into the King Executive Suite, which cost over R2000 per night. The suite was so big and spacious with a touch of Japanese style. She had been to countless places, but nothing was as grand as that room.

Samarah: “Baby, this is such a beautiful suite! Please don’t even tell me how much you’re paying for all of this.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “I wasn’t going to. Some things are not meant to be shared, you know.”

Samarah: “My goodness, look at this view. The night is so beautiful here.”

Aaron: “Do you remember what I told you about the night the time I asked you to be my woman?”

He held her from the back and spoke softly into her ear.

Samarah: (blushing) “How can I forget those beautiful words? They’ll be forever etched into my mind.”

Aaron: “Two years later, you’re even more beautiful than that day? How do you do it, gorgeous?”

Samarah: (blushing) “Do what?”

Aaron: “How do you just manage to capture my heart more on a daily basis?”

She had turned around and looked him deep in the eyes.

Samarah: (softly) “When love is dished out effortlessly on a golden platter, submission comes naturally. Your love for me keeps my heart beating, Aaron. You’ve shown me that love is a beautiful thing, so surely that enhances my beauty. You’ve shown me that God does not make mistakes, and that Him being the foundation of our love was the best thing to have happened to us. I know, the vacations and gifts are just a bonus and they make everything extra amazing, but you have indeed proved to me that you do want to show the world to me. I pray each night that you and I stay protected by God. I love you so much, Aaron.”

Aaron: “I love you even more, Samarah Moloji.”

He gave her a passionate kiss while overlooking the gorgeous view in Tokyo. With all those tall buildings and city lights, Tokyo indeed becomes peaceful at night in certain places of the city. While they were enjoying their passionate moment, their hands explored one another's body as always. They always stopped whenever things became too heated, but Samarah didn't allow her body to stop. Aaron planted wet kisses on her neck, embracing her beautiful, full breasts with his hands. She tilted her head and moaned in pleasure. He slowly removed her top and then her bra moments later. For the very first time he got to see her breasts in full view. He paused for a moment to embrace the beauty thereof. He gently placed her onto the bed and kissed her neck all the way down to her nipples. Smoothly, fervently, he got into a slow rhythm and sucked on her nipples. Samarah's body was beyond astounded. Her head felt instantly hot with every moment he sucked on her nipples. His lips voyaged down her abdomen where he embedded wet kisses, sending reflexes through her entire body and curling her toes. He unbuttoned her jeans without exertion, and gently took them off. His penis responded to seeing her gorgeous, busty and abundant thighs. Just when she thought that it was about to happen, he stopped and went up to her lips.

Aaron: (panting) "Let's go to bed."

Samarah: (whiffing) "Why did you stop?"

Aaron: "Didn't you want me to?"

Samarah: "No... I'm ready, Aaron."

Aaron: (surprised) "What do you mean?"

Samarah: "I mean I'm ready for you to make love to me."

Aaron: "I wish you'd told me earlier. Your first time needs to be special, I have to prepare for it."

Samarah: (giggling briefly) "I thought that it just happens."

Aaron: “Most of the time, but baby. We’ve been together for two years, surely you don’t want to be disappointed on your first time. Allow me to prepare you – to prepare us.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Okay.”

Aaron: “I love you.”

Samarah: “I love you too.”

They wrapped each other in one another’s arms and dozed off. It was for the very first time since the inception of their relationship that Aaron allowed himself to have sexual feelings. He allowed his penis to get firm and he allowed her to feel it right from her panties. He allowed himself to embrace her body – sexually, to touch her body in a sexual manner. They were still half dressed yet the intimacy was astounding. The following day came and they both woke up feeling quite good. Aaron woke her up with gentle kisses on her neck.

Samarah: (smiling) "Good morning, Mr. Moeng."

Aaron: "Good morning, gorgeous. Slept well?"

Samarah: "Hmm, I don't know if it is the sheets in Tokyo or what, but I slept like a baby."

Aaron: (chuckling) "I'm glad. Are we going to get up and eat some breakfast?"

Samarah: "Hmm, can't we stay in bed forever?"

Aaron: (laughing) "If we do that then we will never enjoy this vacation, now will we?"

Samarah: "That's also true, but this bed is just so comfy."

Aaron: "I know, babe. Come on, get up."

He tickled her until she jumped out of the bed.

Samarah: "You're so mean."

Aaron: (laughing) "I love you too."

They brushed their teeth before enjoying their complimentary breakfast overlooking the beautiful Tokyo Sunrise."

Samarah: "Gosh, this view is just amazing. I never knew the city of Shinjuku could be this beautiful."

Aaron: "Not as amazing as you. Wait until you and I go clubbing. We'll make unforgettable memories."

Samarah: "Hehe, Mr. Pick up lines."

Aaron: "That's why you love me."

Samarah: "What are we doing today?"

Aaron: "Well, you, my love are booked for a shopping spree and then we'll go on a tour."

Samarah: (excitedly) "Are you serious?! Oh, this is going to be so amazing!"

Aaron: (laughing) "Just two years ago you were petrified of even the idea of going shopping. It's so beautiful to see you grow, my love."

Samara: "I have you to thank for that."

They continued their breakfast and soon after it was time for them to get ready for the day. Aaron still suggested that they continue as usual; take showers separately. It was no bother for either of them, though their sexual chemistry had reached a new level. Once they were done, they were ready for the day. Aaron enlisted the assistance of someone in the Hotel

hired to help guests and tourists. She was asked to take Samarah shopping and show her places.

Aaron: "Here, you can buy whatever you want. The pin is your birthday."

Samarah was so excited. Money indeed makes women happy. She gladly accepted his card while he was out doing what he wanted to do – he was set on making her evening special. She went crazy as asked and went shopping without limits. It was good, enjoyable therapy. After about three hours of shopping, she went back to the hotel only to find Aaron waiting for her at the bar downstairs.

Aaron: "Baby, hand those bags over. They'll ensure that they reach our suite."

Samarah: (frowning) "Why can't I go upstairs?"

Aaron: "Because, I have something planned for the both of us for later."

Samarah: "Should I be worried?"

Aaron: "You just worry about having fun tonight."

Samarah: "Alright then. Where to from here?"

Aaron: "I'm so glad you asked. Our tour guide is waiting for us outside."

They walked out and he handed her a bottle of water and they were shown the town. They took a whole lot of pictures and videos as always and it was a magical day for the both of them. Just when she thought that the fun was over, he had them booked into the hotel spa, where they were relaxing and had the full package, which lasted yet another three hours. With lunch in between, they had quite a busy day. After their spa appointment, Samarah still wanted to go upstairs, and it was finally time for the surprise he had in store for her.

Samarah: "Now can we go back to our room, please?"

Aaron: "Of course, baby. But, wear this first – please."

He handed her a blindfold. She wore it without hesitation. He aided her as they got into the lift. Her heart was overjoyed and beating peculiarly. The euphoria of excitement had got to her and she just couldn't stop smiling. Once they were in their room, it was time for the big reveal.

Aaron: "You may take off your blind fold now."

For a change, he had rose petals all over the floor and so many roses all over the hotel room. The room was dimmed, with quite a few candles stationed in different positions all around. Samarah indeed felt like she was part of a movie.

Samarah: (teary) "Aaron, what's this? When did you get the time?"

Aaron: (smiling) "This is all for you, Sammy. You are one in a million and indeed you have been worth the wait. I never

thought I'd ever wait for a woman like this, but you have shown me that you are the woman that has captured my heart. Lord knows how long I've been waiting for a woman like you to come my way. As promised, I want this evening to be the best and the most unforgettable that you've ever experienced."

Samarah: (teary) "This is so beautiful."

Aaron: "Real beauty is the person I am staring at right here. Now, you will have to go change. There is a gift for you right upstairs and you'll find me waiting for you right here."

Samarah kissed him before leaving to the bedroom. Upon arrival, she found the most magnificent purple dress she had ever laid eyes on right on top of the bed. There was black heels on the floor with a note on top the dress accompanied by a blue orchid. "You had my heart from day one, Samarah Moloi. Thank you for choosing to give me this beautiful gift. Tonight, our souls will merge and become one and we shall be inseparable from this evening onward. Love, Mr. Moeng."

She inhaled the beautiful scent of the orchid and got hold of the dress. She wasted no time in changing into the dress and as she stood in front of that mirror, she couldn't believe that she of all people could look so beautiful in an evening gown. It was long, flowey, yet backless all the way to just above her buttocks. It was a neckline, exposing her gorgeous bust with a long slit below the buttocks. As curvy as she was, she really did that dress an injustice. She wore her heels and as she was walking out of the room it was as if Aaron indeed had eyes everywhere, or he just had really good timing. The moment she stepped out of the bedroom, she heard their most favourite song playing; Vuma by Sands. It felt like she was Cinderella without the misfortunes. She saw Aaron standing right before their beautifully set table, dressed in a black tux accompanied by a light purple shirt, most probably to match with their theme of the evening. Once she made her way to him, he opened up his arms and invited her for a dance. She gladly accepted and they started dancing slowly to their number one favourite song.

Aaron: "You look so beautiful."

Samarah: (giggling) “Thank you. I don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone speak of experiencing something like this – except on tv, though.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Well, then you can be the first.”

Samarah: “How do you do it?”

Aaron: “Do what?”

Samarah: “How do you love me so effortless? So perfectly? So seamlessly?”

Aaron: “Your heart, love. Your heart is so warm and loving that it naturally allows me to love you. Whenever you smile, my heart beams with pride. Whenever I look into your eyes, I see your pure soul. You have healed me in more ways than one.”

Samarah: “This is indeed perfect love.”

Aaron: "Trust me, this is only the beginning, love. You are yet to see me give you the world."

They continued dancing to their song until it was done playing. He pulled a chair for her to get seated and sat right across her on that small

round table. He poured them some champagne and they had their own, unique delectable meal – Tokyo style.

Samarah: "Gosh, so much food."

Aaron: "Yes, Japanese and Chinese people love making tons of food in small portions. They say they cater for the palet."

Samarah: "I'd die if I had to cook like this every single night."

Aaron: (laughing) "I'd never let my wife do all the cooking alone every night. Do you want to know the real reason why I chose this city?"

Samarah: “Do tell me, please.”

Aaron: “Tokyo is mostly known for the amazing night life, but people don’t know how beautiful Japanese culture is. The Japanese express their love by expressions and behaviour. Love words are considered empty if they are not accompanied by a behaviour that reflects those feelings. Making presents and making your partner happy is all the Japanese are about when it comes to love. All along I’ve been expressing my love for you with hopes that you’d open up more and become the woman I’ve always seen in you. It took you quite some time to say “I love you”, but I could see with your actions. I have always been afraid that you’d consider leaving me after I told you everything – but despite it all you loved me from the moment you laid eyes on me. I love making you happy even though you love the simple things in life, but I go all out to make you happy. That’s what I want you to remember one day, my love for you burns so deep within me that I never want that flame to die.”

Samarah: (teary) “Oh, Aaron. You are such a wonderful man. Had I known that I’d meet someone like you, I’d have prayed long ago for this moment. You have shown me that life can indeed be a movie. I feel like the main girl of the cast each and every day. You plan your entire life around me every single

day and you never cease to amaze me without fail. You have shown me the true reflection of God's love. You've introduced God into my life on a more intimate level that I never thought I could ever reach. Because of you, I have so much self confidence and nothing anyone says or does against me hurts me any more. I love the way you look at me and praise me. You look at me as if I'm the only girl in the world. With each and every day you are beside me, I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 16 verse 14; "Let all that you do be done in love". You do everything with love, effortlessly. If anything, it is my honour to give myself to you tonight. You are indeed the king of my heart, Aaron. I don't think I'd ever meet anyone who can do better than you – ever. I pray to grow old with you."

Aaron: (smiling) "I promise you that I'll cherish this evening til eternity. Let's dig in, my love."

They indulged in wonderful Japanese cuisine. After their pleasant meal and a few glasses of good wine, he took her by hand as they walked to the bedroom. Aaron seemed more nervous than Samarah at the time. Once they approached the bedroom he turned her around so she could face the beautiful night sky Tokyo view and slowly removed her dress. She was

completely naked with her back facing him and he took off her panties, since she wasn't wearing any bra. He took his time to appreciate the goddess before him. He slowly turned her around so she could also face him. She didn't even try to hide her breasts from him. He was instantly hard. He slowly took off his suit while she was watching. He needed the both of them to look into each other's eyes and be vulnerable. They looked at one another without saying a word for a few minutes, just hearing each other's hearts beat from a distance. It was terrifying yet amazing at the same time. Aaron was now completely naked before the naked Samarah. She had always seen him half naked, but seeing him totally naked like that was a little daunting. When she looked down at his rock hard penis staring at her, she gulped. "Is it supposed to be this big?" she thought to herself.

Aaron: "This is a very crucial moment in your life, Sammy. I don't want to rush things even though I want to devour you so much right now."

He pulled her closer to him and they started kissing passionately. She allowed herself to touch his body as he allowed himself to touch hers. He kissed her neck for a few minutes while embracing her breasts like earlier before. He got

down on his knees and kissed her abdomen yet again making Samarah feel ecstatic all over her body, and then stopped.

Aaron: "Come, let's get into the shower."

She followed his lead as they went to the bathroom. He opened the tap and allowed the shower to gently warm their skin. The shower was a good idea in order for the alcohol levels to go down a bit. He washed her back and kissed her while the water was soothing their skins. In between, his hands were gently playing with all parts of her body, while his hard penis was stroking her from behind. It is amazing what skin on skin contact without physical penetration can do. He gently placed his hand in her vagina, and stroked her clit in rotation. The more he stroked, the wider her legs spread. She could feel her body warm up faster than anticipated. The more she breathed heavier, the more he continued.

Samarah: (moaning) "Aah, Aaron..."

Aaron: (softly) "Allow yourself to let go, gorgeous."

He stroked her clit faster and indeed she let go and had her very first orgasm in the shower. He turned her around right after that and kissed her again. Their tongues were moving in the same motion, sending heat signals throughout their entire bodies. He closed the tap and led her straight to the bed. They didn't bother about wiping their bodies, as they were filled with deep passion for one another. Once on the bed, he stopped kissing her and looked her in the eye.

Aaron: (panting) "You can still change your mind if you wish."

Samarah: (softly) "No, please, make love to me."

Aaron nodded as he kissed her body, sucking her breasts and devouring her skin. He went straight down to her vagina and spread her legs wide open. He took his time and stared at her vagina for a few seconds before sucking it. He placed his warm tongue on her beautiful clit and gently flicked it. With every flicking motion, her body reacted, her toes curled up, her head tilted back and her hands grabbed hold of his head. Moans escaped her mouth with every action. After she had her second orgasm, she felt so flushed and wanted more. He took out a condom from the side drawer and put it on.

Aaron: "Are you ready? It will hurt a little bit, okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay."

Aaron gently spread her legs a little further and pushed his penis into her vagina. She winced a little bit the first time he entered her sacred body.

Aaron: "Should I stop?"

Samarah: "Please don't."

He nodded in agreement and continued stroking. It felt like her vagina was literally on fire for a few minutes, but after she started relaxing, her body allowed her to feel pleasure.

Aaron: (moaning) "Oh, baby..."

Samarah: "Aah, Aaron..."

Aaron: "I love you..."

Samarah: "I love you too..."

They climaxed together and their souls finally became one. The heat rush all over their bodies excited them.

Aaron: "Thank you so much for giving me this beautiful gift. I promise to treasure you for as long as I live, babe."

She smiled as he kissed her yet again.

Aaron: "I'll be right back. I'm going to run you a bath."

He went to the bathroom, leaving Samarah filled with happiness and no regrets. She did what she wanted to and it brought so much joy to her. She was feeling the aftermath as

she was in pain from the waist down, though. He came back from the bathroom and pulled her gently.

Aaron: "Come."

They got into the bath tub together, with water filled with bath salts. She winced a little once she got into the tub and the water soothed her immediately. She was right in between Aaron's legs, and together, they started an entire new chapter in their lives. They were now one. They had a peaceful night's sleep and Samarah was woken up by stomach cramps around 5am. She had been tossing and turning and they still wouldn't go away. Once she got up, she was shocked to see that there was so much blood on the bed. She checked herself and realised she must have been on her period.

Samarah: "Oh, shit!"

Aaron: "Hey, babe. What's wrong?"

She felt so emotional and embarrassed that she was out of words. When she looked at him and he noticed the blood, warm tears started flowing down her face.

Samarah: (teary) "I woke up with cramps just now. I'm not supposed to be on my period until next week, I think. I'm sorry."

Aaron jumped out of bed quickly and comforted her.

Aaron: "Hey, hey, hey. It's really okay. It's no big deal. I mean, it happens. Why are you crying?"

Samarah: (crying) "I don't know. It's embarrassing."

Aaron: (chuckling) "Baby, it's your menstrual periods. You're a woman and it is normal. Stay put, I'll take care of it."

He let her sit on the bed for a while and went to the bathroom to run her a bath. Once he was done he let her lay in there and kissed her forehead.

Aaron: "It's okay, there's nothing to feel bad about. I'll be right back, okay?"

Samarah just nodded. Aaron got dressed and removed the bloodied sheets from the bed. He went downstairs and came back within a few minutes.

Aaron: "Hey, are you okay?"

Samah: (nodding) "I'm a little better."

Aaron: "Okay, I got you some pads from downstairs and I asked room service to bring us some pain killers along with our breakfast for today."

She was really surprised that he was so calm and collected about the entire thing. Once she was done in the bathroom, he had even gotten new sheets and he made the bed for them. He helped her lotion herself.

Samarah: "You really don't have to do that, you know. I'm not handicapped."

Aaron: (laughing) "I know, you're my woman."

She got dressed in underwear and wore one of the hotel robes since it was a little chilly outside. Aaron didn't go take a shower, he wanted to be right beside her. They had a pleasant breakfast, but the pain she was in was just excruciating and she could hardly eat. She took two pain killers after Aaron offered.

Aaron: "Would you like to lay in bed for a while?"

Samarah: "And ruin our holiday plans?"

Aaron: "We still have a week here. You come first above all other plans. Come."

They got back into bed and cuddled with one another. They spent the next two days just like that; eating in and watching

Netflix all day. He was nice enough to even get her all sorts of snacks he knew that she'd crave.

Aaron: (chuckling) "This is a bit funny, you know."

Samarah: "What is?"

Aaron: "You think I forgot how you always went back to your flat whenever you were on your periods? You refused to sleep next to me until they were over."

Samarah: (blushing) "You knew? I mean, how?"

Aaron: "I'm not blind, you know. Why do you think I always brought you all those snacks and pain killers? I knew how you were complaining to Lydia about how bad your cramps were."

Samarah: "Lydia is such a sell out."

Aaron: (chuckling) “You never have to hide anything from me, babe. You look good no matter what. Periods are natural, you can’t run away from me. You’re basically stuck with me.”

Samarah: “I feel a bit bad, you know. I mean, you literally finally got to sleep with me and now my periods made their appearance.”

Aaron: (laughing) “Sex isn’t everything, babe. Yes, it is a bonus and you’re hella tasty.”

Samarah: (giggling) “Stop it.”

Aaron: “It’s the truth. I love being around you – with or without sex. We have a lifetime to sleep with one another.”

Samarah enjoyed the rest of her day with her head on her boyfriend’s chest. The following day, she felt a whole lot better and it was time for them to continue with their initial adventure.

Aaron: "Good morning, babe. I hope you feel better today."

Samarah: "Good morning, Mr. Moeng. I am much better, thank you. Still bleeding, though, but the cramps are gone."

Aaron: "Good, I was hoping we'd go out today and paint the town red."

Samarah: "As long as I won't have to swim or wear anything short."

Aaron: "You can wear anything you want."

Samarah: "While on my periods?"

Aaron: "I can introduce you to tampons."

Samarah: "Oh, I've never tried them."

Aaron: "It wouldn't hurt to start now."

Samarah: "I'll see."

Aaron took no for an answer. He headed downstairs and requested tampons. Samarah was very hesitant to try them.

Aaron: "Come on, love. You've already had me inside of you, a tampon won't be that bad."

Samarah: (laughing) "Stop it! You and dark humor."

Aaron: "It got you to relax, didn't it?"

Samarah: "A little."

Aaron: "Here, let me help."

As much as she didn't want to, she allowed him. She spread her legs while standing while he inserted the tampon into her vagina. She had her eyes closed the entire time and he washed his hands once he was done.

Aaron: "All done. Now you can wear whatever you want."

Samarah: "Okay, but I'm doing it myself the next time. You're so weird."

Aaron: "You love me like that."

They got dressed and started early for a day filled with adventures. They started off at the Senso-ji, which is a Japanese Temple, at the end of the shopping street. From there, they headed to Yayoi Kusama Museum based in the suburban part of Shinjuku with devoted works of the Yayoi Kusama. It was really interesting for them to learn more about the Japanese culture and history. They then topped it off by visiting the Origami Kaikan, which is a place devoted with the art of origami on each of its floors. They ended the day with a picnic at Yoyogi Park. Just when Samarah thought that Aaron

was done with her and her day was busy enough, he had other plans for her.

Samarah: “Oh, I’m so tired. Are we going to chill and relax now?”

Aaron: (chuckling) “This is what happens when we stop working out. Don’t be a party pooper, there’s so much awaiting us tonight.”

Samarah: “Oh, really, Aaron?”

Aaron: “Yes, you’re almost 21. Live a little.”

They took a shower together and got ready for the night life. They started their night easily at the New York Bar, a swanky and sophisticated cocktail bar on the 52nd floor of the Park Hyatt. She thought that it was going to be their last stop, but after two drinks, their Uber was waiting for them and took them to WOMB, which is a popular night club in Tokyo. She had never been to a club before, so of course Aaron took her to

her very first night club in another country. He didn't want to scare her off of course, so he booked a VIP section for the two of them.

Samarah: "Goodness, is the music always so loud at clubs?"

Aaron: (chuckling) "Yes, but give it time to sink in. After a few drinks, you will barely hear it."

Of course, it happened just as he had predicted. After one more drink, she started to let loose. She only danced around him and whenever they were together in his flat. The last time they really danced together in public was at their first Vacation in Bali. She got up and started moving her hips, teasing him and he soon followed. It felt good for him to be able to enjoy the care free Samarah – even if it meant that he'd enjoy her when she was intoxicated.

Samarah: "This is so much fun! Lydia is going to kill me for not inviting her."

Aaron: "We'll come with her next time."

Samarah: "Oh, I can't even hear the music they're playing, but it would be nice for them to play something we know."

Aaron: "Okay, I'll be right back."

He knew she was safe as he left her alone in the VIP room for a few minutes and when he came back he looked at her with a huge smile on his face.

Samarah: "What are you up to?"

Aaron: "Nothing. You're so beautiful when you're tipsy."

Samarah: "Haha, I am going to regret it tomorrow. I just know it."

Aaron: "You can regret anything with me by your side."

The DJ played a song quite familiar to them – Versace on the floor by Bruno Mars. She jumped up without warning, causing Aaron to burst out in laughter and amusement.

Samarah: (excitedly) “Oh, baby! They’re playing our song! That’s our song! That’s our song!”

Aarong: (laughing) “Yes, it is.”

Samarah: “I mean, no offence, but do they even know Bruno Mars?”

Aaron just kept laughing.

Samarah: “Screw that! Let’s dance!”

Aaron: “How about I watch you dance instead?”

Samarah: "Be my guest."

She was dancing in such a care free manner and singing along to the lyrics of the song, unbeknownst to her, he was taking a video of his girl. She was in another element and had no worry in the world. She danced until the song was over, and despite feeling sweaty, she was enjoying herself.

Samarah: "Whoo! Baby, this is the best trip I've ever had. Even though you made me travel like my life depends on it today, but I am really glad you did it."

Aaron: (chuckling) "You're welcome, my love."

Samarah: "I'm serious. You always push me to be the best."

Aaron: "That's what I am here for."

Samarah: "Can I tell you a secret?"

Aaron: "Sure."

She whispered in his ear.

Samarah: (whispering) "I'm feeling weird, down there, actually everywhere. I mean, my nipples feel tingly, my clit feels like it is pulsating and I want to touch you so badly. I'm horny, aren't I?"

Aaron: (laughing) "Yes, you are, baby."

Samarah: (whispering) "Can I touch it?"

Aaron: "It's just the two of us in here. You can do whatever you want."

She didn't hesitate as she led her hand to his crotch and started rubbing her hand against his penis. She could feel it hardening, causing her to feel even warmer. Her lips were on his neck and her warm breath was making him feel electrified.

Samarah: (softly) "May I kiss you?"

Aaron: (panting) "Oh, shit. You can do whatever you want to me, baby girl."

She hardly initiated kisses so it felt good for Aaron to see her do that. She kissed him passionately, as she unzipped his jeans and placed her hand on his bare penis. He was moaning in her mouth, and her in his.

Aaron: (panting) "Maybe we should get out of here before we both do something nasty."

Samarah: (laughing) "I'm on my periods, remember? Although I'd like you to teach me something I've been dying to try on you."

Aaron: "What's that?"

Samarah: "Let's get back to the hotel and I'll tell you."

They grabbed two bottles of water before heading out. While they were in their taxi, she couldn't stop rubbing his penis and he enjoyed seeing her like that. She refrained from kissing him as she was afraid the taxi driver was going to complain. Once they arrived at the hotel, she removed her shirt and shoes and took off his jeans and underwear. She got down on her knees and looked up at the shocked Aaron.

Samarah: "Teach me how to give you the pleasure you desire."

Aaron swallowed hard as he stared down at his now feisty Samarah. He was bewildered with wild thoughts.

Aaron: (breathing heavily) "Okay... Start by licking it on the outside... From the head."

Samarah: "Okay, like this?"

She placed her warm mouth on the tip of his penis and sucked gently.

Aaron: (moaning) "Aah, yes..."

Samarah then continued to rub his penis up and down with her hands and lick the outside. Aaron was on cloud 9.

Samarah: "What else should I do?"

Aaron: (panting) "Put it inside of your mouth..."

She did as told making him moan even louder. She enjoyed seeing him lose control like that.

Samarah: "What else should I do?"

Aaron: (panting) "Please, suck my balls."

She did as told and once she was in a rhythm of her own, she stopped asking him for guides and she continued to suck on it. The faster she went, the louder he moaned. He grabbed her head with both of his hands.

Aaron: (moaning) "Aah, fuck! Sammy, move your head, please."

Samarah moved away and he ejaculated as his semen fell onto the floor.

Samarah: "I'll get you a towel."

Aaron was so surprised that she had it in her. She even wiped him clean and soon after, he pulled her up and gave her a kiss.

Aaron: "You are so hot when you take charge."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I wish I could give you more."

Aaron: "We have a life time of that. Come, let's go to bed."

They drifted off to sleep after having their usual bed time talks. And just like that, the rest of the days were magical for them. They had total bliss that week and went back home to spend the rest of the week with their family and friends back home.

“Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A few days later, they had packed up and were on a flight back home. It was a blissful week even though they had only been intimate once. They had such a good time, it was nearly impossible for them to sleep the entire flight through. They were nearly home, and were just enjoying each other’s company while being miles away from the ground itself. Every now and then, Samarah would doze off but then be startled and forced to wake up after a weird dream that just kept re-occurring. After she dozed off yet again, she was startled by the same dream. She had been hiding it from Aaron, but this time he was awake and he noticed.

Aaron: (worried) “Hey, are you alright?”

Samarah: “Oh, I’m fine. I just had a peculiar dream. Nothing too hectic.”

Aaron: "Do you want to talk about it?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, maybe later."

Aaron: (nodding) "Okay."

Samarah: "I can't wait to get out of here. My feet are starting to swell."

Aaron: "I told you that we should have had at least one night's rest in Dubai. We would have caught another flight back home tomorrow."

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, you've done more than enough. Besides, I bet you still have a lot of things planned for the coming few weeks, more especially now that I had a post-birthday celebration in Tokyo."

Aaron: (chuckling) "How well do you know me?"

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, you need to be a regular guy for once.”

Aaron: “Regular is boring. I was born to stand out.”

They both chuckled as he gave her a peck on her forehead.

Aaron: “You know, if I had my way, I’d be making you my wife already. We’d be getting married today even.”

Samarah: (laughing) “So, what’s stopping you?”

Aaron: “Nothing, only the fact that I love you too much to let you change your entire life’s plans for me.”

Samarah: “Would it be so bad being married to me?”

Aaron: “Of course not. You’re 21 now and I don’t want you to be forced to grow up and alter your life. You’re almost done

with school – you have one more year left. We made a pact – remember?”

Samarah: “Yes, I know, we’ll get married right after graduation. It’s just that...”

Aaron: (frowning) “It’s just what?”

Samarah contemplated telling him of her recurring dream, but she chose not to.

Samarah: “Nothing.”

Aaron: “You do know that I can see right through you.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “I know. Trust me, I am not hiding anything from you – at least not anything damaging.”

Aaron: "Okay, as long as you promise me that you won't suffer in silence on your own. I am here to be your pillar of strength. Allow me to do that once in a while."

Samarah: "I promise, I will."

They finally landed and he drove them back to their building. She was starting to feel a little tired, but the thought of seeing Lydia again was just exciting her. Besides Lydia bombarding her with text messages, Rachel was doing it too.

Aaron: "Am I boring you now? You've been on your phone for the entire time ever since we got of the airport."

Samarah: "Oh, I am sorry about that. It's Lydia and your mom. They've been texting me ever since."

Aaron: "Well, they should relax since I know they'll be demanding all your attention from now on."

Samarah: "Jealous much?"

Aaron: “How can I not be? You’re my wife.”

Samarah laughed and within minutes they had finally made it. Ntate Tau was not around, it was his day off. Samarah had taken the time to memorize his schedule. She’d even give him food after she was done cooking every night despite him having lunch which his wife made him every single day – even for night shift. He knew his wife was a bad cook, yet he took the food with a smile and never spoke badly about her food – ever. She never really thought of knocking that day as she was so excited, but as soon as she entered her flat, she regretted it instantly. She found Lydia moaning with her legs wide spread on the couch with Collin kneeling on the floor and eating her out.

Samarah: (shouting) “Hayi (no), man! Lydia, what is this?!”

She shut the door immediately.

Lydia: “Shit! I thought you said you locked?!”

Collin: “Eish (oh), I can’t recall.”

She picked up her clothes hastily with Collin finding it all amusing.

Lydia: “Eish (oh), le wena you should have knocked, man!”

Samarah: “Ai (oh), I’ll go chill at Aaron’s place. You’ll call me when you guys are done.”

Lydia: “Don’t you dare walk away from that door!”

They were having a conversation from either side of the door.

Collin: (whispering) “Ah, baby, ga ke so e tsentse mos (I haven’t even put it in as yet though).”

Lydia: (shouting) “Collin! Tsamaya (leave)! Chomi ya ka e fihlile (My friend has arrived)!”

Collin: (chuckling) “Okay, mfe kiss geh (give me a kiss then).”

Lydia gave him a haste kiss while he just laughed away. Once she was dressed, he opened the door and greeted them both.

Collin: (excitedly) “Hey, bro. How are you Samarah?”

Samarah: “I’m well, thanks how are you?”

Collin: “Well, I’d be smiling ear to ear had you rocked up in twenty minutes or so.”

While Samarah blushed embarrassed, Aaron laughed out loud.

Lydia: (excitedly) “My friend!”

She jumped right at her and hugged her tightly.

Lydia: “And then? What are you two waiting for? Go away so that I can talk to my friend.”

Aaron: “Hao (goodness) Lydia, we haven’t even put our bags in yet.”

Lydia: “We all know no one will steal them. Tsamayang (Go away), Aaron! You two can come back in a few hours.”

Aaron: “Ao (oh)? So you’re taking my wife away from me?”

Lydia: “You took her away for nearly two weeks. Tsamaya man (leave, man)!”

Aaron: (shaking head) “Bye, baby. I love you.”

Lydia: “She knows!”

She shut the door in their faces leaving them stunned with amusement.

Aaron: "How do you cope with her?"

Collin: "Believe me, she actually grounds me and makes my life more interesting if that even makes any sense."

Aaron: "Come join me for a beer."

Collin: "Well, as long as you won't complain about my lips."

Aaron: (laughing) "Come on. It's just pussy juice. It tastes divine, though, I won't lie, more especially if it is from the woman you love."

They both laughed as they entered his flat. He handed Collin a beer and they sat down on the couch.

Collin: “So, how was the trip? Judging by the glow, I take it you have finally tasted the forbidden fruit.”

Aaron: (blushing) “Eish wena (Oh, you). I was actually surprised when she told me she was ready to sleep with me. It’s like she had been planning it, you know. To be honest, I was willing to wait – even until marriage if that’s what it took.”

Collin: “Dude, was two years not enough?”

Aaron: (laughing) “It’s not about that. I love her and if she wasn’t ready I’d still have waited for her. She completes me, man and I love her so much that I am willing to do anything for her.”

Collin: “Rather you than me.”

Aaron: “Are you telling me that had Lydia told you she was willing to wait, that you wouldn’t have waited?”

Collin: “I probably would have, but I am not sure for how long. I mean, before her, I was just a regular guy and now I have sex every single day of the week. She makes me do things that I never knew could be done apart from the movies, bro.”

Aaron: (laughing) “Lydia, the freak.”

Collin: “Freak is an understatement. I mean, I love how she gives it to me, you know. She is more into the kinky stuff, of which I am all for, but I also love that she allows me to be more subtle and actually make love to her at times. She loves it when I choke her, but man, I just love making love to her, I love staring her deep within her eyes, you know.”

Aaron: “I know exactly what you mean. I mean, Samarah and I actually connected on a much deeper level, you know. I never thought that I’d ever be this vulnerable with any girl – ever. I am still yet to learn what she likes and doesn’t like. I don’t want to overstep my mark.”

Collin: “Eh (wow). I thought you guys would have been at it like rabbits by now.”

Aaron: “We would have been but her periods made their appearance the morning after we first did it.”

Collin: “You really do love her, don’t you? You should just put a ring on it.”

Aaron: “Believe me, I want to – badly, but timing. I don’t want to ruin her life, you know. I’d rather wait until she graduates next year.”

Collin: (nodding) “I love that you two plan everything. You do deserve some love, man. And finally, you won’t be walking around with those blue balls.”

They both laughed meanwhile Lydia was too excited to see her best friend.

Lydia: (happily) “Friend! You have no idea just how happy I am to see you! You’ve been ignoring me and now I finally have you all to myself!”

Samarah: "I haven't been ignoring you. I was on holiday. Gosh, you are such a drama queen."

Lydia: "And that's why you love me! I have a cold bottle of wine about to meet your acquaintance!"

Samarah: "Bathong (goodness), Lydia. I have barely been back for thirty minutes and you want to get me drunk already."

Lydia: "Well, that's the entire point because I want you to dish out all the dirt. We both know how uptight you can be."

Samarah: (laughing) "Wow. Why do you have three glasses of wine?"

Lydia: "Well, because we have another guest coming in a shortwhile."

Samarah: "Who?"

Lydia: "You'll know soon enough."

Samarah: "Alright then."

Lydia: "Hold on a second, I don't see any love bites or any weird marks on your neck. Please, do not tell me you're still a virgin?"

Samarah: (laughing) "My goodness, Lydia! You're so forward and no, I am not any more."

Lydia: (excitedly) "Wow! I can't believe it! Gosh, I am so glad – I mean not that I have been dying for you to defile yourself or anything like that, but I am just so happy that I no longer have to hide my sexcapades from you anymore!"

Samarah: "Just make sure you lock the door next time or go do it in your bedroom."

Lydia: (clicking tongue) “Ke (it’s) Collin. He didn’t lock the door. Anyway, I didn’t store this amazing bottle of wine just to talk about him. I want to talk about you – and AA! Tell me all about it.”

Samarah: “Well, it was nice.”

Lydia: “Aowa (no), you can’t do me like that. Nice ke eng bjanong (what on earth is nice)?”

Samarah: “I mean, it hurt like hell at first, but after a few minutes, it felt quite nice. He had roses literally everywhere, Lydia, with a brand new dress and shoes for me on the bed. We had dinner and danced to our favourite artist, babe. It was just like a movie, I really didn’t want the night to end. He was quite shocked that I had offered myself to him and he just couldn’t stop thanking me. I have never felt this weirdly connected to a person before. I mean, we’ve always been connected, but now it’s like – I just can’t explain it, you know.”

Lydia: “I know exactly what you’re talking about. Please, do tell me he is a machine in bed or something.”

Samarah: (laughing) “It’s quite hard to explain since we only had sex once.”

Lydia: (frowning) “What do you mean once? Is he like, a noodle man or?”

Samarah: (laughing) “No, man. I mean we only did it once and he ran a bath for me afterwards. He got into the tub with me to soothe the pain and all, but the following morning I woke up with period pains and bloody sheets. I was so fucking embarrassed.”

Lydia: “Wow, your ancestors must be quite disappointing. I mean, how dare they let you go and have such a good time in Tokyo only for you to give that man one round fela (only)?!”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Stop it. He was so understanding about it, though and we spent a few days in bed – doing nothing but chilling.”

Lydia: “Hehe, Aaron is a saint, hey. I mean, Collin and I can barely even make it to a day without sex. We only stop when I’m on my period.”

Samarah: “Well
at least I took your advice and training and put it to action.”

Lydia: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

Samarah: “A few days afterwards, we went out clubbing. I got a little drunk and... I went down on him... just like you sort of taught me.”

Lydia: (surprised) “Wa reng na (what are you saying)?! Hehe, who knew you had it in you?! I told you that I’d unleash the inner bitch in you! Gosh, I am so proud of you. Now at least I can die knowing you won’t make the poor guy suffer in bed should it be time.”

Samarah: “Wena wa gafa (you’re so crazy), shame.”

Lydia: "What did he say about it, though?"

Samarah: "He couldn't keep his hands off me, and I just couldn't find it in me to do it again while sober."

Lydia: "Give yourself time, it will happen naturally and gradually. You have an entire lifetime to get to know what you both like in bed. I mean, I doubt you two will be as wild as Collin and I, but I believe that Aaron is content with anything you do."

Samarah: "I know he is, but I just don't want to be a bore, you know."

Lydia: "That's where communication comes in. Different strokes for different folks, hey. You shouldn't force things, but rather let them happen gradually. Aaron strikes me as the type that won't do anything to you unless you let him, so talk to him. Explore one another. You know him better than anyone else."

Samarah: "I suppose you're right."

Lydia: "I am just glad that he is your first, unlike that moron Langa. He probably doesn't even know how to muff a girl."

Samarah: (laughing) "I wouldn't know."

Lydia: "That's even better."

There was a stern knock on the door and Lydia jumped up without thinking twice.

Samarah: "Are you expecting anyone?"

Lydia: "Not really, but we both have been expecting you."

She opened the door without hesitation and in walked Rachel so happily.

Rachel: (excitedly) "Hello, my daughters! Gosh, I have missed you two!"

Lydia: (smiling) "Hi, mom. Long time."

Rachel: "Ag, long time indeed. It has been a while, really. Why are you sitting down? Don't you want to come hug your mother?!"

She called them both her daughters while they called her mom. It just came naturally. Samarah rushed towards her and was given the tightest hug ever. She had brought yet another bottle of wine and some food in a picnic basket.

Rachel: "Hmm, look at you. You do look like an ex-virgin. I like the glow."

Samarah blushed embarrassed.

Lydia: "I told her the very same thing."

Rachel: "Oh, no, no, no. Why are you acting all shy on me? No, honey. There is nothing to be ashamed of here. If anything, I am happy that you gave it to someone as sane as my boy, but I don't want to know how big he is and everything. I just want to know one thing; did you have fun? Was it special?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, it was, Mom."

Rachel: "Then that's all I need to know! Lydia, pour me a glass, please, while I tell you about my first experience."

Lydia: "Ooh, this is going to be juicy, I just know it."

Rachel: "Kae (I wish)! Believe it or not, but Aaron's father was not my first."

Lydia: (gasp) "Mom! You're so shady!"

Rachel: “Heh bathing (my goodness)! I’m also human, you know. I mean, my parents were very strict, believe you me. I was the only daughter and they just treated me like an egg – literally. They had money, tons of it and the thought of some thug defiling me and getting away with my money terrified my father.”

Lydia: “So, how did you manage to get passed them?”

Rachel: “They worked, fortunately, so which mean that I could only get up to no good whenever it was during the week. My mother was always home during the weekends, so it made it harder for me to do what I wanted. So, there was this really handsome guy at school who was interested in me. He made it clear, but because I came from a strict family, I had to pretend that I wasn’t interested in him. He really looked like the perfect high school jock, you know; muscles, dark skin and he was quite sporty and tall. He was every girl’s dream and believe me, I was hotter than this in my olden days. I had curves for days and a very tiny waist. I was 16 at the time and I felt like well, if I hadn’t done it then I’d have lost my virginity after marriage which is not what I wanted.”

Samarah: "Sixteen? Wasn't it painful?"

Rachel: "Everyone's first time is painful no matter what age you are. So, one day I sent him a text message after my father annoyed me with his usual speeches about boys. I actually did it to spite him, really. Of course, Meshack responded within minutes. I told him that I wanted to visit him the following morning, meaning that I wasn't prepared to go to school. He was so excited but called first because he thought that I was pranking him. Indeed, the following morning I got up and dressed in my uniform, once my parents dropped me off at school, I waited for them to drive off before disappearing into the bus. When I arrived at Meshack's house, he was so stunned to see me. He was still in his pajamas and he was quite unsure if I was serious or not. He offered me some food of which I gladly accepted. Afterwards, he offered me to watch some movies with him. I asked him if he had any alcohol in the house. A few bottles later, we were all over each other."

Lydia: "Aowa (no), Mama. Don't tell me you are stopping there."

Rachel: “For the good looking and sporty guy he was, he sure was a disappointment. I mean, it was my first, but I do know that it was supposed to last longer than 5 minutes.”

The three of them burst out in epic laughter.

Rachel: “He touched the right spots and kissed really well, but once he was in, he didn’t last more than 5 minutes. I thought he was too excited, you know, so I thought I should give him another try. The second round was just as short as the first and right there and then I thanked him for the day and told him to delete my number.”

The three of them burst out laughing yet again.

Samarah: “But, Ma, that was just rude.”

Rachel: “My baby, you’re still very new to the field. If you had an orgasm your very first time, I bet you you won’t want to settle for less – ever. One day, you’ll understand.”

Lydia: "Did he ever contact you again?"

Rachel: "That fucking fool told everyone how he slept with me the following day. I was trending even before I could tell my own friends about it."

Samarah: "That must have been humiliating."

Rachel: "Oh, no, honey. He should have known better than to try and humiliate the one and only Rachel."

Lydia: "Please tell me you taught him a lesson?"

Rachel: "You can bet your fine self I did. I walked right up to him when he was telling his friends about how great he was and how boring I was since I was a virgin, but I walked up to him and told him right in front of them all."

Samarah: "What did you say?"

Rachel: "I looked him right in the eye and said; "I might be a virgin, but I sure do know that you were supposed to last longer than 5 minutes, boo. Of course, they were all stunned and went quiet for a minute. He was really embarrassed and still tried to embarrass me. He told them that I was just lying because I was such a bore in bed, and I said; "If I'm such a bore in bed, how come all the girls leave your ass after sex? Even your ex Raesibe. I told him to stold embarrassing himself and just walk away. He never spoke to me ever since."

Lydia: "That was brutal."

Rachel: "At times you just have to be brutal. Men have this condescending attitude that we owe them when sex is really a two way street. A man can't sleep with you and expect you not to climax, it just doesn't work that way."

Lydia: "Well, you're not the only one who had the worst first experience."

Rachel: "That's the thing; it might have been the worst first one, but it shouldn't define your sex life going forward. So

many parents don't tell their children this and they just end up being with the very first person they sleep with, of which it shouldn't even be that way."

Samarah: "Your parents must have been angry after finding out about it."

Rachel: "Hehe wena (you), they were livid. My father demanded that his father pay some sort of damages for defiling me and that we should have gotten married, but I refused them both. I wasn't damaged and I sure wasn't going to marry Meshack of all people. When I met Aaron's father, he was everything in a man. As much as he was a whore, I know why the ladies just couldn't leave him."

The three of them burst out laughing so hard, that Aaron and Collin heard them from his flat. Aaron decided to call Samarah.

Samarah: "Oh, excuse me, it is Aaron."

Lydia: "Ai, ai, ai (oh, oh, oh). Leave it."

Samarah: (chuckling) "You'd never leave Collin's call unattended man."

Lydia: "You have a point there."

Samarah: "Hey."

Aaron: (frowning) "Why are you being so formal? Is it because my mom is there?"

Samarah: "Are you stalking us?"

Aaron: (chuckling) "No, I heard her voice. I mean you guys are so loud the entire building can probably hear you."

Samarah: "Sorry, we didn't mean to make a noise."

Aaron: "It's okay, I was just checking on you."

Samarah: "Okay, I see."

Aaron: (chuckling) "You really don't want to participate, do you? Okay, then. Just say yes or no."

Samarah: "Okay."

Aaron: "Please tell me that the red robot is over. I am dying to taste you again."

Samarah: (blushing) "Yes."

Aaron: "Do you give me permission to do whatever it is I want to do to you tonight?"

Samarah: (giggling) "Yes..."

Aaron: "Would you like me to give you permission to do whatever it is you would like to do to me?"

Samarah: (blushing) "Yes..."

Lydia: "Wa ba bona (you see now)? They've started again. Hey wena (you), Aaron! We're bonding here! Hang up the phone!"

Samarah: "I have to go. You heard the boss."

Aaron: "She won't be the boss any more once I am done with you tonight. I can't wait to bury my head in between your soft, succulent thighs. I can still taste your clit on your my tongue."

Samarah: (flustered) "Aaron, stop it. Bye bye."

She hung up the phone leaving her blushing with embarrassment.

Lydia: "Hmm, I know that look. Phone sex is amazing."

The three of them laughed yet again, leaving Samarah too embarrassed to speak.

Rachel: "It is really okay to explore things and one another, you know. Very soon you'll be so rebellious in bed, that you won't even want to stop having sex."

Samarah: (blushing) "I don't know about that."

Rachel: "I won't say much since you are still freshly embarrassed, but you can ask me or talk to me about anything. You both can."

Lydia: "That is why I appreciate you, Mama. I yes, you!"

Rachel: "As you should."

Lydia: "A toast; to new beginnings and a life time of sex."

Rachel: "Cheers!"

And just like that, Samarah had opened a new window in her life and she had gained a new and wonderful mother and her friendship was blossoming. She was hesitant to share her dream with her future mother in law, as it was going to change her entire fate, though she was unaware of it.

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.”

A few days passed after Samarah and Aaron had been back and she still hadn't told him of her recurring dream. They still had a few days before going back to school. Life was a breeze and so was the new aspect in her life. She and Aaron were exploring each other in ways she could never imagine. She was lying in bed with Aaron's arms wrapped around her waist. He slowly kissed her neck as a form of good morning greetings as usual.

Samarah: “Mmm, ah, Aaron I am still sleeping.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “This is my good morning greeting. You should get used to it.”

Samarah: “No, not after you kept me up all night. I can't.”

Aaron: (laughing) "Askies (Sorry), baby. I just can't get enough of you."

Samarah: "Uh-uh. I am so tired."

Aaron: "You don't have to do anything. I'll do all the work."

Samarah: "You're such an addict."

Aaron: "You shouldn't be so tasty."

He chuckled and got underneath the sheets. Samarah figured what he was about to do and she quickly tried to jump up as she lifted the sheets to look at him. He was already in between her legs.

Samarah: (surprised) "Aaron, what do you think you're doing?"

Aaron: "You know what I am about to do, baby."

Samarah: "No... I mean... We just got up."

Aaron: "So? I love tasting you. Relax."

Samarah was about to dispute but he wasn't having it.

Samarah: "Aaron... Please..."

He did what he did best and devoured her. His warm tongue slowly twirled on her clit as he proceeded to lick it in circular motion, causing her body to ease from all the tension as her head fell back onto her pillow. Her hands gently grabbed his head and aided him in continuing to pleasure her.

Samarah: (breathing heavily) "Baby..."

Aaron: "Do you want me to stop?"

Samarah shook her head and he stopped as he poked his head from underneath the sheets.

Samarah: "I said no!"

Aaron: (laughing) "I didn't hear you."

She forcefully pushed his head back in between her thighs and he continued to provide her indescribable pleasure.

Samarah: (moaning) "Aah, Aaron!"

He got back up just as she was about to climax which rubbed her the wrong way.

Samarah: (angrily) "Are you serious right now?!"

Aaron: (chuckling) "Next time, you'd better speak up."

Samarah: "Are you going to leave me hanging like that?"

Aaron: "I wouldn't dare."

He positioned himself in between her legs and slowly entered her. For a moment they had both forgotten that they weren't using a condom that morning. The heat of the moment had gotten to them. About a few minutes in, he stopped as he pulled out of her.

Samarah: (panting) "What's wrong?"

Aaron: "Shit. I'm sorry. I completely forgot to put on a condom for a moment. I swear, I didn't do it intentionally."

For a moment he seemed rather stressed and filled with regret as he was on the edge of his side of the bed.

Samarah: "Hey, It's okay. I know you wouldn't do it on purpose. Besides, we got tested, right?"

Aaron: “Still, that doesn’t give me the right to possibly ruin your future. A baby is not what you need right now.”

Samarah: “It was an honest mistake, baby. Come on.”

Aaron: “I’m going to take a shower. I’ll see you in a bit.”

He kissed her forehead gently and walked straight to the bathroom. He felt terrible about what had happened and despite them not even getting to the finishing line, he thought of what could have happened. “What if she had gotten pregnant?” he thought to himself. He did not want to be the reason that she had to become a young mother of an unplanned child. It sure was going to turn out well, but he wanted her to enjoy her life without any disturbances and regrets. While he was in the shower deep in thought with the water running down on his skin, she walked in – naked, without anything covering her. She opened the shower door and hugged him from behind. He felt her soft hands caressing his abdomen and he gently rubbed his hands on hers.

Samarah: "I'm sorry..."

Aaron: "No, I'm sorry. You don't have to feel bad about anything."

He turned around and looked at her despite the water running down their faces.

Aaron: "One of my biggest fears is making you a mother before you're even ready. I just want you to enjoy your youth before we can start a family and get married."

Samarah: "I hear you. I didn't mean to make it look like I want you to make me pregnant or anything like that. I was just caught up in the moment."

Aaron: "I hear you, but I don't want us to ever get caught in such a moment of distress ever again."

Samarah: "Lydia mentioned to me that she is on contraceptives. Perhaps I could try those too."

Aaron: "I don't want you to do that for me, but for you yourself."

Samarah: "Yes, I'm doing it for me – for the both of us, so that should anything ever happen we'll be covered."

Aaron: (nodding) "Let's talk about this at a later time, shall we?"

Samarah: "Yes. Let's finish up in here."

They finished taking a shower together and once they got dressed, they had planned to go out for brunch and spend the rest of the day indoors, until Collin and Lydia appeared. Collin knocked swiftly on the door until Aaron opened for them.

Aaron: "Collin, mfwethu (bro), why are you knocking on my door like you're in trouble or something?"

Collin: (laughing) “Harde (sorry), dude. Lydia has been on my case. A friend of mine has invited me to a party in Soweto, Orlando to be precise. He’s asked me to bring a few people if I wish.”

Samarah: “Oh, okay. When is this party?”

Collin: “Well, it is today, actually. I wasn’t planning on going, but Lydia has been pestering me. She says she is craving a party.”

Lydia: “Oh, please, Collin. Don’t make me look like the bad guy. You also want to go – deep down you know it.”

Aaron: “Why don’t you two go? I mean, Samarah is not really one for parties – more especially in Soweto.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Wow, Babe. What does that really mean? I can have fun too, you know.”

Aaron: "It's not that, I just mean it is not really your scene. And it is most certainly not mine too."

Samarah: "You've said it yourself that it is not a bad thing to try out new things, you know."

Aaron: "Okay, only if you want to go."

Samarah: "I'll go only if you want to."

Lydia: "Yoh (goodness), bathong (Gosh)! Can you two decide already?! I just want to have fun."

Aaron: "Fine, but we were on our way to have brunch. You two can join us if you wish and then we can head straight to the party afterwards."

Aaron: "Agreed".

They headed out and greeted Ntate Tau on their way out. He seemed to have something on his mind when he saw Samarah, but he could not engage as they seemed to be in a hurry. They went to the mall and had brunch at a nearby restaurant with a few drinks of course. After a mere two hours later, they were finally ready to head to the party. They were all set and dressed accordingly, since the theme that was communicated was blue and white, therefore they settled for jeans with sneakers and white Tshirts.

Lydia: “Oh, I can’t wait to finally party with you again, babes. It has been too long indeed.”

Samarah: “You know parties aren’t my scene, but it is never too late to try anything new.”

Lydia: “Whatever you have done to my friend, keep doing it, Aaron. I love this new her.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “As long as you don’t steal her from me.”

Lydia: “Oh, please. I can’t compete with pillow talk. I mean, you even got her to colour her dreadlocks. I’ve known her for years and not even I could get her to bleach them. I salute you.”

Collin: (laughing) “Stop it, baby, man.”

Lydia: “Le tshaba nnete (you guys are afraid of the truth).”

As Aaron was turning into the street they were directed to, Lydia saw quite a familiar place.

Lydia: (frowning) “Baby, where exactly are we going?”

Collin: “Oh, he said we must look for a peach painted house. Here’s the house number. There it is.”

There was a huge tent right outside the house and to Lydia’s surprise, it was literally four houses away from Langa’s home. She felt a little unsettled and she noticed the change in Aaron’s facial expression. She knew they were both thinking of

the same thing. She quickly looked at Samarah to try and get a glimpse of her expression as well.

Lydia: "Do you know where we are, Sam?"

Samarah: (frowning) "No, should I be aware of this place? I don't recall ever being in Soweto."

Aaron: "Well, it's your first time. It is no big deal. Let's go."

Collin walked out while Lydia got out of the car feeling rather weary about the situation.

Collin: "Are you alright, babes?"

Lydia: "Yes, it's just..."

Collin: "What is it?"

Lydia: "Nothing. Don't worry about it."

Collin: "Are you sure?"

Lydia: "Yes."

Collin kissed her forehead gently.

Collin: "Okay then. You'll tell me when you're ready."

Samarah walked hand in hand with Aaron, but she just had a rather curious look on her face. She glanced around a few times at the houses, and eventually her eyes landed on Langa's home.

Aaron: "Are you alright?"

Samarah: "Yes, I just can't keep staring at these houses. Something within me tells me that they are all so

familiar, you know, like I've been here before or something. I just can't pinpoint it."

Aaron: "It will come to you, don't worry."

The four of them were about to walk into the tent, when Collin's, Dan friend approached them.

Dan: (excitedly) "Collin, my man! You made it!"

Collin: "Sho Dan. Yes, I did. I brought my woman and some of my friends. I do hope you don't mind."

Dan: "The more the merrier, right?"

They all got acquainted with one another and Dan was rather hospitable. The party hadn't really started yet. The set up was just about done and a few people who seemed like family members were in the tent. They were the same age as them if not a tad bit older, but everything was falling into place.

Dan: "Here, take a seat anywhere but there. That's my table."

He chuckled and offered them drinks. He showed them where to get more should they run out of anything. Luckily they had already eaten.

Lydia: "This is one thing about kasi parties that I like. The alcohol is not limited and you know what they say about free alcohol, right?"

Collin: "It slaps harder than anything else."

They both laughed.

Aaron: "Are you going to drink anything?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "I am not sure I even want to."

Aaron: "I'm right here. You can drink if you feel like it."

Samarah: (nodding) "I'll have a Savanna for now."

Aaron: "Okay, I'll get you one. I'll be right back."

They got acquainted to a few more people who were invited, and luckily they already knew some of them from Campus. The party officially started after about an hour. Dan was properly dressed for his 21st. He really looked the part.

Lydia: (shaking head) "Man, kasi (township) parents really take 21st birthday parties seriously. I mean imagine what all this could have cost them."

Collin: "Yes, but I'd rather have bought a car with the entire amount."

Dan's parents and friend began making speeches, all this while the tent had become so full that it was impossible for the four of them to see who was all there. It was a party after all. Dan

made his own speech and thanked everyone for coming. The alcohol was then galore and it was time to take pictures and start partying – officially. Little did they know that their evening was about to get spoiled. After yet another few hours, they all took pictures with Dan and once the alcohol was flowing they started dancing.

Lydia: “Collin, tla re jaive toe (let’s go dance, please).”

Collin: “Adios (Bye), guys. My wife is holding me hostage on the dance floor.”

Aaron laughed while he sat next to his girlfriend.

Aaron: “Are you okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, are you?”

Aaron: “You know I am always okay whenever I am around you.”

Samarah: “May I tell you something?”

Aaron: “Of course.”

Samarah: (whispering) “I feel like dancing.”

Aaron: (excitedly) “Then let’s dance...”

They got up and started dancing with one another. Samarah was slowly letting go and dancing with her man however she felt like it. Aaron loved seeing that side of her. She allowed him to carress her body in a sensual way while they were on that dance floor. She allowed him to explor her body while they were dancing and her hips were swaying in a way most peole had never seen. A lot of their fellow campus mates were rather shocked that Samarah could actually dance. They were the “It” couple; everyone wanted to be them and all the girls adored the way Aaron loved her – mostly publicly.

Lydia: “Ayeye (Oh, yes)! Yes, chomi ya ka (my friend)! Show them all what you’re made of!”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Stop it, Lydia. You’ll make her want to sit down.”

Lydia: (laughing) “After what she did in Tokyo, I doubt she will be scared by all these people.”

Aaron: (embarrassed) “Must you guys talk about everything?”

Lydia: “Who said anything about everything?”

Aaron just chuckled and laughed it off. They had no idea that the word around town had already spread. The town gossips had already spread the news that Langa’s rich ex girlfriend was back in town – with a rich boyfriend by her side. He was planning to make a stop at the party after his shift and the moment he landed, he was shocked to see what was before him. He had just taken a beer from the bar when he noticed a very different Samarah before him. She was even more

beautiful than the last time he had seen her. She had lost quite a visible amount of weight and she was glowing. All that he could see, but what really stressed him was that; she was happy. She was laughing and care-free, something she hardly was whenever she was with her. “Could it be because he has money?” he thought to himself. “Samarah was not into money, but I guess people do change” so he thought. Ntombi arrived as she heard he was at the party.

Ntombi: “Oh, there you are. I’ve been looking everywhere for you. Did you really have to leave me behind? I told you to call me the moment you arrived so that we could come here together.”

Langa had zoned out and was captivated by Samarah. After a few more sentences, Ntombi realized that her boyfriend was not even paying much attention to her. The moment she realized why, she became angered.

Ntombi: (angrily) “Langa! Are you even listening to me right now?!”

Langa: “Oh, sorry. Uthini, baby (what are you saying)?”

Ntombi: (clicking tongue) “Don’t tell me you’re still hung up on her. I mean, she’s still fat.”

Langa: “No, I’m not. I paid lobola for you, didn’t I?”

Ntombi: “You haven’t finished. Remember that. I’m going to get myself a drink. I’ll be right back.”

Langa just nodded and proceeded to sit down. Vee and Vusimuzi had finally gotten married – despite Vusi’s apprehensiveness. They had two children already and she still managed to party with him no matter what.

Vee: “Hey, Langa. Kudala sikumele (We’ve been waiting on you).”

She looked like she had been drinking for quite some time.”

Langa: "Oh, hey. I was busy as you know. Taxi drivers don't sleep."

Vusi: "Notmbi looks pissed. What did you do to her?"

He glanced over again at Samarah's direction and Vusi noticed.

Langa: "Nothing."

He lit his cigarette and the moment Vusi realized why his brother's mood had gone all sour, he found it rather amusing.

Vusi: (chuckling) "Don't tell me you are still hung up on her. I mean, look at her. She is finally with her type."

Vee: "Yes, and besides, you guys are married now."

Langa: "Traditionally."

Vee: “Don’t let her hear you say that.”

Ntombi came back and sat right next to her man and immediately started to fiddle with his overgrown beard, annoying him.

Langa: (annoyed) “Ucabanga ukuthi uyenzani (what do you think you’re doing)?”

Ntombi: (frowning) “Since when do you complain when I play with your beard?”

Vee: (laughing) “Since your competition is back in town, baby girl. Wordis that her boyfriend is beyond loaded.”

Langa: “He doesn’t look loaded. Those thick glasses of him make him look like an idiot.”

Ntombi: “Why do you care? I thought you were over her!”

She was shouting at him so loudly that everyone heard it past the music. Samarah along with Aaron and the rest of the people there were staring at them. She caught a glimpse of him and he looked right back at her, but she couldn't recognize him at all.

Langa: "Eish (oh), must you really make a scene, Ntombi?"

Ntombi: (shouting) "I swear if you make a fool out of me again, I will stab someone!"

She was about to break her beer bottle, when he removed her from the tent faster than lighting itself. Vee was laughing as always, while Vusi was just amused and chose to mind his own business.

Samarah: (frowning) "Does such things happen all the time at parties like these?"

Collin: "Sometimes."

Aaron: "Are you okay? We can leave if you want to."

Samarah: "No, I'm fine."

Aaron: "Okay."

They sat back down and continued to enjoy the party. He was a little uneasy, but he chose not to show her. An hour later, Langa came back to the party and found Vee and Vusi still drinking and smoking.

Vee: "You're back? Where's Ntombi?"

Langa: "She's at home."

Vee: "Why did you leave her there?!"

Langa: "I don't answer to you. Mind your own business."

Vee: "You came back for her, didn't you?"

Langa: "Eh, Vusi. Khuza umuntu wakho (tell your girl to stay in her lane)."

Vusi: "Awume nawe (just stop it), Vee."

She was annoyed and decided to keep quiet. Her side kick Zanele was now married, so she was the only one left who loved meddling in other people's business. She and Ntombi got up to no good, apart from smoking and drinking all day, there was not much they did. Phume was studying to become a Dentist. After a while, Samarah needed to use the toilet. She had been going with Lydia for safety and Dan ensured them that they could use the restroom in the house, but Lydia had seemingly disappeared with Collin.

Samarah: "I need to pee."

Aaron: "Come, I'll take you."

Samara: "You don't have to follow me everywhere, you know. I'll be fine."

Aaron: "No, love. You don't know this place. It is not safe for you to wander around."

Samarah: "I'm going into the house, besides, Collin and Lydia have probably gone somewhere for a quickie and I can't expect you to walk around holding our bags and jackets. You're facing the house, so you can watch me enter and leave all the way from here."

Aaron: "It's dark, Sam. Be careful. If you don't leave within the next five minutes, I am coming for you."

Samarah: "Sir, yes, sir!"

She chuckled and gave him a kiss as she walked out. She walked right past Langa's table, which felt like the perfect opportunity for him to try something. He stood up quickly. Aaron noticed him get up and just as he was about to

leave the tent and go look for Samarah, the DJ made an announcement.

DJ: "Sorry to disturb but if you are driving a blue Golf 7 with registration number CY59CD GP, could you please step out. Someone seems to have bumped your car and the suspect has been apprehended."

He rushed out to go see what the problem was, while Samarah was about to head back into the tent, Langa quickly cornered her. He held her hand which alarmed her.

Langa: "Hey, Sammy. Long time. You look good, really. How have you been?"

She quickly removed her hand and stared at him with the utmost shock that he even knew her name.

Samarah: "May I help you?"

Langa: (chuckling) “Come on. Is this a new game that you’re playing right now? I know that guy is your new boyfriend, I mean, people talk, but I was just hoping that we could talk for a moment.”

Samarah: “I’m sorry, but I really don’t know you. You must be mistaken.”

Langa: “It’s me, Langa. Come on.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Langa? You’re my... I was told of what you did to me.”

Langa: (frowning) “Told? What do you mean?”

Samarah: “I really don’t remember you and I am actually glad I don’t. Now, if you’ll excuse me.”

Langa: “Hey, come on. I won’t be long. I just want to talk to you about something. My mother really misses you. Buhle misses you – I miss you. Even Baba died missing you.”

The further she tried to get away from him, the tighter his grip became on her wrist. He kept pulling her towards the direction of his home.

Samarah: (anxiously) “Seriously, I don’t know you. Please, let go of me.”

Langa: “I won’t hurt you. I just want to talk to you, please.”

Samarah started getting a massive headache and felt like everything was spinning around her. Langa was overloading her with unnecessary information and being forceful. All the while Langa was trying to get her to note his words, Buhle appeared from behind the tent. She was rather excited to see the confused Samarah.

Buhle: (surprised) “Oh, my goodness! Sammy? Is that you?!”

She attacked her with a hug.

Buhle: “Oh, wow! I can’t believe you are actually here! How are you?!”

Samarah: (teary) “I... I don’t... who are you? I don’t even know him, would you please tell him to let go of me?”

Buhle became rather appalled at the situation at hand. Samarah started crying as she stared at her in fear.

Buhle: “What have you done to her? Can’t you see she looks frightened?!”

Langa: “I just wanted to talk to her, that’s all.”

Buhle: “Let go of her!”

Langa let go of her arm while Buhle profusely apologised.

Buhle: “Hey, I’m really sorry. Please, forgive him. He can be such an asshole at times. I really don’t think he meant any harm.”

Samarah: (crying) “I kept telling him that I don’t remember him... I don’t know him, but he just kept pushing! He just kept pushing!”

Buhle: “I’m sorry. Who are you here with?”

Samarah: “My boyfriend...”

Aaron came rushing to her and once he realized she was crying, his face changed.

Aaron: “What the fuck happened here? What did he do to you? Are you hurt?! Why are you crying?”

Langa: “I didn’t do anything to her. I just wanted to talk to her.”

Aaron: (angrily) “You just wanted to talk to her yet she’s crying?!”

Buhle: “There was a misunderstanding. Please, he didn’t hurt her.”

Samarah: (crying) “Aaron, please, can we go home. My head is pounding.”

Aaron: “You’re lucky I didn’t lay a hand on you, sonny. Stay the fuck away from her if you know what’s good for you.”

He gently grabbed the crying Samarah and left with her, leaving Buhle in a state of confusion.

Buhle: “What did you do to her?”

Langa: “Nothing. I swear. I just pulled her towards me and wanted to talk to her, but she kept on saying that she doesn’t

know me nor remember me. Do you think she's acting because of what I did to her?"

Buhle: "Really, Langa? Did that look like someone who was faking it all?! If she doesn't remember you, I honestly don't blame her. You really fucked things up and had to end up with Ntombi."

Langa: "Ushokanjani (what do you mean)?"

Buhle: "Hayi suka (Oh please)."

Aaron took Samarah the car and quickly went to the tent to grab the rest of their things. Upon arrival at the tent, Lydia and Collin had just gotten back.

Collin: "What's wrong?"

Aaron: "We're leaving."

Once they were all in the car, Lydia realized Samarah was crying.

Lydia: "Come sit with me in the back, Collin go to the front please."

Collin: "What happened to the car?"

Aaron: "Some fucker bumped it, but I sorted him out."

He started the car and drove off in high speed.

Lydia: "Hey, what's wrong? What happened?"

Samarah: (crying) "I... I, wanted to go to the toilet. Aaron wanted to go with me but I told him not to. When I left the house, he was there."

Lydia: "Who?"

Aaron: (angrily) “Langa.”

Lydia: (shocked) “What?! What did he do to you? Did he hurt you?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, he... He kept pulling me towards him and further away from the tent. When I asked him who he was, he kept telling me that he is my ex and that he was sorry. The moment he began to tell me everything he said happened and of people I don’t even know, my heart started feeling like I was spinning. That girl came and she also knew my name. She hugged me but once she realized that I had no idea who they both were, she saved me. Oh, shit. My head is on fucking fire. I feel like it is about to burst. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

Lydia: “Maybe we should take her to the hospital, Aaron.”

Samarah: “No, ho hospitals. I just want to go home.”

Lydia: "Okay, we'll get you a grandpa on our way back home."

Aaron was driving, but his entire concentration was on the love of his life. They stopped by a nearby garage and got her some water and grandpa, but she was not getting better. Once they got to the flat, Aaron took her to his flat, while Lydia and Collin went to her flat.

Lydia: "You'll call me when she doesn't get better, won't you?"

Aaron: "Yes, I promise."

Lydia: "Thanks."

Once he closed the door he focused all his energy on her.

Aaron: "Come

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let's take a shower. You'll feel a lot better."

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay, but my head feels so heavy. I can hardly move."

Aaron: "I'll help you."

He took off her clothes and helped her get into the shower. She was not feeling like herself at all. He helped her take a shower and once they were done, he got her into bed as well.

Samarah: "Can you give me a pain killer or something?"

Aaron: "You're not getting better?"

Samarah shook her head. He got up and got her two pain killers and after about 15 minutes, she managed to doze off. He was rather worried about her and found it hard to sleep, so he decided to call her doctor.

Doctor: "Hello."

Aaron: "Hi, Doc. It's Aaron. I am sorry to call you so late."

Doctor: "Oh, hi. It's alright. I am on call tonight. Is there anything I can help with?"

Aaron: (sigh) "My girlfriend was in a very unfortunate situation tonight. She bumped into her ex and started having a really bad migraine. It has been hard to get it under control ever since."

Doctor: "Does she remember anything of him?"

Aaron: "No, she says she doesn't."

Doctor: "Headaches are common in memory loss patients. She is likely to get those more often now. It is a sign that her memory might come back, but I big chunks instead of regular bits and pieces."

Aaron: (sigh) "What can I do to help? This might deter her in her studies."

Doctor: "It is fixable. Bring her by tomorrow. I'll refer you to that psychologist again. She's really good. She'll be able to assist."

Aaron: "Thank you, Doc. I really appreciate it."

They both said their goodbyes and hung up. His car was bumped and his hand was bruised but that was the least of his worries. He needed to ensure that she was okay. He lay next to her and he barely slept a wink. While Aaron dozed off hours later, Samarah had the same dream she had been having, but only this time it came with flash backs. She found herself waking up drenched in sweat, while the migraine had subsided to a mild headache, but it still was nearly unbearable. She decided to get up at 6am and make them both breakfast. She included a lot of healthy items; fruits with walnuts and yoghurt, along with an English breakfast. Aaron never slept in, but after watching her sleep nearly the entire night, he woke up after

her. Once he noticed that she wasn't in bed, he immediately jumped up and found her wrapping up in the kitchen.

Samarah: "Hey. What's wrong? You look so pale."

He immediately rushed towards her and gave her a tight hug.

Samarah: "What's wrong, love?"

Aaron: "I didn't see you in bed so I became worried. Why didn't you wake me? You know I don't like it when you make us food by yourself."

Samarah: "Yes, but I saw you sleeping so peacefully that I didn't want to disturb you."

Aaron hugged her from behind and inhaled her scent.

Aaron: "I missed you."

Samarah: (smiling) "You see me every single day, Mr. Moeng."

Aaron: "Well, Mr. Moeng wishes you could be sown right onto his leg so that we could be conjoined. I hate being away from you. How are you feeling today?"

Samarah: (sigh) "Much better, just a slight headache."

Aaron: "I spoke to your doctor. I have made an appointment for us to go in for a check up."

Samarah: (frowning) "But why?"

Aaron: "We're going back to campus on Monday. I don't want you getting distracted by anything."

Samarah: "I hear you, but is a check up really necessary?"

Aaron: "Love, you are going to see the doctor. You might as well get a whole body physical assessment done while you're at it."

Samarah: "There's no winning with you, is there?"

Aaron: "You know me too well."

Samarah: "What happened to your hands?"

Aaron: "It is no big deal. Come, let's eat and I'll tell you all about it."

They sat down and prayed for the food before they began eating.

Aaron: "Some idiot bumped my car last night while you went to the bathroom. He wanted to run away until I beat him up."

Samarah: (sigh) “It’s all my fault. I’m sorry. If I hadn’t asked us to go then we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

Aaron: “These things happen. Besides, it is just a car, it is replaceable. I was more worried about you and what that asshole could have done to me.”

Samarah: “I don’t think he wanted to hurt me, he just really scared me, that’s all.”

Aaron: (shaking head) “He looked really desperate. You don’t know what desperate people are indeed capable of.”

Samarah: “I suppose you’re right. Speaking of Langa, I have been having dreams, one particularly weird dream, rather.”

Aaron: “What kind of dream?”

Samarah: “Well, I never told you because it just didn’t make sense to me. I would see him in my dreams, but because I had no recollection of him – it just didn’t make sense to me.”

Aaron: "Go on."

Samarah: "Well, I've been dreaming that you and I are about to get married, but then he appears out of nowhere – with a gun and shoots you. If it is not a gun, then he approaches you using a long, sharp knife. What puzzles me is how recurrent this dream is now and how it keeps changing form."

Aaron: "What do you mean?"

Samarah: "Well, at first it would be the very same dream; us at the chapel with him shooting you. Then now he approaches with a knife. Last night while sleeping, I thought it was the painkillers or something, but I recall the dream too well."

Aaron: "Did it appear differently?"

Samarah: (nodding) "This time we were done getting married, and then as we were about to leave, he came out of nowhere and ran you over with his car. When I wanted to run towards

you, he appeared next to me and held my hand so tightly, that I couldn't get away from him. And then... you disappeared."

Aaron kept quiet for a short while trying to analyse the meaning of the dream.

Samarah: "I'm sorry. I am ruining our breakfast."

Aaron: "No, it is not your fault that you keep getting such dreams. We'll sort it out, don't you worry."

Samarah: "There's something else."

Aaron: "Yes?"

Samarah: "I'm starting to remember."

Aaron: "What do you remember?"

Samarah: "I am starting to remember bits of my father, Richard and I remember Buhle and... Langa."

Aaron: "Hmm, I see. Good memories I hope."

Samarah: (shaking head) "Not really. I recall only good memories of my father and Buhle, but I remember what Langa did to me and how devastated I was."

Aaron: "Well, I don't want it all messing with your head. Let's go shower and see what the doctor has to say, okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay."

Aaron: "Hey, I love you. Don't you ever forget that."

Samarah: "I love you too."

They went to the bathroom and took a shower together as always. It was a bit different as they hardly said a word to one

another. It was as if each one was absorbed in their thoughts, trying to figure out what the other was thinking of. It was intense and very silent. Once done, they got dressed. She had sent Lydia a text saying she got up and felt a lot better, which put her to ease. She was still fast asleep with Collin and so she thought she would see her when she came back. Upon leaving the building, they didn't see Mr. Tau, but the guard on duty had a message for them, oddly.

Guard: "Dumelang (Good morning)."

Samarah: "Dumela Ntate (Good morning sir)."

Aaron: "How are you?"

Guard: "I am very well, how are you today?"

Samarah: "We can't complain."

Guard: "I don't normally do this, but Ntate Tau asked me to give you a message. I have been out here waiting for you since I started my shift."

It was a rather chilly morning due to the rain.

Samarah: (shocked) "In this rain, sir?"

Guard: "Yes, he said it is really urgent and I of all people know to take his messages rather seriously."

Aaron: "What did he say?"

Guard: "He said that you need to call him as soon as possible, or else, your headaches will get worse."

That message puzzled the both of them.

Aaron: "Alright, thank you, sir. See you later."

Guard: "Alright, bye."

As they drove off, Samarah was rather puzzled.

Samarah: "Does he always give such weird messages?"

Aaron: "Sometimes. Most of the time, he sees good things. Besides, I don't think there is anything to worry ourselves over."

Samarah: "I suppose you're right."

He noticed her holding her forehead and squinting her eyes.

Aaron: "Is the headache back?"

Samarah nodded.

Aaron: "There's a pair of sunglasses in the cabion."

She took them out and put them on right away. They arrived at the hospital and the doctor had been expecting them.

Aaron: "Hi, Doc. Thank you so much for meeting us."

Doctor: "It is no problem. My shift ended a while ago, but I don't mind going the extra mile for my patients."

Aaron: "We appreciate it."

Doctor: "How are you doing, Samarah?"

Samarah: "I am okay, I guess."

Doctor: "Aaron tells me you've been having headaches. Do you mind if I examine you?"

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, not at all.”

He made her sit on the bed and the moment she took off her sunglasses, she felt like her head was heavy.

Doctor: “Is the light hurting you?”

She nodded. He continued to examine her and gave her a physical assessment as Aaron suggested.

Doctor: “Well, physically, there is nothing wrong with you. You seem to be getting your memory back, though you’re getting headaches because it seems as if all the traumatic experiences you have had are coming back at the same time.”

Aaron: “So, what can we do?”

Doctor: “Well, I suggest you go and see a psychologist, like I suggested the last time. You should really try hypnotherapy. Basically, you might be able to get your memory back, without overloading your brain with trauma.”

Aaron: "And you are sure that will help?"

Doctor: "In most cases, it does."

Aaron: "And if it doesn't?"

Doctor: "Then she will have to be patient and wait for her memory to come back. It is quite a long shot, but you both have nothing to lose."

Aaron: "What do you think, Sammy?"

Samarah: "I am willing to try it."

Doctor: "Good, it is settled then. I'll write you a referral letter."

Samarah: "I just have one more question, Doctor."

Doctor: "Sure. What's up?"

Samarah: "Uhm, I'd like to... get on contraceptives."

Doctor: (chuckling) "Oh, that wasn't exactly a question, but I assume you want to ask me which one would be suitable for you, am I correct?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

Doctor: "Well, we have many different kinds; the contraceptive injection, the implant, the pill, the IUD and of course, the Evra Patch. I do not recommend the patch for you because of your weight. It won't work. What I can ask you to look at is the pill, IUD or the implant. You're still young and childless and the injection does seem to give a lot of young ladies problems. I will give you these pamphlets to go through. Do some research and when you're ready, go see this gynae I am referring you to. Okay?"

Samarah: "Okay, thank you, doctor."

Doctor: "You're welcome. It is better to be safe than sorry, right?"

She felt a little embarrassed which really amused Aaron. Once the doctor was out of the room and left the two of them alone, he laughed.

Aaron: "Hmm, I see you want us to go raw now, don't you?"

Samarah: (embarrassed) "Stop it. I am just taking precautions."

Aaron: "Well, you could have just said you want it skin to skin, baby."

Samarah: "Aaron, you're really embarrassing me."

Aaron: (laughing) "I'm sorry. Come, let's go. We have a psychologist to see."

Samarah: “How do you do it? I mean, how do you cope with me?”

Aaron: “Love, baby. Love is something else.”

They finished up and headed straight to the Psychologist’s office. Luckily, she had been expecting them.

Psychologist: “Good day. My name is Dr. Peggy Scheepers. You are more than welcome to call me Peggy, or Dr. Scheepers or simply just Doctor. It is indeed your choice. I just would like you to be comfortable with me. Whatever we discuss stays in here, amongst us, okay?”

Samarah: (nodding nervously) “Okay.”

Dr. Scheepers: “So, I have been expecting you and I am surprised that you never came soon after you were diagnosed with amnesia.”

Samarah: “Oh, honestly, I am quite afraid of hospitals – I just don’t know why. I didn’t think it was necessary.”

Dr. Scheepers: “I see.”

Aaron: “Can that affect her progress, doctor?”

Dr. Scheepers: “Well, based on your referral letter, your case is quite unusual.”

Aaron: “How so?”

Dr. Scheepers: “Well, most amnesia patients can’t seem to retain new information. Anything recent to them doesn’t become stored in their brains, but in your case, you recall everything and everyone recent and nothing much from before your accident. In your case, we call your condition dissociative amnesia; that occurs when your brain blocks out certain, important information. It could be due to a traumatic event which occurred when you were younger or right before your accident. It is quite common with head injuries.”

Aaron: "I see."

Dr. Scheepers: "Can you recall anything traumatic that happened to you or someone you know?"

Samarah: "Well, I remember my sister, my twin sister to be precise. She died when we were both ten years old."

Dr. Scheepers was speaking while jotting down notes in her notebook and occasionally fixing her glasses. She was a short, white doctor with the most gorgeous legs and the most perfect set of teeth.

Dr. Scheepers: "I see. How did she pass?"

Samarah: "Well, that's what I don't understand. I don't remember that part."

Dr. Scheepers: (nodding) “I see. It says here that you don’t remember your parents either?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Well, as of last night, I had a dream of my father. I don’t recall my mother much.”

Dr. Scheepers: “Well then, I’d like to explain what I would like to try on you – hypnotherapy. Most of the time it is used to cure or alleviate trauma, mostly childhood trauma. In your case, we’ll be using it to prevent possible Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and possible negative coping mechanisms which might occur.”

Aaron: “How does it work? Is it painful?”

Dr. Scheepers: “Well, with the patient’s consent of course, I get her in a state of deep sleep and concentration, where she’ll be calm and focused on my words and voice. It won’t be painful at all. I will use this method to get the brain to focus on what we would like her to remember. It is a relaxing process and most of the time, your recurrent headaches should be able to disappear.”

Aaron: "And if they don't?"

Dr. Scheepers: "Then she will be required to do therapy and live off anti-depressants that will alleviate her headaches. Normal pain killers will not have any effect since it is a psychological problem, not a physical one."

Aaron: "What do you think, babe? Do you want to do it?"

Samarah: (nervously) "I have nothing to lose, right?"

Aaron: "Okay, Doc. You can proceed, but if she starts feeling uncomfortable in any way, we stop. Got it?"

Dr. Scheepers: "Of course. Alright, Samarah, I'd like you to lie down on my couch over there. You need to be completely relaxed."

Aaron: "Can I stand next to her?"

Dr. Scheepers: "Sure, but try not to touch her since she will sense your heartbeat and how you feel. It might disturb the process."

Aaron: "Okay. I'll try."

She lay down on the couch and let go of his hand. It felt as if she was about to do something independently, which still scared her.

Dr. Scheepers: "I need you to close your eyes and relax. I need you to focus on my voice at all times. Should you feel uncomfortable, you tell me, okay?"

Samarah: "Okay..."

Dr. Scheepers: "If you feel the need to stop at any given time, I need you to say "red". If you would like me to continue, you say "green". If you are unsure of a certain memory or situation you find yourself in, you say "yellow". Do you understand?"

Samarah: "Yes."

Aaron was rather frightened about the experience. He wasn't quite sure what they would get out of it.

Dr. Scheepers: "Okay. Just follow my voice. Take a deep breath in, and a deep breath out."

She did as told and started to relax.

Dr. Scheepers: "Just follow my voice, okay? When you hear my fingers snap, you will slowly relax and when you hear my fingers snap three times, you will then be in a complete relaxed state of mind."

She snapped her fingers once, then twice and then three times quickly. By then Samarah was relaxed and very calm. It made Aaron really anxious knowing he couldn't touch her.

Dr. Scheepers: "Okay, we will start at the beginning. Find your ten year old self. Do you see her?"

Samarah: (smiling) "Yes, I see her."

Dr. Scheepers: "What else do you see?"

Samarah: "I see my sister, Amarah. We are walking back from school. Wow, she looks so happy. And so do I."

Dr. Scheepers: "That's good. It is a good memory, is it not?"

Samarah: "Indeed, it is."

Dr. Scheepers: "Should we continue? Red, yellow or green, Samarah?"

Samarah: "Green."

Dr. Scheepers: "What are you two doing?"

Samarah: "I see us talking and I was listening to her crazy stories as always. She was always the funny one."

Dr. Scheepers: "Where are you two?"

Samarah: "We are at home, my father's house."

Dr. Scheepers: "Does it feel like a happy place?"

Samarah: "Absolutely."

Dr. Scheepers: "Okay, continue. Tell me what you see."

Samarah: "She told me that I should always remember her, no matter what happened and then – wait."

Dr. Scheepers: "What is it? What do you see?"

Samarah: "Someone is coming."

Dr. Scheepers: "Breathe. Stay calm. Who is it?"

Samarah's breathing started to rapidly change.

Samarah: "I don't know. The person is knocking on our bedroom door. It seems to be night time."

Dr. Scheepers: "Green, yellow or red?"

Samarah: (breathing rapidly) "Green."

Dr. Scheepers: "What do you see?"

Samarah: "She is walking in."

Dr. Scheepers: "Who?"

Samarah: "My mother."

Dr. Scheepers: "Carry on."

Samarah: "She looks angry. I can't hear what she says, but..."

She starts breathing heavily.

Dr. Scheepers: "Carry on."

Samarah: "She's... She's really angry. I can't... I can't do this."

Dr. Scheepers: "Okay, calm down."

Samarah: "Red! Red! Red! Red! Red! Red!"

She exclaimed "Red" so many times, that Aaron was certainly terrified. He had never seen her in that state before. Dr.

Scheepers got her out of that trance and even then, she wailed like a bereaved woman.

Aaron: "Hey, it's okay. It's okay, I'm here."

Samarah: (crying) "I can't do this. I am sorry, but I can't do this."

Aaron: "Shh, it's okay. We understand."

She cried for a good 15 minutes, with Aaron by her side. She looked so frightened, but Dr. Scheepers allowed her to be free. Once she had calmed down, she felt embarrassed.

Samarah: "I'm sorry, doctor. You must be quite appalled."

Dr. Scheepers: "There's no need to apologize. All this is part of your healing process. Believe it or not, we are actually one step closer."

Samarah: "How when we didn't even get to do anything?"

Dr. Scheepers: "Well, at least now we have a start. We now can be certain that something happened on the night your sister died that caused your trauma. Whatever it is, your mother could very well be part of. You seemed very scared of her, petrified in fact. Don't you worry, we'll work on it."

Aaron: "So, what now?"

Dr. Scheepers: "Well, we will have to start a round of therapy before we ever get to try out hypnosis again. For now, I will prescribe you some medication that will alleviate your headaches. They are tension headaches, so you should be able to feel at ease after a few days. Be sure to take one pill in the evening just before bed. Do not take them after 8pm please, otherwise you might oversleep."

Aaron: "Don't worry, Doc. I'll make sure that she sticks to her meds."

Dr. Scheepers: “You do that and do not stress yourself by any means. If you ever need to talk or ask me anything, I am just a phone call away.”

Aaron: “Thank you so much, Doctor. We really do appreciate it.”

Dr. Scheepers: “You are most welcome. My PA will send you your therapy schedule. If you’re not happy with it, please do let me know.”

And just like that, a can of worms was opened in Samarah’s life and memories started to flood her mind from that day onwards.

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

After Samarah’s rather hectic therapy session, she felt drained and needed to rest. Thankfully Lydia understood as she was literally just next door. While she took a nap, Aaron took it upon himself to call Ntate Tau. He really wanted to know what he meant by his message.

Ntate Tau: “Hello, Aaron.”

Aaron: “Dumela Ntate (Hello, father).”

Ntate Tau: “How are you? I expected you to call me a lot sooner.”

Aaron: “I’m sorry I couldn’t call earlier. I had to take Samarah to the doctor.”

Ntate Tau: “Hmm, I see. Well, she will be alright, however her problem is that of a psychological manner and not a physical one.”

Aaron: “That is exactly what we were told. We tried hypnotherapy, but it didn’t work. She was very scared. Whatever happened on the night her twin sister died really affected her badly.”

Ntate Tau: “You and I both know what that does to a person. What she did affected you too – in more ways than one.”

Aaron: (sigh) “Yes, sadly we don’t have any proof.”

Ntate Tau: “Patience, she will reveal herself to the world. Anyway, how is she now? Are the headaches back?”

Aaron: “Yes, she received medication to alleviate them.”

Ntate Tau: “Yes, the meds should work, but it is important for her not to be dependent on them. I need to make her some herbs that will calm her down. Every night when you two pray, light a candle and burn some incense for her, please. I fear that the worst is yet to come.”

Aaron: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

Ntate Tau: “Well, this is no longer an earthly fight. We have to fight, spiritually. That woman has already dealt with Samarah spiritually.”

Aaron: “Please, don’t tell me I’ll lose her.”

Ntate Tau: “She is the least of your worries. You need to stay away from the likes of Langa Dladla by all means – or else, your worst fear may very well come to light sooner than we think.”

Aaron: “Ntate stop talking in riddles, please.”

Ntate Tau: “I believe Buda told you everything. Your enemy is back and he is a lot nearer than you think. Your uncle is going to launch an attack on you with the help of Langa. You have to face him by all means – and if you try to kill Langa, nothing good will come of it. You cannot kill him; not intentionally at least.”

Aaron felt as if his entire world was about to fall apart.

Aaron: “So, what can I do?”

Ntate Tau: “Let nature run its course. When the time comes, you will have to face him like the real man you are. Your grandfather has got your back all the way.”

Aaron: (anxiously) “And Samarah? Am I going to lose her?”

Ntate Tau kept quiet for a shortwhile.

Aaron: “I am going to lose her to that loser, aren't I?”

Ntate Tau: “I can’t tell you much, but everything shall be revealed to you. You are a strong man, Aaron. Face it like a man, if you try to run away, you’ll only make things worse. I’ll bring the necessary herbs by tomorrow. Make sure that Samarah agrees to use them. Keep your faith alive and remember Matthew 19 verse 26: “With man this is impossible, but with Godd everything is possible”. Your mother didn’t teach you the Bible and ways of prayer for nothing. She has been preparing you for what is to come.”

With that said, he hung up, making Aaron wonder if Samarah’s dream was about to become a reality. He felt so uneasy and disappointed as if his life was just falling apart and he couldn’t do anything about it. He found himself staring at his lovely Samarah. “I can’t lose her – especially not to another man” he thought to himself. If he were to lose her then he felt that it would have been best to leave her with his seed. He loved her too much to even think of living without her, or possibly dying and leaving her behind. He got into the sheets and started touching her.

Samarah: “Hmm, baby? Are you okay?”

The moment he noticed that she was awake, he slowly got on top of her.

Aaron: (breathing heavily) "I need you... Please, let me make love to you..."

There were glistening tears in his eyes and Samarah looked him right in the eye. She noticed he was not okay, but he needed her then. She nodded and took off her shirt. Aaron took off his clothes and once they were completely naked, he slowly dipped his index finger in her vagina. She gasped and moaned simultaneously, as he placed his lips on hers and kissed her passionately. Their wet tongues danced together allowing their bodies to become one. He positioned himself and entered his penis. His eyes locked with hers and he never looked away. Even after kissing her, he would open his eyes and stare right back at her. Those glistening tears started to fall down his cheeks as his worst fears were starting to consume his mind.

Samarah: (moaning) "Baby, are you alright?"

Aaron: "I love you, Samarah. I love you so much."

Samarah: "Oh, I love you too, Aaron."

He delayed his ejaculation and pulled out of her. She opened her eyes and looked at him in wonder, but he went down to her vagina and started licking her clit the way he knew how. Samarah was in a state of uncontrollable euphoria.

Samarah: (moaning) "Aah, fuck! Aaron! Please, come back up, baby, please..."

Aaron: "Come for me, I am begging you."

Samarah allowed him to suck her harder and faster. With every flick of his tongue and each time his lips sucked on her vagina, she spread her legs wider. She let loose and climaxed, but he wasn't done with her. He went back up very fast and kissed her. She enjoyed tasting herself on his warm lips. She didn't pull out of the kiss and held his head tightly. He entered her yet again, causing her to moan out loud.

Aaron: "Look at me... Look at me, Sam."

She opened her eyes, as tough as it was and she stared right back at him. He didn't say a word further, but allowed the both of them to stare at each other while making love. It felt like they were digging into one another's souls on that particular day. They let go and reached orgasm together. He came inside of her without regret. Neither of them were thinking of the consequences on that day. They were just happy to have shared such an intense moment together.

Aaron: "I love you."

Samarah: "I love you too."

He went to the bathroom and grabbed a towel. He wiped the both of them and they dozed off together. They both had no idea why it happened, but they kept on making love and falling back asleep for the rest of that day. Around 8pm, Lydia was banging down their door.

Samarah: "Hmm, who is it at this time of the night?"

Aaron: "It can only be Lydia. I'll get it."

She nodded and tried to go back to sleep. He wore his briefs and attended to the door.

Aaron: "Lydia, are you trying to wake the entire building up?"

Lydia: "Aowa (no), man. The both of you have been ignoring me like crazy. Why?"

She started sniffing.

Aaron: "We've been sleeping."

Lydia: "It really smells like sex in here."

Aaron: "Oh, your bedroom always smells like sex, man. Come on, we're tired."

Lydia: "Yes, and you sure are hungry. Unless you want me to go back to my flat with all this food."

Aaron: "No, don't do that. Where's Collin?"

Lydia: "He went home to check on his parents."

Aaron: "Oh, so you thought it was better to bother us, right?"

Lydia: "I thought you two loved me. Go wake your wife up so we can eat."

Aaron chuckled on his way back to the bedroom. He woke the reluctant Samarah up and she got dressed in her pajamas.

Lydia: "Hey, you're finally up."

Samarah: “Tjo (oh), Lydia. You just had to rock up. We literally went to sleep like an hour ago.”

Lydia: “If I hadn’t come you would have woken up at 10pm craving food. Trust me, I know what an entire day’s sex does to a person’s body.”

Samarah: “Come on, just because we’ve been in here all day doesn’t mean we have been having sex.”

Lydia: “See how thirsty he is? He does look like he has been riding you all damn day.”

Samarah: (laughing) “Wa phapha waitse (You’re so forward you know).”

Lydia: “I know.”

Aaron: “So, what are we eating?”

Lydia: "I made some dumpling and stewe with creamy spinach. The weather permits, right?"

Samarah: "Are you sure you made this?"

Lydia: "I might hate the pots but I can cook, you know."

Samarah and Aaron both laughed. They ate their food and had some juice. After their meal, Aaron decided to give them some privacy.

Aaron: "I'm going out. I'll be right back."

Samarah: "Okay."

Aaron: "Enjoy your gossip session
bo babes."

Lydia: “Whatever.”

He walked out and Lydia started asking what she had been dying to.

Lydia: “How do you really feel?”

Samarah: “Honestly, I feel a bit better since I took those meds right after we got back. I wasn’t going to be able to sleep.”

Lydia: “Yep, and a lot of sex really helps with headaches, you know. You look really well.”

Samarah: (laughing) “Wow, Lydia, wow.”

Lydia: “What exactly happened last night?”

She told her everything from her encounter with Langa to her dream and to her unpleasant session with her therapist.

Lydia: "Babe, that is a lot to take in, you know. I mean, I've been telling you that Beatrice is just not a good person. I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if she killed Amarah or anything like that."

Samarah: "Well, I don't know because it seems as if my brain just doesn't want to remember."

Lydia: "Well, I believe in timing. You will remember when the time is right, you know."

Samarah: "I suppose you're right."

Lydia: "As long as you take it easy. You're the only friend I have. If you die on me, I'll have no one. I'll literally be orphaned without you."

Samarah: "Don't you worry, I won't die any time soon."

While Aaron was outside, he was conversing with Ntate Tau. He explained everything to him about how he should administer the herbs to her. He really thought that he'd tell him about the future.

Aaron: "So, you're really not going to tell me about what is really going to happen?"

Ntate Tau: "The answers are right in front of you. Your uncle is going to come for you."

Aaron: "Will he succeed?"

Ntate Tau: "No, but it has to happen. You can't run from it."

Aaron: "And Samarah?"

Ntate Tau: (sigh) "She will fall into the hands of the wrong man, but she will come back to you – it is fate. You two are meant to be."

Aaron: “Where will I be while she is in the hands of the wrong man?”

Ntate Tau: “Getting stronger to fight your battles. She won’t be completely lost. All those sent to watch her will be here – including me.”

Aaron: “I don’t understand.”

Ntate Tau: “You can’t dwell on what hasn’t happened yet. Fate can sometimes be changed. Now go before she starts worrying about you. Your biggest job is to love her like nothing else right now. She’ll cling onto that love with her dear life.”

From that moment onwards, Aaron strived to do everything and anything with Samarah. He chose to give her the best time of her life for as long as he could, though he had security around watching her for safety. He went back up and found her washing the dishes. He put the herbs right on the kitchen counter and hugged her tightly from behind.

Samarah: "And now?"

Aaron: "Can't I show my woman some love and affection?"

Samarah: "Well, you can, but are you sure you're alright?"

Aaron: "For as long as you're with me, I am more than alright."

Samarah: "What are these?"

Aaron: "They come from Ntate Tau. He asked me to give them to you. They'll really help with the headaches."

Samarah: "I've never used herbs before, but I am willing to try them."

Aaron: "That's all I needed to hear."

He gave her a passionate kiss.

Samarah: "You're acting really weird, you know."

Aaron: "Showering my woman with love is not weird. I have a lot of surprises for you."

Samarah: "What kind?"

Aaron: "You'll see. Come, let's go to bed. Tomorrow is our last day before the new quarter."

Samarah: "Eish (oh), I am not looking forward to that."

Aaron: "Uh-uh. I don't recall dating a lazy girl, now, do I?"

Samarah: "Bathong (Goodness), Aaron. Who are you calling lazy, Mr. Moeng?"

Aaron: "Let's see about that."

He tickled her until she ran all the way to the bedroom. They had a peaceful night's sleep thereafter and Aaron ensured that they still got up at midnight to pray together. The following morning which was a Sunday morning, he made her get up early in the morning.

Aaron: "Good morning, Sunshine. Get up."

Samarah: "Aowa (no), Aaron. It is so early and besides, we're not going anywhere."

Aaron: "Says who?"

Samarah: "It's Sunday."

Aaron: "You've become quite lazy ever since we haven't been exercising."

Samarah got up and looked at him.

Samarah: "Who are you calling lazy?"

Aaron: (chuckling) "I figured that would be the only way to get you to wake up. Come on, go take ka shower. We have a long day ahead of us."

Samarah: "How come you're already dressed?"

Aaron: "I got out and left you sleeping."

Samarah: "You went jogging alone? You want me to gain all my weight back, don't you?"

Aaron: "I wouldn't dream of it. You would still be hot even if you did."

Samarah: (Clicking tongue) "Men can be so annoying."

Aaron: "Are you ovulating? Is that why you're so moody?"

She just clicked her tongue and proceeded to the bathroom. Once she was done, she found he had made the bed and had an entire outfit placed on the bed for her. She got dressed and just before heading out, he had made her a healthy breakfast.

Aaron: "I thought you might want to eat before we leave."

Samarah: "It depends."

Aaron: "On what?"

Samarah: "Where are we going?"

Aaron: "It is a surprise. Ga o tlwaele ne (you just don't get used to this, do you)?"

Samarah: "Alright then. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt."

He sat there and watched her eat without any worry. Once she was done, they walked out hand in hand. They got into the car and drove off. She knew he wasn't going to tell her where they were going, so she stopped asking. He pulled over and parked at a BMW car dealership in Sandton.

Samarah: "Are you looking to buy a new car?"

Aaron: "Something like that."

Samarah: "But you just got the dent fixed on the Golf."

Aaron: "I know, baby. Come."

Surprisingly for Samarah, the salesman who greeted them seemed to have been expecting them.

Salesman: (smiling) "Mr. Moeng, Mrs. Moeng. Welcome to our dealership."

Most of the time people thought they were married and they never bothered to correct them. It sounded really nice to hear them call her Mrs. Moeng.

Aaron: "Hi, thank you."

Salesman: "So, is there anything in particular you have in mind?"

Aaron: "That's up to the lady to decide. Shall we take a look around, babe?"

Samarah: "Oh, you want me to pick?"

Aaron: "I do value your taste and opinion a lot, you know."

She looked around and was entirely fascinated by the cars, but the prices were rather shocking.

Samarah: "Aaron, these prices are ridiculous."

Aaron: "Comfort is pricey, my love. Besides, we're just looking today."

Samarah: "Oho, knowing you, you might just surprise me and buy any one I choose."

Aaron: (laughing) "Come on. Be open minded. We're just looking today, I am not lying. I promise."

Samarah: "Okay then."

She looked around at all the different models, but nothing really caught her eye until she saw the BMW 8 Series Coupè in a light blue colour. Judging by the look on her face, she was really fascinated by that one.

Aaron: "She likes this one. Why don't you go in and see it for yourself?"

She opened the door and walked in. The gorgeous interior and leather seats felt like heaven to her.

Aaron: (smiling) "Do you like it?"

Samarah: "This is nice. I can really see you driving this one."

Aaron: "I see."

Samarah: "But I don't want you buying such an expensive car, Aaron."

Aaron: "Don't you worry yourself about that for now. Come, we have a few more trips to make."

They greeted the salesman goodbye and they were onto the next one. They headed to Mercedes Benz, and he could tell she

was in the spirit of car shopping. They were greeted by the next salesman and Samarah fell in love with the cars before her. She didn't need to look any further, and fell in love with a white GLC Coupe right before her. Her glance was hooked on it, and he opened the door for her without asking any further questions. Aaron got in on the other side of the car and just stared at her.

Samarah: "This one... This is the one."

Aaron: "Are you sure?"

Samarah: "Yes, I mean, it is high time you start looking your age."

Aaron: (laughing) "Wow, really baby?"

Samarah: "Yes, the price is going to give me nightmares, but I love it."

Aaron nodded and off they went. She had no idea where they were going, but surprisingly he stopped in an open sand road.

Samarah: "What are we doing here?"

Aaron: "If you were given the opportunity to buy a car today, which one would you pick out of the two you saw today?"

Samarah: "Well, the Mercedes of course."

Aaron: "Well, here is your chance."

Samarah: "What are you talking about?"

Aaron: "I am going to teach you how to drive every single day until you master it. You have three weeks until you write your learner's test."

Samarah: (shocked) "Are you serious, Aaron?"

Aaron: "Why would I be joking?"

Samarah: "No, love. You can't possibly buy me a Mercedes Benz. Are you crazy?"

Aaron: "I am crazy about you. Go big or go home, remember? What do you say?"

Samarah: "At least let me think about it. Who wants to see a student driving such an expensive car? People will think I am dating a blesser."

Aaron: (laughing) "I don't care, what matters to me is your happiness. Now, are you going to jump into the driver's seat or not?"

Samarah was rather excited to learn how to drive. She did as told and just like that, their driving lessons began.

– “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Between juggling therapy, driving lessons and her studies, Samarah was managing and Aaron was there to see her happy. It had been about eight weeks since she started therapy, and she was already seeing results. Her headaches were less prevalent and she managed to start a healing process with her father. She hadn't seen him in years, so she saw it fit to start. She had gotten her learner's license without even studying much, and little did she know that Aaron had a serious surprise for her. On that particular day, he dropped her off at Dr. Scheepers' office and went about finalizing the last bit of his surprise. She finished earlier than expected and when he needed to fetch her, he was not nearby. She called him immediately after her session.

Aaron: “Baby.”

Samarah: “Love, I'm done. Where are you?”

Aaron: "Eish (oh), I am not around. How come you finished so early?"

Samarah: "Today's session didn't really take long. If you're not around I can take an Uber."

Aaron: "I can get someone to come fetch you."

Samarah: "Aaron, come on, I am not paralyzed, you know. I can do it."

Aaron: "Are you sure? I would never forgive myself should anything happen to you."

Samarah: "Yes, I'll be fine. I will contact you should anything go wrong. I promise."

Aaron: "Okay, send me the details of your driver the moment you get into that cab."

Samarah: “Yes boss.”

She tried logging into her Uber app, but it was unavailable. So, she tried Taxify and it worked. She didn't really worry much about the driver and didn't really see the picture clearly. All she needed was the registration number of the car. She checked in and within ten minutes, the car had arrived. She got in at the back and greeted the driver, unbeknownst to her whom he really was.

Samarah: “Hi, Driver. I'd like to go to Ferndale, please. The exact address I requested.”

She sent Aaron the details of the driver and sent him a text message too. “Going home to see my dad. You can pick me up there if you're done later. Love you.” She was not very surprised that the driver didn't greet her back. She could hardly see his face as he was wearing shades. She thought he was most probably not the talkative type and chose to get busy on her phone. Something within her told her to look up, and once she realized that he was headed towards a different direction, she became alarmed.

Samarah: "Excuse me, driver. I gave you my address and you're going the wrong way."

Langa: "Yes, I know."

Samarah felt immediately panicked once she saw him.

Samarah: "What the fuck are you doing here?! You're not the driver I requested."

Langa: "I am. I'm just using a different name."

Samarah: (frightened) "Where are you taking me?! This is against the law, you know!"

Langa: "I just want to talk to you, that's all."

He was heading towards Soweto, making Samarah panic which was the onset of yet another headache.

Samarah: (panicked) “Please, stop the car and let me out!”

Langa: “Come on, since when are you afraid of me, Sammy? Have I ever hurt you? Have I?”

He didn’t even bother listening to her. She was in a state of shock and decided to call Aaron. The phone rang and once Langa realized that she was on the phone, he quickly stopped the car and grabbed the phone from her, making her panic even more. Aaron had already answered the phone.

Aaron: “Hello? Sam? Hello?”

Langa hung up immediately and switched off her phone.

Langa: (angrily) “Yazi uyabora (you can be so boring, you know). I just want you to come and see uMa (mom) and then I’ll let you go. If I really wanted to hurt you I’d have taken you

somewhere far. Please, do this for me and I promise you, I'll let you go. I won't hurt you."

He tried to touch her and she flinched backwards.

Langa: (shaking head) "I don't even know what they told you about me. You know, I did some digging and found out you actually had memory loss after you fell at res. You know, it really didn't sit well with me knowing that you actually forgot me out of all people. Your father is really upset that your so called boyfriend has been keeping you away from him. I mean, who does that anyway? Family is everything; blood is everything, you know."

He was so calm as if he was doing a sensible thing. He parked the car just outside his gate, leaving Samarah really worried.

Langa: "Come on, we don't bite. Surely you do remember that."

A thousand thoughts started racing through her mind. He even went to open the door for her. She thought of screaming, but then she knew no one in Orlando.

Langa: (smiling) "Come on."

She walked out and he touched her waist. She felt so scared. He had kidnapped her without even worrying. He opened the gate and Buhle was right outside. She was very happy to see Samarah and she jumped to give her a hug as always.

Buhle: (smiling) "Hey. It is so nice to see you again. Gosh, you look so beautiful! I hope this fool didn't take you against your will, did he?"

Samarah: (nervously) "Oh, n... no, he didn't."

Buhle: "You don't sound too sure. Hey wena (you), where did you get her?"

Langa: “She requested and once she saw that it was me, she asked me to come and see uMa. Come on now.”

Buhle: “I don’t trust you, Langa. Believe me, Ma wouldn’t be too happy if you brought any trouble home. And what will Ntombi say if she saw her here?”

Langa: “She’s at work. Relax.”

Buhle: “Come on in, Sam.”

Buhle held her by hand but she was too excited to even notice how nervous and stiff Samarah was. She was taken into the house and she saw a boy playing in the lounge.

Langa: “Oh, that’s my son, Mthokozisi.”

He spoke about it as if he wasn’t the product of the ultimate betrayal. He looked exactly like Langa. Buhle took Samarah to her mom who was in her bedroom.

Buhle: “Ma! We have a visitor for you!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Who on earth is that? I told you I want no visitors!”

The moment Mrs. Dladla saw Samarah a tear escaped her eye. Samarah looked at her and she looked as if she had aged ten years in a span of three years. She looked very frail, and unhappy, which broke Samarah’s heart.

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, my child! I have longed so much to see you.”

Samarah gave her a tight hug and allowed Mrs. Dladla to let out her tears of joy. Samarah was still scared

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but being in that woman’s arms gave her peace of mind. She knew that Langa couldn’t do anything bad to her for as long as his mother was there.

Mrs. Dladla: "How have you been?"

Samarah: "I've been okay. A lot has happened, you know. I fell during my first year at Varsity and hurt my head. I lost my memory in the process and I have only recently started remembering some of the people I once knew."

Mrs. Dladla: "Oh, Nkosiyami (my God). My dreams! It is no wonder I'd dream of you looking confused. I'd dream of you staring at me and whenever I called out to you, you'd look so confused. When Buhle told me she saw you at a party nearby, I was a bit saddened that you didn't even want to come and see me, though I don't blame you."

Samarah: "Oh, it was not intentional."

Mrs. Dladla: "She explained what this fool did to you. I hope you didn't take her against her will, Langa. You sure can act crazy at times."

He just laughed and walked out to take a smoke.

Mrs. Dladla: “You know, ever since you left us, life was never the same. Baba became gravely ill and he would cry out for you each and every day. His relationship with Langa was never regained. He cursed him from the day he had a stroke and he cursed him even when he took his last breath.”

Samarah: (shocked) “Oh, no, Ma. That can’t be right.”

Mrs. Dladla: “No, he had every right to be angry. Even now, he is very angry at Langa. Nothing seems to go right for him. Everything he touches, he just ruins. When he brought Ntombi here despite our reservations, Baba asked God to take him and release him of the misery of seeing the disappointment his son was to him.”

Samarah was a little heartbroken when she saw a picture of the smiling Baba on the night stand. She remembered how much of a good man he was and what a positive influence he was in her life. He stepped up and became a father to her when her own refused to do his duty.

Samarah: "I sure miss his words and crazy laughter. He was a good person."

Mrs. Dladla: "He sure was. I wish he had taken me with him, but he told me that it wasn't time. I am miserable, all I just wish for is for Buhle to finish school so that I can die in peace."

Buhle: "Mama, you can be so dramatic sometimes."

Mrs. Dladla: "I am serious. I have lived. And now, all my two sons do is just embarrass me."

Samarah: "You still have a lot to live for, Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: "No, I am just happy I have seen you. You look so good. I can see your boyfriend is treating you like gold – as he should."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Yes, he is."

While they carried on conversing, they heard people shouting as if Langa was getting beaten up.

Aaron: (shouting) “Where is she?!”

Langa: “Where is who?!”

Aaron: “You thought I wouldn’t find out that you kidnapped her?!”

Buhle: “Yoh (Oh)! Mama! I’ve never seen so many policemen!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Policemen? This boy, Samarah, did he take you against your will?”

Samarah nodded in shame.

Buhle: (clapping hands) “Yoh! I knew it! I just knew it!”

Mrs. Dladla: "My child, why didn't you say?"

Samarah: "I was just happy to see you, that's all."

Mrs. Dladla: "I told you, Langa has become such an embarrassment."

Aaron came rushing into the house.

Aaron: (shouting) "Sam! Samarah! Where are you?!"

Mrs. Dladla: "Go before he comes rushing in here."

Samarah: "It was nice seeing you again, Ma."

Mrs. Dladla nodded in shame. She couldn't face Samarah any more. Once she walked out of the bedroom, the frantic Aaron hugged her with such relief.

Aaron: “Oh, thank God I found you! Where is your phone?”

Samarah: (softly) “He took it.”

Aaron: “Are you hurt?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No. He just said that he wanted me to come and see his mom.”

Aaron: “There is your proof. Take him away.”

He addressed the policemen who had taken Langa into handcuffs. He looked at Aaron with so much hatred despite having a bloody face. News travels fast in the township and when everyone heard that Langa Dladla was getting arrested, it didn't take them too long to whip out their cameras and start recording everything. The Police took Langa and threw him into his van, while Samarah was quite embarrassed to even face everyone – more especially Aaron. He opened her car door and drove off once he was also inside. He was quiet for a

while and she only realized then that Langa could have done something terrible to her.

Samarah: "I'm sorry."

Aaron kept quiet and tried to control his breathing. He drove in silence until they go to his flat. After he unlocked the door, he threw the keys onto the kitchen counter and proceeded to the bathroom without saying a word. He had locked the door because he wanted to be alone. She heard the shower water running and only realized that she was actually in danger. She was about to whip out her phone, when she realized that Langa had taken it from her the time she was in his car. When she was forced to face the aftermath then, it all came rushing and the feelings started kicking in. She started crying silently while shaking in fear, of what could have possibly happened to her. Aaron was frantic for a reason and she could have alerted Buhle and Mrs. Dladla the moment she saw them that she was being held against her will. He took an awfully long shower, but once he was out he felt a lot better. He saw the sadness and regret on her face and sat down right next to her.

Aaron: “You know, when I called you and the phone went off, I just went ballistic. When I tried calling you and it went straight to voicemail – you just don’t want to know what went through my mind. I thought... I thought that the worst had happened to you.”

Samarah: “I know... I’m sorry, Aaron.”

Aaron: “Am I not enough for you? Please, if that’s the case then tell me now.”

Samarah: “You are enough for me, Aaron. Why on earth would you think otherwise?”

Aaron: “Your ex boyfriend just took you to his house against your will and yet there you were, chatting with his mom and sister. Is that what you want? Do you miss them? Do you miss him?”

The pain in his breaking voice really cut her deeply.

Samarah: "I want you, Aaron. It is you I want to be with – now and forever. I am really sorry. I only realized afterwards what could have happened. I was just so heartbroken seeing Mrs. Dladla in that state, that I felt sitting there with her would have been a bit of relief to her. I meant no harm."

Aaron: "Do you honestly think that the fucker would have let you go after you spoke to his mom? He could have taken you some place else."

Samarah: (teary) "I'm sorry..."

Aaron: "I was busy with your surprise today when you called me. I would have left it all just to come fetch you, but I just wanted it to be the perfect gift."

Samarah: "I'm really sorry, Aaron."

Aaron: "It's fine. Let me go jog, I need to clear my mind."

Samarah: "What time will you be back?"

Aaron: "In an hour. Is there anything you need?"

Samarah: "No, just my phone. I'll bring you another one when I come back."

He took his car keys and off he went. Samarah felt so horrible that she just cried. She went out and looked for Lydia, thank goodness she was home. She allowed herself to cry and once she relayed the entire story to Lydia, she also shared the same sentiments.

Lydia: "Well then, had it been the other way around, how would you have felt? Would you not have felt as if he too wanted his ex back?"

Samarah: (sigh) "Not you too, Lydia."

Lydia: "I am your friend and by being that I have to be honest at all costs."

Samarah: "I hear you. For a moment I wasn't thinking. I just saw the pain in her eyes and I wanted to be there to comfort her."

Lydia: "I hear you, but now, you forgot completely about the one person who has had your back ever since you dumped Langa. The one person who would move mountains for you. The least you could have done was call him or text him with Buhle's phone or something."

Samarah: "I wasn't thinking."

Lydia: "You're right – you weren't. And now, you owe him an entire night of good, hot and steamy sex."

Samarah: "Lydia bathong (my goodness)."

Lydia: "I'm serious. That man is coming back with your brand new car and a brand new phone. You'd better suck it from behind, girl."

Samarah: (Shocked) "He's what?"

Lydia: "Eish (oh), me and my big mouth. Do you see why I hate these venting sessions? You just made me spill the beans and ruin the surprise now."

Samarah: "So, the entire time he was busy picking the car up for me?"

Lydia: "A ke bolele selo (I'm not saying anything), babes. Go take a shower and wear the sexiest lingerie you can find in your closet. Don't even give him a chance to speak once he arrives. You owe him that much."

Samarah: "Thank you for listening."

Lydia: "As always, no go away, please."

Samarah rushed to Aaron's flat to take Lydia's advice into deep consideration. She messed up but it wasn't the end of the world. She realized that she could have lost the best man in the world for a man who took her for granted.

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”

Samarah was pleased right after her conversation with her best friend. She decided to go straight to Aaron’s flat and follow her advice. She freshened up quickly and put on a red lace two piece lingerie set. She particularly chose that one because of the high waist panty. She hadn’t worn it before and was waiting for a special occasion. Any day happened to turn into a special occasion while dating Aaron. She wasn’t very much prepared since she had no idea what time he’d be back, so she just opted for the good old trick in the book – sex. She sat on the couch and waited for him to return. She promised herself that she wouldn’t fall asleep. Luckily for her, after half an hour of waiting, he finally arrived. He had a few paper bags in his hands and she wasted no time. She wanted him to catch the element of surprise. She sat right across the door with her legs wide spread. He was still deep in thought when he put those bags on the kitchen counter. As soon as he turned around, his jaw nearly dropped on the floor. She could see his penis slowly erect from inside his pants.

Aaron: (swallowing hard) "Hey... What's the occasion?"

Samarah: "Come sit."

Aaron: (nervously) "I..."

She didn't hesitate as she stood up and walked straight towards him. He was hardly caught being nervous, so she felt good about herself at that present time. As tall as he was, she roughly pulled his face towards hers and gave him a passionate kiss. He enjoyed it whenever she took charge, and a little roughness never hurt anyone. He caressed her back and the feeling of the lace material of the lingerie made him weak. She kissed him in such a lustrous manner that he was left in shock. She sucked his lips and looked him straight in the eyes. His eyes had become weakened with dilated pupils. She kissed his neck, planting wet kisses all over it. He tilted his head in pleasure while his toes curled from inside of his sneakers. She removed his shirt and slowly sucked on his nipples. He rested the palm of his hands on the kitchen counter. If he could dig his nails into it, he would have in a heartbeat. She slowly went down on his abdomen while licking a trail down all the way to his torso. His irregular breathing was a sign of immense pleasure arising. She

took off his pants together with his briefs and his rock hard penis jumped out and stared at her. She gently caressed it with one hand, while the other fiddled with his balls.

Aaron: (moaning) “Hmmm...”

He was about to touch her head, but she had other ideas.

Samarah: (softly) “One rule, don’t touch me until I give you permission.”

He was left speechless so he just nodded while staring down at her. She teased him properly, by licking one end to the other of his torso and then his inner sides, along his penis. His hands were begging to touch her. She slowly let out a warm breath onto his penis before slowly putting it into her mouth. The warm feeling of her melting saliva onto his penis tantalized his entire body and brought calmness to his soul. His body was overheating with joy. She alternated between sucking and licking his penis and sucking and licking his balls. The faster she did it, the louder his moaning became and the faster his breathing was.

Aaron: (moaning) “Shit! Samarah, o nketsang (what are you doing to me)?”

She enjoyed seeing him surrender like that and went in for the kill. She put his entire penis into her mouth and sucked him at a fast pace. Aaron’s body had surrendered to Samarah while he was internally begging for mercy.

Aaron: (breathing heavily) “Please, let me touch you, baby.”

Samarah pulled out whenever she had to answer while allowing her hands to do the work.

Samarah: “Only if you forgive me. Do you forgive me?”

Aaron: (panting) “Aah, yes.”

Samarah: “I want to hear you say it.”

Aaron: “Yes! Yes, I forgive you!”

Samarah: "Then touch me..."

That was all he needed to hear. He quickly pulled her up and kissed her fervently. He tore her bra to feel her breasts and suck on them. He interchanged between sucking on her neck, lips and breasts for a noble five minutes. He proceeded to go down on her and kiss her abdomen all the way down to her crotch. Her body surrendered to him as he tore her underwear as well. He placed his mouth on her clit and sucked her, causing her body to swelter with boundless desire. He dipped one finger inside of her vagina and felt her warmth. He didn't wait for her to finish this time and got back up.

Aaron: (panting) "Take me; I'm all yours."

Samarah pulled him towards the couch and threw him on it. She positioned herself and got on top of him. She inserted his penis into her body and started riding him. They both felt so intense; it was an act of forgiveness on Aaron's part while Samarah was asking for forgiveness. After a while he picked her up and removed her from on top of him and placed her on the couch. He got on top of her and entered her again. He went

faster this time and gradually placed his hands on her throat choking her a little bit. The thrill of the act enticed her so much she had no reservations.

Samarah: "I'm sorry, baby..."

Aaron couldn't wait any longer as he climaxed and soon after she finished after him.

Aaron: "I love you, now, always and forever."

Samarah: "I love you too."

They kissed and he went to the bathroom to get a towel and wipe the both of them clean.

Aaron: "I should get mad at you more often."

Samarah: (giggling) Stop it."

Aaron: "Ah, you're going all shy on me now? Alright then. Go change and meet me back here in a few minutes."

Samarah: "Where are we going now?"

Aaron: "You'll see."

She knew he had a great surprise for her and even though Lydia already told her about what she had to expect, she was still excited.

Samarah: "Alright then."

She headed to the bedroom and quickly changed. He was also dressed by the time she was done.

Samarah: "What's in the paper bags?"

Aaron: "You'll see those in the car. I've changed my mind. Come."

He picked the paper bags up again and out they walked to the parking lot. She was a little dumbstruck to find that they were going back to Aaron's Golf 7.

Samarah: (frowning) "Where are we going?"

Aaron: "Be open-minded. You'll see."

He opened her car door of which he never failed to do, no matter how angry he was at her. He placed the paper bags neatly at the back seat and they drove off. They greeted Ntate Tau and they drove to an unknown destination. She was anxious and thought that perhaps Lydia heard wrong. He drove for about half an hour while smiling to himself. He was more than happy to answer her questions, just not about the destination. They finally reached a nearby lodge. She assumed that they were going to be indoors and he had booked them a room, but he had other plans. The moment they got out of the car they were met with a man in a suit.

Man: (smiling) "Greetings Mr. and Mrs. Moeng. I hope that you find all is in order."

Aaron: (smiling) "Greetings, I do hope you got all I have requested."

Man: "Oh, absolutely. Including the blind fold, sir. Here you go."

Aaron gladly took the red blind fold and looked at Samarah.

Aaron: "Are you ready?"

Samarah just nodded curiously as she allowed him to blindfold her. Aaron thanked the man and handed him the paper bags he had come with. Samara had no idea where they were going, but she trusted him enough to know that he wanted to surprise her greatly. They didn't walk for very long, most probably about five minutes. It was a chilly evening, but tolerable. Once they stopped, she realized they had reached their destination.

Aaron: "I am about to remove your blindfold now, okay?"

Samarah nodded. He removed it and her eyes were met with the most beautiful setup she had ever seen. They were facing the lake, with a man made fireplace that was big enough to keep them warm. There was a big table alongside their own set table with a lot of food. There was no car in sight, which was not a bummer for her. She was really happy to be alongside the man she truly loved.

Samarah: (smiling) "What is this, Aaron? This is so beautiful."

Aaron: "Tonight's dinner is the start of our new life together."

Samarah: (frowning) "What are you talking about?"

The moment he knelt down on one knee and took out a ring box, an ensemble of people playing musical instruments rose from nowhere and started playing the instrumental version of one of their favourite songs Vuma by Sands. She knew the beat like the back of her hand.

Aaron: "Samarah Moloji, you have been such a wonderful addition to my life. Words can't explain how I feel about you but you know with my actions over the course of our time together how much you mean to me. Let me first start by saying this; I purchased this ring a long while ago. I actually wanted to propose back in Tokyo, but I just wasn't ready. I felt like I was going to derail you in life, but I figured; go big or go home, right?"

Samarah chuckled tearfully.

Aaron: "I love you so much, it hurts being away from you. If I could, I would get someone to conjoin us so that we'd be together forever – everywhere we go. You are my world, Samarah and nothing would give me greater pleasure than being your husband and the father of our children. I would like to explain to you why I chose this ring for you: it took a lot of thinking but then since you were born in February, it only made sense to use your birth stone Amethyst; which symbolizes spirituality, royalty and protection. I would love this to remain a symbol of our love til eternity. It is a fine emerald cut diamond ring and since you don't like expensive and flashy rings, I tried

to get them to design a minimal design as possible. I even have our anniversary date engraved on it.

It always feels like God literally took a rib of mine and made you especially for me. Proverbs 18 verse 22 says; “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 31 verse 10 says; “An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. Colossians 3 verse 14 says; “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. I love you more than the word itself and I know with God as our pillar, you and I will achieve greater things. Believe me, I have pondered my mind so many countless nights wondering if I should do this, but then, I don’t want anything to happen without me doing this. So, without any further ado, will you give me the greatest pleasure by agreeing to marry me?”

Samarah: (crying) “Oh, Aaron. Yes, yes I will marry you.”

He slowly put the ring on her finger and the band immediately switched from playing Vuma to Versace on the floor. He stood up and kissed his new fiancée.

Samarah: (crying) “You never cease to amaze me. You could have asked me to dress up, you know.”

Aaron: “You look good in anything – especially naked.”

Samarah: (giggling) “You could have just asked me this at home, you know.”

Aaron: “And where would that leave my originality? Come on, I know you’re starved.”

Samarah: “You know, when Lydia slipped and said that you had a car as a surprise for me, I didn’t expect an engagement.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Did she now? Lydia, neh?”

They continued eating their five star meal while he didn’t entertain the car topic. She was too excited to see her ring that she didn’t even mind if she didn’t get a car. After a scrumptious meal and amazing dessert, she knew that he really thought it all out.

Aaron: "Are you done eating?"

Samarah: "Yes, I am actually feeling a bit chilly right now."

Aaron: "Come, one more destination to get to."

Samarah: "I thought we were going home."

Aaron: "And let you seduce me again? No way."

Samarah just laughed it off and as he was keeping her talking, she didn't even realized that they had arrived at their desired spot. When she looked ahead of her, she saw the exact same Mercedes Benz she saw a few weeks prior draped with a big red bow. The number plate was customized to "Samarah GP". It looked slightly different from the one she saw, but she was in awe.

Samarah: (excitedly) "Is that for me?"

Aaron: (smiling) "Yes, baby. It is for you."

Samarah: "Aaron, when did you get the time?"

Aaron: "For the one you love, you make time, love."

Samarah: "Can I go inside?"

Aaron: "Of course you can. It is part of our plans for tonight."

She rushed towards the car with him following her. He allowed her to open the door herself this time. He got into the passenger seat along with the paper bags he had been carrying the entire night. He handed her the key with a wide smile.

Aaron: "Switch it on and see."

She did as told and the car greeted her with a message on the screen. “Hello, Samarah, where are we going today?” The interior was customized with purple elements alongside the metallic touches of every door and handle, and the leather seats were purple and black. The mirror had a purple diamond rosary hanging from it.

Aaron: “That’s for protection. Do you like it?”

Samarah: “Are you kidding me? I absolutely love it. But I told you I didn’t want an expensive car.”

Aaron: “It is rude to say no to a gift, you know. If you don’t want it – I can return it.”

Samarah: “Oh, no, no, no. you wouldn’t dare.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Good then. Let’s have some ice cream.”

Samara: “We already had dessert. Do you want me to get fat?”

Aaron: "I'll still love you either way."

He took out some ice cream from the paper bags, along with her favourite smoothie. He handed her a new phone and sim card.

Samarah: "You could have just gotten me my phone back, you know."

Aaron: "It was due for an upgrade anyway."

Samarah: "Don't you get tired? Of me? Of doing all this for me?"

Aaron: "Why would I get tired of love? Of love that keeps my heart beating?"

Aaron was happy to be with Samarah, he didn't see them separate no matter what and he fought to do whatever it took to prevent that. Unfortunately, it only took the weakest link to form an alliance with the enemy to bring him down and ruin everything.

Chapter 47

Ephesians 5:31 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

Everything was good and blissful for both Aaron and Samarah. While she was still in disbelief of her new engagement, Aaron told her to drive home while he was driving behind her. It was a fairly new experience, since she never drove alone. Once she made it back to the flat, Ntate Tau was the very first one to congratulate the two of them.

Ntate Tau: (smiling) “Bana ba ka (my children). I believe congratulations are in order.”

Samarah: (excitedly) “Ntate (sir), I forget how you know everything.”

Ntate Tau: (laughing) “Not everything, my dear. May I see the ring?”

She gladly showed him her hand, while Aaron stood next to her with his arm wrapped around her waist.

Ntate Tau: “I have never seen such a beautiful ring in my entire life. Aaron, o berekile (you did well), son.”

Aaron: “Thank you, Ntate.”

Ntate Tau: “I see you have bought her a very beautiful car.”

Aaron: “She picked it herself.”

Samarah: “Well, he sort of tricked me into it.”

Ntate Tau: “Nonetheless, there is nothing wrong with a man appreciating his woman. Tell me, Samarah, my dear. When last did you drink those herbs I made for you?”

Samarah: "I drink them every day. Why do you ask?"

Ntate Tau: "No particular reason. Are they helping?"

Samarah: "Oh, yes. I have been calm and I hardly get any headaches now."

Ntate Tau: "Hmm, may I ask that you don't drink them for a while."

Samarah: (frowning) "May I ask why?"

Ntate Tau: "Oh, don't worry yourself much about it. You'll find out soon enough."

Samarah: "Oh, alright then. We have school tomorrow. I shall ask Aaron to bring you some breakfast down before you leave tomorrow morning."

Nate Tau: "You two are too kind. May God bless your union."

He held her hand but she didn't notice that his eyes were filled with a bit of sadness and sort of pity. Once they went up to their flat, it didn't take Lydia very long to open her door once she heard them walk towards the door.

Lydia: (excitedly) "Congratulations, my friend!"

She attacked her with a hug.

Lydia: "You are one bad ass, Aaron! Please, do make an honest woman out of my friend!"

She hugged him as well and he laughed.

Samarah: "How did you know? You know what? I don't know why I even ask."

Lydia: "I know everything."

Samarah: "But you didn't tell me."

Lydia: "Oh, believe me, I nearly did. Now, let me see the rock."

She showed her her hand and she just screamed.

Lydia: (screaming) "My goodness! This is such a beautiful ring! When are we celebrating?!"

Aaron: "How about tomorrow after lectures?"

Lydia: "I won't be able to sleep much tonight. Aaron, you owe me a Gucci bag for keeping your secret. Ne santse se ntshwarisa mala (it was even giving me a stomach ache)."

Samarah and Aaron both burst out in laughter.

Aaron: "But you told her about the car, though."

Lydia: “Ag, but I didn’t spill the big beans, though. You should give me credit for that.”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Right. I always keep my promises, you know that. We should get to bed, love. Lydia, re tlao bona kaosane (we’ll see you tomorrow).”

Lydia: “Just don’t make babies yet. I don’t want to be an aunty just yet.”

They laughed and headed to their flat. Everything felt so surreal. They both took a shower together and lay in bed next to one another, with Samarah looking at her ring the entire time.

Samarah: “This feels so surreal, you know.”

Aaron: “I know, can you imagine what our wedding day will feel like?”

Samarah: “Well, I can only imagine the kind of wedding dress I’d like.”

Aaron: “Do share.”

Samarah: “Well, I’d really love a mermaid style dress, with a lace top, but considering my weight – “

Aaron: (interrupting) “There’s nothing wrong with your weight. You are a goddess and a goddess deserves the best dress and a fairy tale wedding.”

Samarah: “Well, I don’t care what I wear. Even if we got married at Home Affairs, I’d be happy.”

Aaron: (smiling) “I know, but you deserve the best, baby. Let’s set a date.”

Samarah: “Hmm, when did you have in mind?”

Aaron: "Well, I was thinking the sooner the better, but I'd like to have a word with your father first."

Samarah: "Do you have to?"

Aaron: "I want to do things right. I need you to be introduced to my ancestors and for the Moloji and Mosue ancestors to be joined as one. Allow me to do this."

Samarah: "Okay, but he will most probably charge you a fortune. He wasn't happy the last time he saw me."

Aaron: "He will get over it. You weren't happy when he left you alone at home, yet you forgave him, didn't you?"

Samarah: "You have a point there."

While they were thinking about their possible future together, Rachel video called Samarah.

Aaron: “Ai (Oh), it is my mom. Answer her.”

Samarah: (giggiling) “Be nice. Hello, Ma.”

Rachel: (ululating)) “Yah! Oh, Aaron, my son. You have made me the happiest mother in the world! I can’t even stop smiling! I even told all my church ladies!”

Aaron: “Bathong (Goodness), Mama. You didn’t have to do that. It is still premature.”

Rachel: “Hey, wena (you). God’s plan is never immature. Sammy, my baby, let me see that ring.”

She showed her the ring.

Rachel: “Yesses (Goodness)! Aaron, o nale style ne (you have style, hey)! Your grandfather must be so proud of you right now!”

Aaron: (smiling) "Thank you, Mama."

Rachel: "When are you two coming so that I can bless you accordingly?"

Aaron: "Soon, we have classes tomorrow."

Rachel: "Wa bora (you're so boring), hey. It is not like you two live so far from me. I can't wait to see you, my baby girl."

Aaron: "Same here, Ma. Please, allow my wife to rest. It has been quite an eventful day."

Rachel: "You can't shut me down like that without prayer."

She began praying for them over the phone.

Rachel: (praying) "Ntate Modimo wa rona (Our father), who art in heaven, I thank you so much for finally blessing my child with his beautiful wife. I ask of you to bless them with a long life,

healthy children and a wonderful marriage. May they love each other with your word in mind, spirit and heart. As promised in Jeremiah 29 verse 11; “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” You have never forsaken me lord, though there have been many times I have wanted to give up. You knew that this would happen; you placed this wonderful lady in his life for a purpose known to you. We thank you that we get to experience her presence in our lives. You never let go of Aaron and you have been protecting him with your palm and the blood of the lamb. May you now keep doing so with his wife by his side. Proverbs 18 verse 22 says to us; “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.” May my son obtain good favour from you from now onwards in his marriage. Mark 10 verse 9 says; “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” I ask that you do not allow anyone or anything to come between them; for if they have a problem, may they seek you first just as I have taught him. I pray in Jesus Mighty Name. Amen.”

Samarah and Aaron both said Amen.

Samarah: “Thank you, Ma. That was a powerful prayer.”

Rachel: (nodding) “I leave you two with the verse from Ephesians 5 verse 21: “Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” May the two of you submit to one another. Yes, Aaron is the head of the household, but that does not mean that whatever he says goes. Respect one another and you shall be rewarded with a good marriage. I am very proud of the both of you. I can’t even stop my tears from overflowing. Maybe it is the wine.”

Aaron and Samarah both laughed.

Aaron: “Ai (oh), Mama. Get some rest.”

Rachel: “No. I am going to rejoice in the grace of God until I fall asleep. Good night my children, mommy loves you akere (okay)!”

She blew them kisses and hung up the phone. Seconds later, she posted a screen shot of the two of them from the video call on her status with the caption “Job 42:2”.

Aaron: "Now that it is official, Mrs. Mosue, shall we consummate our engagement?"

Samarah: (blushing) "Only because you always ask so nicely."

He kissed her and placed her right before him in a spooning position. They were both naked, since well they slept naked on most days. He slowly placed his hand on her clit and rubbed it gently, in circular motion. Her moaning cascaded and he kissed her neck while at it. He spread her thighs apart in preparation for his penis to enter her. He carefully entered her gently and gradually, while she caressed his face with her one hand. They made slow passionate love to one another and as always, each moment they made love felt like the very first time. Once they climaxed together, they remained in that position until they fell asleep.

Aaron: "I love you, Mrs. Mosue."

Samarah: "And I love you, Mr. Mosue."

Aaron and Samarah: "Today, tomorrow and forever."

They drifted off to peaceful sleep. The next morning she managed to get up at the same time Aaron got up. They went jogging together once again as usual and had breakfast when they came back. As promised, she made some for Ntate Tau and Aaron went downstairs to give it to him.

Ntate Tau: "Oh, Aaron

my son. Thank you so much, but it really was not necessary. I am already on my way home."

Aaron: "You can eat it on your way home."

Ntate Tau: "My wife will think I am cheating."

They both laughed.

Aaron: "Tell her it is from your new son."

Ntate Tau: "One day you'll know that women aren't easily swayed, you know."

Aaron: "I can't wait for those days."

Ntate Tau: "Hmm, keep well then."

Aaron: "Oh, before you leave, Ntate, may I ask why you told Sam to stop taking her herbs?"

Ntate Tau: "I'll leave it to you to figure out."

Aaron looked at him in confusion.

Ntate Tau: "One of your heart's desires are about to come true."

Aaron was still confused but he let him be. Ntate Tau greeted him goodbye and left. He went back up to the flat and decided not to dwell on Ntate Tau's words. His visions always present themselves either way. Samarah had just finished washing the dishes.

Samarah: "Oh, you took a while. I see you two were gossiping about me."

Aaron: (chuckling) "I could never do that. He told me that wives have a very mean streak and that they don't take anything lightly."

Samarah: "Well, he is right. I can already feel that rubbing off on me."

Aaron: (laughing) "Come, let's go shower. We have a lot to do today."

They went about their business and got ready for their first day back on Campus. Lydia wasn't there when they were done, so

she must have left with Collin. Aaron suggested that Samarah drive herself to Campus, since he had plans after classes.

Samarah: “But I don’t even have a license as of yet.”

Aaron: “Don’t worry about it. No one will stop you. Campus is not that far, once you are done with your classes go out for lunch with Lydia. I’ll send you some money.”

Samarah: “I already have a very fat bank balance, Aaron. You already know that.”

Aaron: “Okay then. I’ll see you later.”

He kissed her and drove out. Just as she was about to drive out, Lydia was being dropped off right at the gate by Collin.

Lydia: (rushing) “Hey, wena (you), Sammy! Ke fihlile (I have arrived)!”

Samarah: “O tswa kae (where do you come from)?”

Lydia: “I was with my man. I couldn’t listen to you and Aaron shag all night. Man, this car is even finer than the pictures! I see he took my advice. Look at the custom made seats. I love it.”

Samarah: “Advice? How often do you two talk?”

Lydia: “More often than needed. Come, what are you waiting for? Everyone needs to see us rocking up in this car.”

Samarah: “I hate attention, you know that, Lydia.”

Lydia: “Well, too late for that, hunny bun. You are engaged to the most wanted guy on campus now. Gata lefura leo (step on it)!”

She played some music straight from her phone and chose to play “Imali eningi” by Big Zulu.

Samarah: "Do you really have to?"

Lydia: "Oh, yes, I do. Ebile e re ke bule sun roof (let me open the sun roof), baby girl."

Samarah just let her be. She was happy that her friend always celebrated her wins no matter what. As soon as they entered Campus, she increased the volume, while Samarah just let her be.

Lydia: "Yes! Ke batla ba go bone (I want them to see you), babes. Dumelang, Baloyi (Greetings, witches)!"

Samarah parked the car and they got out.

Samarah: "Thank goodness that's over."

Lydia: "O tlo nkgopola ke shwele, sa mma (you'll miss me when I'm gone, sis)."

Samarah: "Stop saying such things. The last person who told me that really died."

Lydia: "I still have a long life ahead of me. Collin and I still have so much to achieve together, babes."

Samarah: "When are you two going to get married?"

Lydia: "Once I really feel that I can live with sucking one dick for the rest of my life."

They both laughed.

Samarah: "Wa lapisa waitse (you're so tiring you know). I have to get to class. See you later."

Lydia: "On it. Love you!"

They went their separate ways and of course, the stares were there – more than usual. She figured Aaron must have posted her on Instagram or most probably even Lydia. Some even congratulated her on her engagement and she figured it was Aaron. Not too long before entering the lecture hall, a notification from Facebook came through that she was now engaged to him. She just smiled to herself and kept on walking. When she sat down an SMS notification came through. “Capitec +R5000. Ref: Husbae.” She knew he wouldn’t stop since she already had so much money that she never used. It was high time to consider using it, though. Two lectures later, she was done and so was Lydia. She found Lydia waiting for her right outside her lecture hall for a change.

Samarah: “Wow, since when do you meet me first?”

Lydia: “Since I am so excited that I’ll get to be a bridesmaid for the first time in my life. Besides, Collin has tons of work to do today and he strictly instructed me not to bother him with nudes or any dirty messages. I feel so neglected.”

Samarah: (laughing) “Bathong (Wow), Lydia. You see him every day. You literally were with him just last night.”

Lydia: "I know. He is my drug. There's no cure for this kind of addiction."

They got into her car and drove to the mall as she had promised Aaron.

Samarah: "I think we should go do some shopping today before we eat, what do you think?"

Lydia: "I can never say no to that."

Samarah: "It is my treat today."

Lydia: (frowning) "What? I won't say no to that. Girl, what's my budget?"

She showed her her bank balance, leaving Lydia screaming in shock.

Lydia: (shouting) “Heh (huh)?! Samarah Moloji! You’re walking around with a bank balance of over R100k for what? Why aren’t you using your money, girl?”

Samarah: “I don’t know, I mean it is an accumulation of all the money he’s been giving me all these years – well, apart from my investments. I guess I have just been saving it.”

Lydia: “Aowa (no), let’s go shopping, babes! This time, get your man a nice gift for a change. They too deserve gifts.”

Samarah: “But he tells me that he never wants me to buy him anything.”

Lydia: “Sometimes they just say that, man. A man like Aaron is just happy to see his woman spend his money. I won’t even ask where he gets that kind of money. He must be shit loaded, so spending this money won’t hurt him at all.”

She took her advice and they stopped by Matt Arend and she helped her choose a watch for him.

Lydia: "See what a man wears is key; that is what presents him to the people. A watch can represent a man, you know. We all know most rich guys like rolex, but it is so overrated. Buy him something from the heart; expensive enough but not too over the top because he will not like that you spent your money on him."

Samarah: "I suppose you're right. He does love collecting watches."

Lydia: "See? Now which one do you like here?"

She chose the Nkosi Heritage Africa.

Samarah: "Yes, I'd like that one, please."

She was informed that it would cost her R5000.

Lydia: "Wait, that's it?"

Samarah: "What do you mean?"

Lydia: "Ai, Sam. Aaron has really spoiled you rotten. You have got to think out of the box, baby girl. You have to make it his own unique watch – the same way he made your car your own."

Samarah: "I see what you mean, the same way he engraved my engagement ring."

Lydia: "Now you're getting it."

Samarah: "Okay, how about I get it engraved with our initials and the day we met?"

Lydia: "Very original and special. Do it."

She was informed that it would cost a little extra to get it engraved and that she would have had to wait a week.

Lydia: “Oh, no, she can’t wait a week. Money talks, doesn’t it? How much will it cost for her to get it within a few hours?”

She was told of the price and Lydia agreed.

Samarah: “Just like that, Lydia?”

Lydia: “Girl, haven’t you learnt anything from your man throughout the years?”

Samarah paid and they walked out. She thought the shopping was over, but Lydia had other ideas. She made her buy him a nice and rather expensive bottle of Bulgari cologne for men. From there, they splurged a little on themselves. They had such a good amount of fun and went to eat and have a few drinks from there. Meanwhile, Aaron ensured that he got his work done before he went to Ferndale to visit Richard. It had been quite some time since he saw him. He even put on a jacket as a form of respect. When he rung the intercom at the gate, Richard was stunned to hear his voice.

Richard: "Who is it?"

Aaron: (clearing throat) "Dumela Ntate (Greetings father). It is me, Aaron."

Richard: "What can I do for you?"

Aaron: "I have come to see you. Please open up."

He was reluctant but Beatrice pushed him to open for him.

Beatrice: "Oh, don't be such an old man. Open up for him."

Richard: "What on earth does he want?"

Beatrice: "There is only one way to find out."

He opened up for him and as always, Aaron left his car outside the gate and walked in. He was confident as always and was not nervous at all. He was met with Beatrice at the door and she was visibly nervous.

Beatrice: (nervously) "Hello, Aaron. How are you?"

Aaron: "I'm well. May I come in?"

Beatrice: "Sure, sure."

She allowed him in and he found Richard sitting in his wheelchair in the kitchen.

Aaron: "Dumela Ntate (Hello father). How are you?"

Richard: (smirk) "Since when do you ask me how I am doing?"

Beatrice: "Oh, uh, may I get you something to drink?"

Aaron: "No, thank you. I won't be staying long."

Richard: "Why are you here?"

Aaron: "I have come to tell you that I have asked your daughter to marry me. She said yes."

Beatrice: (excitedly) "Oh, wow! That is such good news!"

Meanwhile Richard was rather irritated while Aaron just gave her the side eye.

Richard: "You have some nerve, you know. Firstly, you accused my wife and I of things we both do not know of the last time you were here and now you come barging into my house telling me this bullshit!"

Aaron: "I have not come for that today. Believe me, I am very well aware of what I told you last time and I still stand by it. I

am here today to ask you for your daughter's hand in marriage – respectfully.”

Richard: “Why don't you ask your uncles to come?”

Aaron: “It is a complicated matter, but if you do want that I can arrange it. Just so you know, I would like to marry her as soon as possible.”

Richard: “You don't get to come here and make those kind of demands.”

Aaron: “I am not demanding anything, sir. If you do not approve, just so you know, I will marry her whether you like it or not. Just like you, my elders are estranged to us and it will be difficult to involve them all. We do not need them to be present, but if you wish to make things difficult for your own selfish desires, I will marry her without your consent and presence.”

Richard was getting angry and started breathing abruptly.

Aaron: "I shall give you enough time to think about it. I will call you again tomorrow."

Beatrice: "I would just like to know; when do you plan on getting married?"

Aaron: "In a month."

Beatrice: "That's rather hastily. Is she pregnant? I mean, she can't possibly be pregnant."

Aaron: (frowning) "What makes you think she can't be pregnant, Beatrice?"

Beatrice: (nervously) "Oh, uh, I am just surprised. I mean, the last time I recall she was a virgin."

Aaron: "Hmm, I will call you tomorrow. Have a good day."

48

– “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.”

After Aaron was done with calling his future in laws to order, he decided to visit his mother. He found her already cooking.

Aaron: (smiling) “Knock knock.”

Rachel: (surprised) “Aaron, my son! This is new. Since when do you visit without Samarah and at this time of the day and week?”

Aaron: (chuckling) “Ma, there is nothing wrong with surprises, now is there?”

Rachel: “Well, I am not so sure right now. You look a bit puzzled. Luckily, I am cooking. Come help me.”

He went ahead and followed her to the kitchen.

Aaron: (Smiling) “Hmm, pap and mogodu (tripe).”

Rachel: “It used to be your favourite before you became so posh.”

Aaron: (laughing) “I’m not posh, I’m still your son.”

Rachel: “Yeah, sure.”

She was just about done and he helped her by adding the rest of the ingredients to the tripe. Once the food was done, he helped her dish up and they sat together on their dining room table, with a glass of red wine for her and a glass of cognac for him. They blessed the food and began digging in once they were done.

Rachel: “So, how is it really going? I have a feeling that this was just an impromptu visit.”

Aaron: (deep sigh) "Well, actually I just come from Richard's house. I went to see him and that skinny witch regarding lobola."

Rachel: (surprised) "And? How did that go?"

Aaron: "Obviously he wasn't pleased and he started insulting me again, but I gave him no choice."

Rachel paused for a moment.

Aaron: "What is it? Why do you look so worried?"

Rachel: "Well, I mean I didn't really think you'd want a traditional way of things."

Aaron: "What do you mean?"

Rachel: “I mean, I thought that you’d allow me and my elders to do everything for you in terms of tradition. You know very well that your father’s family is off record, well, basically for eternity.”

Aaron: (deep sigh) “I know that, Ma. I know that very well, but surely if I want things done right then I should involve ancestors from both sides. You were married to Papa (father) so they too need to be involved. If that is what Richard wants, of which I am really sure it is what he will want – then so be it. I’ll give it to him.”

Rachel: “Aaron, I have a very bad feeling about this. You know very well what this means, don’t you?”

Aaron: (nodding) “Yes, I do. I’ll do anything for Samarah, Mama – even if it means making a deal with the devil himself.”

Rachel: (shaking head) “You can’t make a deal with the devil. He will always have a fine print. You know very well that you don’t do dirty business – it’s just not you.”

Aaron: "I'll have to get extra security. I already have a tracker on Samarh's phone."

Rachel: (shaking head) "Perhaps you should wait a little while before you two get married. I don't know, maybe get married at home affairs while we figure things out."

Aaron: "You sound just like Sammy, Ma. No, I want to do right by her. I mean, should anything happen to me – "

Rachel: (interjecting) "What do you mean by that? What is it that you know that I don't?"

Aaron: "Nothing. I just feel that I need to marry her as soon as possible, you know."

Rachel: "I don't believe you."

Aaron: "I'm not hiding anything, I swear."

Rachel: "Promise me one thing; that you'll tell me should you find yourself in trouble. Promise me."

Aaron: (nodding) "Of course, Ma. I will. I promise."

Rachel could tell that her son was hiding something deep from her, but she was no nagging mother. She chose to leave it in God's hands and let him be. They continued to have a lovely lunch together despite everything pondering Aaron's mind. Once he was done, it was time to head back to his flat.

Rachel: "Here, I made a lot so that you can give Sammy along with Lydia and Collin."

Aaron: "Ma, you are really spoiling Lydia, she will never see the need to cook if you continue like this."

Rachel: "Oh, don't be so selfish. You are all my children."

Aaron: "Ai (oh), okay then."

He gave her a tight hug.

Rachel: "I love you, my boy."

Aaron: "I know, Ma. I know."

Rachel: "Hey, I'll kick you harder than you think."

Aaron: (laughing) "I love you too, Ma."

Rachel: "Take care now."

As soon as he left Rachel gave herself the platform to wallow in deep distress. Aaron was inviting trouble into both their lives and she knew it. She always knew that day would come, but she never thought it would be so soon. She could only pray and hope that both of them including Samarah would be safe despite Aaron's decision. Once Aaron went back to the flat, he stumbled across a very beautiful setting. Samarah had gone all

out by decorating the flat for an indoor, candle lit picnic for two. She had pulled out all the stops with a three course meal, and sexy lingerie underneath her lace robe to top the night off. Aaron placed the lunch box full of food on the kitchen counter, whereas he had already given Lydia hers.

Aaron: (calling out) "Sam?! Where are you?"

She came out running from the bedroom.

Samarah: "Oh, finally, you're here."

She jumped at him and gave him a long kiss. He was amused and surprised by it all.

Aaron: (smiling) "What is all this?"

Samarah: "Well, I thought that I'd surprise you for a change."

Aaron: “Hmm, well, you didn’t need to, but I am not complaining. What’s the occasion?”

Samarah: “We’re celebrating our engagement – again. Each and every day until we get married.”

Aaron: (laughing) “I like the sound of that.”

He was about to lean in for a kiss, but Samarah had none of that.

Samarah: “Oh, no you don’t. We can’t do that until we get through our very special evening planned.”

Aaron felt a little bad.

Aaron: “Eish, well, I am sorry to break it to you, love, but I already ate.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Oh.”

Aaron: "I went to see my mom after doing something very important."

Samarah: "Oh, such as?"

Aaron: "I'll let you know soon enough once it falls through."

Samarah: "Oh, okay then."

Aaron: "But I won't say no to dessert and the surprise you have in store for me."

She chuckled along with him as they sat down on the blanket that she had laid in front of the tv. She poured him a glass of whiskey while she had a glass of wine. She was enjoying her lovely starter as they were talking. She didn't even notice how hungry she was until she ate both their starters. Aaron didn't complain, he just loved seeing her fulfilled and content.

Samarah: “Oh, before I forget. I would like to give you your gift.”

Aaron: (frowning) “Gift?”

Samarah: “Mm-hmm.”

She quickly rushed to the bedroom and came back with a gift bag which she handed to him. Aaron was really excited and wasted no time opening the gift. He saw the custom made watch she had made for him, along with the engraving. He paused for a while and stared at it. No one had ever really given him something with such sentimental value. Meanwhile Samarah’s heart was nearly beating out of her chest with anxiety that he might not have liked it.

Samarah: (anxious) “You don’t like it, do you?”

Aaron looked at her with glistening eyes and held her warm hands.

Aaron: “Are you kidding me? I absolutely love it.”

She smiled with relief.

Aaron: “Here, put it on me, please.”

She removed the initial watch he had been wearing and proudly put his newly gifted watch on his wrist.

Aaron: “I will never remove it from now onwards.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Don’t be silly, you have tons of watches – some even more expensive than this one.”

Aaron: “No, love, they might be more expensive in currency, but this one is priceless.”

He gave her a gratitude kiss while she started digging into the main course. She ate his yet again and surprisingly, she wasn’t full.

Samarah: “Yoh (wow). I must have been starved although Lydia and I had lunch earlier on today. A ka kgora (I am not full), you know. Damn, this is embarrassing.”

Aaron: (laughing) “Not at all. Rissotto isn’t exactly a filling meal. Thankfully, I still have food from my mom. I’ll go warm it for you.”

Samarah: “Thank you. What is it?”

Aaron: “Oh, pap and mogodu.”

She found herself salivating at the thought of the food. She knew that Rachel could really cook well. While Aaron was heating up her food, she was nibbling on the snacks while patiently waiting for her food. She wasn’t much of an eater, but she thought nothing of it. Once Aaron was done, he neatly placed the food in a plate for her and placed it before her.

Aaron: “Here.”

Just as she was about to thank him, her stomach cringed just by the smell of the tripe. She immediately knew that she needed to vomit. She ran towards the bathroom and everything she had consumed that day came back up. Aaron was quite worried and she was surprised. She hardly vomited unless she was really hungover, which also rarely happened. He rushed towards the bathroom door and knocked on it sternly.

Aaron: "Baby, are you okay?"

Samarah: "Yes, I'll be out in a minute."

He waited impatiently for her as she brushed her teeth to get rid of the foul smell of vomit. Once she was out she noticed the look of concern on his face. He held both her hands.

Aaron: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: "Yes, I think so. Oh, goodness, that smell. I just can't seem to handle it."

Aaron: “What smell?”

Samarah: “The tripe.”

She rushed back to the bathroom and it all came back up again – including the lunch she had from earlier on that day.

Aaron hated throwing food away, so he quickly placed it back into the lunch box given to him and placed it in the fridge. He even washed the plate to rid the place of the smell. She tried to wash down the sour taste in her mouth with some more wine, but that too just started tasting differently. He went back to her once he was done and by then she was sitting back on the blanket. Nothing she was looking at seemed appealing any more.

Aaron: “The smell should have subsided by now. I’m sorry. You don’t have any allergies nor dislike towards tripe, though. And you’re not ovulating.”

Samarah: "It must be something I ate."

Aaron: "Maybe."

Samarah: "I am sorry for ruining our evening."

Aaron: "You didn't ruin anything at all. Don't say that."

Samarah: "I feel like I did. I just don't feel so well all of a sudden."

Aaron: "Come, let me light out all these candles and we'll go lie down in bed."

Samarah: "But I thought that I'd finish the evening off with a nice surprise I had in store for you."

Aaron: "We have an entire life time for that. Come."

He poured himself another glass of whiskey, lit out the candles and walked to the bedroom hand in hand with her. They lay in bed together watching some tv. Neither of them suspected that anything could be wrong with her. She slowly drifted off to sleep with her head on his chest after an hour of watching tv, while he was reeling at the fact that she was a part of his life. Everything made sense to him with her around. He kissed her forehead and he too started drifting off to sleep soon after her. Samarah started feeling very offish from that evening. The following morning she got up and her stomach still felt weird.

Aaron: "Good morning, sunshine. How are you feeling today?"

Samarah: "I don't know, my stomach still feels a little upset."

He had walked in with a breakfast tray and a smoothie.

Aaron: "I thought you might say that, so I made you a berrie and yoghurt smoothie with a twist – I added ginger powder. It helps with an upset stomach."

She took about three sips from it and could not stomach anything more.

Samarah: "Thank you, but that is all I can take."

Aaron: "Okay, care for a jog? You might feel better afterwards."

Samarah: "Sure, it is worth a shot. I am just sorry about last night."

Aaron: "You have nothing to feel sorry about."

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay, let me go brush my teeth then and change."

Aaron: "You could just jog in your lingerie, though. I bet you'd make really good headlines."

Samarah: "Hah, hah, very funny."

He laughed and she proceeded to freshen up. Once she was done changing, they were off for a jog. Ntate Tau was on duty that morning and he always had a bright smile whenever he saw the two of them. They greeted each other as always.

Ntate Tau: "See you later, parents."

He had called them so many names that they never took note of anything. They didn't get to reach their usual one and a half hour when Samarah's stomach betrayed her yet again after a mere 15 minutes of jogging.

Samarah: (out of breath) "Wait a minute, let's stop for a second."

Aaron: "What's wrong?"

She couldn't get to her answer when she vomited right there and then. Aaron really became alarmed.

Aaron: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: "Uh, I think so."

Aaron: "No, that's it. I am taking you to the doctor."

Samarah: "No, I don't need a doctor. It must just be a stomach bug."

Aaron: "I am serious, you can't go on like this."

Samarah: "I am sure I'll be fine later on."

Aaron: "You need to stop being so stubborn, you know."

Samarah: "I promise you, I'll be a lot better later on. If I'm not then I will consider going to see the doctor."

Aaron: (frowning) "I don't like nagging you. You know that, but I'll take your word for it - for now."

Samarah: "Thank you."

Aaron: "Come, let's go home."

They walked together with Aaron's arm around her waist. He was very concerned but he tried his best not to act like a control freak. Upon entering the gate, Ntate Tau could see that Samarah looked rather unwell.

Ntate Tau: "Is everything okay?"

Aaron: "She seems sick, but won't go to the doctor."

Ntate Tau: "Hmm

my wife also does that to me all the time. Don't you worry, she is okay."

Aaron nodded and walked up to the flat with his fiancée. She still felt strange and lacked appetite for basically everything.

Aaron: "Go shower, I'll make us something to eat."

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, I don't want anything. I doubt I can stomach anything right now."

Aaron: "Okay, should I come shower with you?"

Samarah nodded. They went to the bathroom together and he helped her undress. He just needed to reassure her that everything would be fine. He would have loved to be intimate with her at that moment, but just being there with her was enough for him. He helped clean her up and felt a few changes on her body, but he didn't tell her as yet. Her breasts felt a lot fuller than usual and her abdomen seemed to have protruded a little. "She has been having quite an appetite lately" he thought to himself. They showered without saying a word to one another, but her body was slowly responding to his warm touch. She aided his one hand down to her vagina and of course, he didn't refuse. He slowly rubbed her clitoris, just the

way she liked it. She spread her legs even further while he pleased her with his hand. He enjoyed sucking her in intimate places. He turned her around and got down on his knees. The warm water was soothing their skin while he gently placed his tongue in between her legs. She went crazy; the wider she spread her legs, the faster he proceeded to lick. He continued until she released and climaxed right in his mouth. He closed the shower tap and whispered to her slowly.

Aaron: "Let's go to the bed."

She nodded and they proceeded to the bedroom. He wasted no time though they were still wet. He got on top of her and kissed her passionately. He let his penis enter her and it felt a lot warmer and tighter than usual. They had sex nearly every day, though it felt a lot more different. He loved the fullness of her breasts and her erect nipples drove him even crazier. He nibbled on her neck while she gasped out of pleasure.

Aaron: "Hmm, I love you, Sammy."

Samarah: "I love you, Mr. Moeng."

After two rounds of passionate love making, they climaxed.

Aaron: "Whooh! That was intense."

Samarah: "Stop it."

Aaron: "Damn, look at the time."

Samarah: "Ah, Aaron. My first lecture was at 8."

Aaron: "Sorry, love. I got so carried away. Have you seen your breasts lately? They look so full."

Samarah: (clicking tongue) "You are just insane as usual. Now I have to shower again or else I'll miss my next lecture."

Aaron: "We could just skip classes all day, you know."

Samarah: “No, thank you. We might just end up making babies.”

Aaron chuckled and let her be. She showered again while he was staring at her from the bed. He only had one class on that day and since he missed it, he didn't see the need to take a shower again. Samara was particularly surprised when she wanted to wear one of her pair of jeans and it felt a little tight around the waist. She kept frowning in frustration.

Aaron: “Are you alright?”

Samarah: “Ag, these stupid jeans don't seem to want to fit any more. Have I gained weight? Do I look fat?”

Aaron: “No, babe. You didn't gain any weight at all.”

Samarah: (irritably) “Why does it seem like you don't want to be honest with me?!”

Aaron: (frowning) “But I am, love.”

She clicked her tongue and put on one of her tops, and when it seemed a lot tighter around the breast area, she became even more irritated.

Samarah: (snappy) “You see? See why I said you just don’t want to be honest?! Look at this! Just look!”

Aaron: “But, baby, I honestly don’t see anything wrong.”

Samarah: “Ag (oh)!”

She grabbed her car keys and jacked and huffed out of frustration.

Aaron: “Wait! Let me drive you to school!”

She didn’t even want to listen to him, but he quickly got into his gym clothes and sneakers and rushed downstairs. She was already outside the car by the time he got there.

Aaron: “Hao (gosh), baby. Why are you mad at me now?”

She was still irritated and chose not to say anything, while she threw the keys at him and went to the passenger side. When he was about to walk towards her to open the door, she snapped at him again.

Samarah: (angrily) “Just get in the car and drive!”

He hardly saw her angry and he didn't want to step on her toes even further. He still had no idea what he had done, so he let her be. He drove her to campus while he kept glancing at her. She was moody and quiet, while he was confused. Once he got to the parking lot, she got out.

Aaron: “Hao, baby. Aren't you even going to say goodbye?”

Samarah waved goodbye at him with her back faced at him and walked away. Aaron pondered his mind while sitting in the car, trying to figure out what had gone wrong. He thought of asking

his mother, but just as he was about to make the call, one came through.

Aaron: "Hello."

Richard: "Yes, it's Richard."

Aaron: "I can see that. Have you decided?"

Richard: (sigh) "Yes, I have. I will agree to you marrying my daughter, only because I love her. Just so you know, she won't come cheap."

Aaron: "Of course, she is priceless."

Richard: "I want things done the right way, so we expect a letter from your elders. The sooner the better."

Aaron: "Okay, thank you."

Richard hung up on Aaron while he just smiled to himself in relief. That was all he needed to hear. He decided to quickly head to his flat for a quick shower and change before telling his mother the good news. He found Ntate Tau waiting on him the moment he got out of Samarah's car.

Ntate Tau: "Aaron, my son. I take it you have good news to share?"

Aaron: "Yes, Ntate, Sam's father has agreed to lobola."

Ntate Tau: "That man. As long as he agreed. How are you feeling?"

Aaron: "I am quite relieved, actually. Now I have to face people I don't even like."

Ntate Tau: "Hmm, I see what you mean. Have you told Samarah?"

Aaron: (shaking head) “No, not yet. I wanted her father to agree first. I doubt she will even want to listen to me after this morning.”

Ntate Tau: “What do you mean?”

Aaron: “She is so offish with me. She asked me about her weight when her clothes felt a little tighter. I didn’t even say anything bad to her. Now it seems like she won’t even talk to me.”

Ntate Tau: (laughing) “You still haven’t figured it out yet?”

Aaron: “Figured what out?”

Ntate Tau: “For a lawyer and an upcoming Neurologist, you can be rather slow.”

Aaron: “What do you mean by that?”

Ntate Tau: (Chuckling) "I'll see you later, someone wants to enter."

Aaron was even more confused by Ntate Tau but he let him be. He went to his flat to change and clean up and by the time he wanted to leave the yard, Ntate Tau was on lunch. He wanted to ask him what he meant earlier on, but he let him be. He texted Samarah to see if he should fetch her after her class.

Aaron: "Should I come fetch you?"

Samarah: "Spending a few hours in the library. Lydia and Collin will bring me home."

Aaron: "Okay, love you."

She didn't respond of which felt cold for Aaron. He was saddened by it all and drove straight to his mother's house. Meanwhile Samarah was indeed in the library with Lydia catching up on some assignments. She wasn't feeling

hungry in the morning, but after her class, she felt quite starved and bought a lot of food and even more snacks. She was eating a bit of everything all at once, which was seemingly unusual for her.

Lydia: "So, wa re (you said) what happened this morning?"

Samarah: (clicking tongue) "Can you believe it? We had sex after our shower and everything felt great. He just did the things, man. It felt really weird this time, but that's not the point. Afterwards I was getting dressed and I could see that my clothes seemed a bit tight. I asked him a simple question; "Do I look fat?"

Lydia: "What did he say?"

Samarah: "He said to me that no, I don't look fat at all, but he is clearly lying!"

Lydia looked at Samarah and started laughing.

Samarah: "What is so funny, Lydia?"

Lydia: "Bathong chomi (goodness friend). Do you honestly not see it?"

Samarah: "See what?"

Lydia: "Your eating habits, your moods, your weight gain, your boobs look huge and your eyes are so clear."

Samarah: (teary) "Are you trying to say that I am fat, Lydia?"

Lydia: "No. When last did you have your period?"

Samarah sat there and tried to digest the question. After a full five minutes it dawned on her.

Samarah: "Shit."

Lydia: “Uh-huh. I think it is time for us to take a trip to the campus nurse, don’t you?”

Samarah was numb, she wasn’t even sure how to feel. Meanwhile Aaron found his mother busy constructing her sermon for the coming Sunday.

Rachel: “Ah, Aaron, my son. You should get engaged everyday if I’ll be getting these visits so often.”

Aaron: (sigh) “Sure.”

Rachel: “You look rather sad. Let me make you some food.”

Aaron: “No, I know how you get when you’re busy planning your sermons. Go ahead, I’ll make myself something.”

Rachel: “Alright.”

While he continued making himself some breakfast, Rachel was in the moment with her thoughts. When he came back, he asked her to indulge her words.

Aaron: "Mind if I ask what you want to preach about?"

Rachel: "Well, I had a beautiful dream of a baby. I don't know what it meant, but I was holding the baby in my church, so I have decided to preach about the love of God and children."

Aaron: "Hmm, read some to me."

Rachel: (excitedly) "Okay, then. I had a beautiful dream of a baby. I have no idea what it means, but I feel God is speaking to me. Children are miracles and bring about so much joy in our lives. They represent innocence and the favour of the Lord. Psalm 127 verse 3 says; "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." Everyone comes to me often to ask questions such as; "Why now? Why did God choose to bless me now? I am unmarried and the father of my son has chosen to leave me, pastor. If children were truly a blessing from God, then why does he allow

such?” Well, I say unto you, Matthew 19 verse 14 says; “But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” What on earth do you think God meant in Jeremiah 1 verse 5 when He said; “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations?” What on earth do you think He meant when He said in Galatians 1 verse 15 when He said; “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace?” He knew us all before we were even born and therefore, He knew your unborn child long before He was conceived. Fear not, for God is with you. He has plans for you and for that child.”

Aaron: “Hmm, I love it.”

Rachel: “Oh, I am so sorry. I am so wrapped up in my sermon, I didn’t even ask how you were.”

Aaron: “It’s okay, Mama.”

Rachel: “No, talk to me. You seem a little down. Is it Richard? What did he say?”

Aaron: “Actually, he agreed. He wants the traditional way of things done and said that she won’t come cheap.”

Rachel: (clicking tongue) “Well, that’s what all broke men say. At least he agreed, that’s one thing. If you’re upset about the whole traditional thing, we will figure something out – we always do.”

Aaron: “It’s not that. Samarah has been acting strangely.”

Rachel: “What do you mean?”

Aaron: “She has been vomiting since last night when I gave her the tripe. And this morning, she was just weird.”

He explained everything that had happened and without a doubt, Rachel burst into laughter.

Aaron: "I don't find this funny at all, Ma. She could be really sick."

Rachel: "Bathong (goodness), Aaron. Do you two even use condoms?"

Aaron: "Mama, what kind of question is that?"

Rachel: "Do you still not see what is happening?"

Aaron: "What do you mean now?"

Rachel: "That is what God was trying to tell me. That is why I am so filled with the spirit of children."

Aaron: "What are you on about?"

Rachel: “Proverbs 17 verse 6 – “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers. Samarah is pregnant, and I am going to be a grandmother!”

It took him quite some time to figure out that she might have been right. When it hit him, he became dumbstruck, while Rachel was rejoicing all over the house. Meanwhile, Samarah was dragged to the campus clinic reluctantly by Lydia. Luckily for them no one was in the queue so it was just them. She explained everything to the nurse and was handed a pregnancy test. Her nerves were shot and she didn't even bother to look at the test. She waited there with Lydia and the nurse and after a few minutes it was time to look at the results.

Nurse: “Well, congratulations, hun. You are pregnant.”

Lydia: (excitedly) “Oh, I'm going to be an aunty!”

The Nurse explained what the options were for her, but Lydia told her that she was already engaged to be married. All this while Samarah was rather quiet. She had no words. While she was overcome with shock, Lydia was reeling with joy just like Rachel.

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

While Aaron was reeling in the news, though he had no idea, Samarah was overwhelmed. So much so that she even went to a nearby pharmacy and bought three more pregnancy tests. When she went back to her flat with Lydia, she did not hesitate to take them again. All three of them came back positive almost instantly. Lydia was reeling with excitement while Samarah was laughing and crying simultaneously. She was too unsure how to feel, though one thing remained certain; everything felt so surreal. Aaron had been calling her but she just didn't have the heart to answer his calls. Lydia answered them all letting him know that she was taking a nap, meanwhile she just remained mum while Lydia was sipping on wine and trying to cook anything and everything that Samarah could stomach. She wasn't sure any more if it was the state she was in or if it was her nerves, but she could not stomach anything other than dry toast and water at that time which helped curb her nausea. She could not even sleep, but was grateful for Lydia's company. They were at Aaron's flat, and he had come back faster than lightning itself. He barged in with so

much excitement, forgetting to knock and alert them that he was entering.

Lydia: (frowning) “Bathong (goodness) Aaron, have you forgotten how to knock? O tla re tshosa (you’ll scare us to death).”

Aaron: “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to. Is everything alright? May I speak to my woman, please, Lydia?”

Lydia: “Ah, I am so used to you two. You don’t even have to chase me out any more. I know the drill. Babes, o be sharp ne (be okay, hey)? I’ll check up on you later, okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Thank you.”

She gave her a hug and left.

Lydia: “Just so you know, it has been a rather emotional day for me, so I am taking this bottle of wine for myself.”

She walked out and left Aaron smiling to himself. Once she was gone, he rushed towards Samarah and knelt down before her. He could see the sadness in her eyes and was not happy about it.

Aaron: "Baby, are you okay?"

All it took for her to cry was for him to ask that question. She shook her head and tears started streaming down her face.

Aaron: (worried) "What is it? Please tell me."

She just showed him three pregnancy tests she had taken from her bag. He reeled at those two clearly visible lines he saw on all three of them.

Aaron: (smiling) "You know, I had no idea, but now that I do know, I am so delighted, my love. I am indeed the happiest man in the world."

Samarah nodded while crying.

Aaron: "Aren't you happy?"

Samarah: (crying) "I am."

Aaron: "Then why are you crying?"

Samarah: "I don't know. I am just... scared, I guess."

Aaron laughed excitedly.

Aaron: "My love, everything happens for a reason. If anything, I firmly believe that God is in our corner. He truly loves us and I am just grateful for this."

Samarah: (crying) "Me too, but I just can't stop crying."

Aaron: (laughing) "It's just the hormones, baby."

He kissed her on the lips.

Aaron: "I know our little bean wasn't planned, but thank you so much for making me the happiest man in the world. This is the best gift I could ever ask for. I know you're scared, baby, believe me, I am petrified, but I promise to give you and our seed the life you both deserve. When I proposed to you, I promised to give you the world and I still stand by it."

Samarah was still in tears, but Aaron's warmth calmed her down naturally. They sat on that couch curled up in each other's arms while watching tv without saying much, until such a time that Aaron decided to spark up the conversation again right after the nerves were over.

Aaron: "I am thinking we should go see the doctor tomorrow morning."

Samarah: "I have classes tomorrow."

Aaron: "I know that, but surely we need to know if you are both safe and okay, right?"

Samarah: "I suppose you're right."

Aaron: "I have something to tell you."

Samarah looked at him curiously.

Aaron: "I went to see your father two days ago."

Samarah: (frowning) "What for? Did you guys fight again?"

Aaron: "Oh, no. I spoke to him about lobola. I am ready to speed up the process and I told him that I'd like to marry you within a month."

Samarah: "What did he say?"

Aaron: “I gave him a day to think it through and he called saying that he agrees to it. (sigh) So, I have to get my father’s family together as soon as possible. With the baby on the way now, I have to speed up the process even faster.”

Samarah: (surprised) “But what about your uncle? I mean the man loathes you. And his family? How will they accept what you did when they have been hunting you down for years?! Aaron, you literally changed your entire life, you altered it because of them! How will we even get married when they want you dead?!”

Aaron: “I will find a way, Sam.”

Samarah: “I don’t like this at all. I really don’t like it. I mean, can’t we just get married? Just us and our close family and friends? We don’t need to do this whole tradition and lobola stuff – I don’t really believe in it.”

Aaron: “1 John 4 verse 18 says; There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. I truly

believe that we both have a long way to go, but God has our backs. Trust in Him; trust in me – please.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Okay, but I just don’t like this at all, just so you know.”

Aaron kissed her hand.

Aaron: “Thank you for trusting me. All will be well.”

Samarah: “Okay.”

They had a peaceful night’s sleep while Aaron remained a little restless. He knew what he had to do though both his mother and Samarah were against it. Rachel had called Samarah just before they went to bed to congratulate her on her pregnancy and comfort her. She was yet to tell her father and Beatrice, of which she wasn’t ready for. The following morning came and as usual, Aaron got up early. He made her a light breakfast instead of asking her to go jogging with him. He burst into the bedroom excitedly with the breakfast tray.

Aaron: (smiling) "Good morning, beautiful Mama."

Samarah: "Morning."

Aaron: "I made you some breakfast. I didn't add any eggs, just in case you felt nauseated again."

Samarah: "Oh, thank you."

He placed the tray on the bed.

Aaron: "I have some yoghurt – plain, strawberries, pawpaw, some oranges and dry toast. I googled and found out that dry toast is good for pregnant women with morning sickness. Also, Lydia told me that you managed to eat that last night."

Samarah: "Oh, how I wish I could stomach anything else."

She managed to eat the fruits at least, but not the yoghurt. Aaron was understanding enough and was happy she managed to have some orange juice too without vomiting. Once they were done eating, they went to take a shower and get ready for the day. Aaron had already made an appointment with the doctor. They got into the car and headed to the doctor. Upon their arrival, they had to wait a while in the waiting room, while Beatrice and Richard were walking by. They were stunned to find the two waiting right outside an Ob-gyn's consultation room.

Beatrice: (surprised) "Samarah? Aaron?"

The both of them looked up in annoyance when they noticed it was them.

Samarah: "Oh, hi. Papa."

Richard: (frowning) "What are you two doing here? Aren't you supposed to be at school?"

Samarah: "I don't have classes today. I came for a check up."

Beatrice: (curiously) "Oh? What kind?"

Aaron: (annoyed) "That's a bit rude, don't you think? You don't ask someone why they came to see a doctor."

Beatrice: "Oh, I didn't mean it like that. It's just that – if you're pregnant – "

Aaron: (interrupting) "Why would you assume that she's pregnant? Aren't you the one who said that she can't possibly get pregnant just the other day?"

Beatrice: "Well, in any case, I do hope you get better from whatever it is you have."

Aaron: "Well then, not everyone who visits a gynae is ill, Beatrice, but we will take your thoughts into consideration."

Richard: "Well, when are you coming to visit Sammy? We have a lot to talk about."

Samarah: "I'll see you soon. Perhaps this weekend."

Richard: "Okay then. See you then. Let's go, Beatrice."

Richard was wheeled out of the hospital by the curious Beatrice, while Aaron decided not to dwell on them much. After another fifteen minutes of waiting, it was finally time for them to enter the doctor's room. Aaron was with her every step of the way.

Dr. Brown: "Good morning. I am sorry you two had to wait so long. It has been quite a hectic morning."

Aaron: "It is no problem."

Dr. Brown: "So, Samarah, what can I do for you today?"

Samarah: (nervously) “Well, I found out that I am pregnant yesterday, so I am here to confirm it and start with my antenatal treatment.”

Dr. Brown: “Well, that is good news now, isn’t it?”

Aaron: “Indeed it is.”

Dr. Brown: “Okay then, well, first I’d like to do a sonar scan on you to really confirm it, and then we will take it from there, alright?”

Samarah: “Okay.”

Dr. Brown: “You can go change into one of the gowns just behind the door in the rest room and we will both be waiting for you out here.”

She nervously went to the office bathroom and changed. Once she was out, Aaron and Dr. Brown were casually conversing.

Dr. Brown: "Oh, yes. Morning sickness is very common but usually subsides in the second semester."

Aaron: "Well, will she be able to carry on normally and be healthy while vomiting so much?"

Dr. Brown: "Some women have extreme nausea to the point where they need to be hospitalized, but let us hope that this isn't the case. I can prescribe some medication for her in hopes that it will help with the nausea."

Aaron: (smiling) "Thank you, doc."

Dr. Brown: "Oh, great. Our mommy has changed. Are you ready?"

Samarah nodded nervously.

Aaron: (chuckling) "She's cute when she's nervous, isn't she?"

Dr. Brown: (laughing) “Most definitely. Come, please do relax on the bed. Nothing about this will hurt you in any way, okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Okay.”

She lay on the bed with Aaron right by her side. The doctor asked her to spread her legs a bit while she got hold of the transuder.

Dr. Brown: “So, since you said that it has been about over two months since you last saw your period, I don’t see a need for a vagina ultrasound. I usually perform that one in a case where the patient might be a few weeks pregnant and the fetus is a little too small. This won’t hurt you one bit, it will only be a cold and potentially uncomfortable, okay?”

Samarah: “Okay.”

Aaron squeezed her hand excitedly while the Doctor got started with the machine. After a while the doctor smiled when she saw something.

Dr. Brown: “Yep, as I expected, you are about 10 weeks pregnant.”

Aaron was too excited and seeing that image on the screen made Samarah ease up a little bit.

Samarah: “Is that the baby?”

Dr. Brown: “Technically, it is still an embryo, but yes, that is your little baby. Oh, wait

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there are two.”

Samarah: (surprised) “What do you mean two?”

While the doctor was adjusting the transducer on her stomach she pressed a button and they could hear colluding sounds from the machine.

Dr. Brown: "Do you hear that? That's two heartbeats."

Both Samarah and Aaron were very shocked.

Aaron: (excitedly) "Twins?! We're going to have two babies, my love!"

Dr. Brown: "This is not uncommon in twins or someone who has twins in the family."

Samarah: "I am a twin, well, she passed on years ago."

Dr. Brown: "Oh, I am very sorry about that, but congratulations. You two are going to be parents to two healthy babies."

Aaron: (excitedly) “This is fantastic, doctor! Is it possible to detect the genders yet?”

Dr. Brown: “Not at this point, but I think on your next appointment, we will be able to tell what you’re carrying.”

Once the doctor printed them a picture of the babies, it sunk into Samarah’s brain. She completely forgot about how anxious she was just an hour prior to seeing the entire image.

Dr. Brown: “I always want to make the moments special for my clients, so may I email you the video of today’s ultrasound? You could always show it to them one day when they’re all grown up.”

Aaron: “Yes, please, doctor. This is literally the best day of my life.”

Dr. Brown: “As exciting as pregnancy may be, it may also pose a danger to both the mother and child at times, and in a case of twin pregnancies we are always extra vigilant.”

Aaron: (nodding) "Of course, doctor."

Dr. Brown: "During pregnancy, usually the patient has to come in and see me once a month, but because of your case, I'd like to see you twice a month."

Samarah: (frowning) "Is there something you're not telling us, Doctor?"

Dr. Brown: "I don't want you to be alarmed or end up starving yourself to death, but most women your size tend to develop hypertension in pregnancy, which we call pre-eclampsia. It is life threatening to both mother and child. I know, it is perhaps too soon to worry about that as weight gain is indeed evident during pregnancy, but we have to be very careful."

Aaron: (nodding) "I'll keep an eye on her, doc."

Dr. Brown: "Good then. I will run some more tests from your blood work. I don't think there is anything we should worry

about as of now. Take it easy and try not to stress as much as possible, okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay. Thanks, doc."

Dr. Brown wrote down her prescription for anti-nausea medication and pregnancy supplements and they were out of there in an hour. Samarah seemed a little worried about the entire situation since she was quiet the entire drive back to the flat.

Aaron: (frowning) "Are you okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

Aaron: "You know you can't fool me, love. What is it?"

Samarah: (sigh) "You and I both know that I am fat, I've always been fat. Now should anything happen to our babies, it will be 100% my fault."

Aaron: "Stop it. Stop saying things like that about yourself. Nothing will happen to you or these babies. Should anything happen, then it would be meant to happen. As far as I am concerned, you three are healthy and I require you to be happy throughout this entire pregnancy. I will under no circumstances allow you to stress yourself, Samarah. We can't handle that. We don't need that. Can you just at least try?"

Samarah: (sigh) "I will try."

Aaron: "That's all I need to hear. Are you hungry?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, but I am worried that I might vomit again."

Aaron: "What are you craving?"

Samarah: "Some Burger King, an Oreo Mcflurry and some Iced Tea. Oh, I am dying for it."

Aaron: "Okay then. Stay put. I am going to get your medication first and bring you some food, okay?"

She nodded and he kissed her before he left. Right after he left, her phone rang. It was a phone call from Beatrice, strange enough. She answered it hesitantly.

Samarah: "Hello."

Beatrice: (nervously) "Oh, Sammy, my baby. Is that how you greet your own mother?"

Samarah: "What can I do for you?"

Beatrice: "Oh, still as hostile as ever."

Samarah still had no recollection of what exactly happened that evening Amarah died. Her mind still blocked it and she refused to revisit it. She had been getting a few memories of Beatrice being mean to her and Amarah when they were younger, hence her inability to connect with her.

Samarah: "You called me, I answered. What is it?"

Beatrice: "Oh, I was hoping we could talk, you know. I mean since you're getting married now and you might be a mother very soon, I just thought that – "

Samarah: (interrupting) "Who said I am going to be a mother?"

Beatrice: "Oh, after seeing you outside Dr. Brown's office, I assumed that – "

Samarah: "That's the thing – you assumed. You always assume. For a mother, you sure do know how to act. I don't get you, in fact, I have never understood you. You could have just asked me out for a cup of coffee and perhaps I would have said yes."

Beatrice: "Bathong (goodness), Samarah! You think that just because you're shacking up with a rich boy you can speak to me like I am trash?! I am still your mother!"

Samarah: "Then act like it!"

She hung up on Beatrice as she was about to insult her. She always got worked up whenever Beatrice spoke to her, hence she just always avoided her. She just knew there was something bigger at play. She could never understand why Beatrice irritated her so much. She tried to breathe slowly and calm herself down. Beatrice just wasn't worth it. She was clearly up to something because the texts from her just kept on coming; "I'm sorry, can we please talk over a cup of coffee maybe tomorrow?", "Please, Sammy, we need to talk about this. Your father has been miserable ever since you met that boy, it is as if you just don't know us any more." "Can we just make peace? It is what Amarah would have wanted." Samarah tossed her phone away from her and ignored the text messages flatly. After about 15 minutes, another call came through. She never bothered to check as she assumed it was either Beatrice or her father. After the person called again for the third time, she contemplated switching it off, only to realize it was Rachel. She instantly regretted it.

Samarah: "Hi, Ma."

Rachel: “Hao (goodness), Samarah. Are you avoiding me? Did I do something wrong?”

Samarah: “No, Ma. It wasn’t my intention. I thought you were someone else.”

Rachel: “Oh, I am right outside your door. I was just about to leave since you were not answering.”

Samarah: “I apologize. I am coming to open up for you.”

Rachel: “Alright, my darling.”

Samarah got up and rushed to the door. Upon opening, Rachel had a few paper bags in her hands.

Rachel: “Please help me with these.”

They took them all and placed them on the kitchen counter. Rachel took one good look at Samarah and she looked a little upset. She was just too excited over the news and gave her one tight hug.

Rachel: "Congratulations, my love. I am just so happy, I couldn't even sleep last night. How are you feeling? Aaron tells me you have been having some horrible nausea."

Samarah: "I am alright, Ma. I am still trying to process everything since the doctor told us we're having twins."

Rachel: (excitedly) "Twins?! Oh, my goodness! I should have expected that since you are a twin and Aaron's father was a twin as well! My goodness, God is just amazing! Come, let's sit down. I brought you something to help with the nausea. You know, when I was pregnant with Aaron I could barely keep anything in."

Samarah: "I'll try it later. Aaron just went out to buy me some food."

Rachel: “Good, that gives us ladies a chance to gossip without him bothering us.”

Samarah chuckled briefly.

Rachel: “Tell me, who has got you in such a sour mood? You should be reeling over the news.”

Samarah: (Sigh) “It’s not a big deal, but it’s Beatrice.”

She told Rachel everything that happened and the sound of that woman’s name always left a sour taste in Rachel’s mouth.

Rachel: “Don’t let her get to you. She is just a devious snake, but God is bigger than anything and anyone. She is small fry.”

Samarah: “I just don’t know why I feel like this towards my own mother. I mean, I feel horrible about it, but I loathe her. Is it even normal?”

Rachel: "Believe me, I counsel so many people who despise their own mothers. A lot of children go through the most at the hands of their mothers. Just be careful of her, but don't let her get to you much."

Samarah: (nodding) "I shall try."

Rachel: "Aaron tells me he would like to marry you as soon as possible. He tells me he is planning on setting up an appointment with his father's family. How do you feel about that?"

Samarah: "Honestly, I don't like it at all, Ma. I feel like he will be exposing us to the enemy. You both have been on the run from them and who knows? Once they find out I am expecting, they will try and get rid of me too."

Rachel: "You know, I now see why God chose you for Aaron. That is my exact same sentiment about the entire thing, Samarah. I don't want you to think that I don't want to do things right by you, because I really do, but his father's family is

just not the right people to approach. They will finish what they started.”

Samarah: “Well, perhaps you could ask your family healer. I mean you always consult him, don’t you?”

Rachel: “You are quite smart. I haven’t really thought about that, but I will. Perhaps he will be able to speak some sense into him.”

Samarah: “If anything, I’d just be happy with a small, court wedding. I really don’t think I would like a big wedding.”

Rachel: “Well, we will get there when the time comes. What did the doctor say? How far along are you?”

Samarah: “She said that I’m about ten weeks along. Wait here, I’ll bring the scan for you.”

Rachel was so excited to share the journey with Samarah. She was thankful that she allowed herself to be so free with

her. Aaron came back with more than enough food for the three of them. Lydia was at Collin's place and she wanted to give Samarah some space with her little family. The three of them enjoyed their meal and usual banter. Later than evening, Samarah was feeling a bit more tired than usual and went to bed early. That gave Aaron enough time to set his plan in motion. He was restless as he was expecting a very important call. While he was studying a bit, the call finally came through at about 10pm. He went outside the flat so that he could not disturb Samarah's sleep.

Aaron: "Alex, talk to me."

Alex: "Sure, Bozza (boss)."

Aaron: "Any news?"

Alex: "Sure, sure. I found him. He lives in Soweto. He is a bit of a big shot there doing the usual small crimes, you know, drugs, car theft, that sort of thing."

Aaron: "Does he go by the same name?"

Alex: "Yes, although many know him by his street name "Bra P".

Aaron: "Cool, send me his address."

Alex: "Sure."

They both hung up and Aaron received the address. It was time for him to face his demons, though he had no idea that he was about to open a very big can of worms.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

The following day came and Aaron had to wait at least until Friday to set his plan in motion. The entire time, Rachel had been worried about him and this plan of his. Samarah's nausea had become a lot better and the medicine was indeed helping, but not much could be done for the extreme fatigue. She and Aaron were still jogging every morning, although she was doing moderate exercises. Friday had come and they both had no lectures. She had been avoiding her father and Beatrice, more especially since Beatrice had started having a sudden interest in her life. She was more worried about what her father would say if he found out she was pregnant. After their morning jog and breakfast, Aaron took a shower and kissed Samarah goodbye. He told her that he had some business to take care of and she let him be. She didn't mind being alone for a few hours that day. Aaron headed straight to Rachel's house and found her a little distressed.

Aaron: “Mama, what's wrong?”

Rachel: “Oh, I don’t know, my son. I have been so restless nowadays. The dreams I have been having are just unsettling me.”

Aaron: “What kind of dreams?”

Rachel: (teary) “I keep dreaming of you in hospital, unresponsive and in a coma. I don’t know what it means, but I don’t like it. This dream keeps on revisiting me and I feel like I am going mad.”

Aaron: “Ma, calm down. You are just anxious. You need to get enough sleep.”

Rachel: (Shouting) “Stop treating this like some kind of joke, Aaron! This is your life we’re talking about!”

Aaron: “Okay, I am sorry. Have you called Ntate Buda?”

Rachel: “He is on his way here. He said that he wanted to speak to you.”

Aaron: "Okay then. I'll wait for him before we leave."

Rachel: "Leave? Where are we going?"

Aaron: "I'll tell you a bit later."

Rachel: (nodding) "Let me go take a shower then."

She walked to her bedroom and a few minutes later, in walked Ntate Buda.

Aaron: "Oh, Ntate Buda. We meet again."

He gave Aaron his usual stare.

Ntate Buda: "Hmm, under undesirable circumstances as usual."

Aaron: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Ntate Buda: "I see you wanted to see me. Well, I am here now. What is it you would like to know?"

Aaron: "Well, I would like to know if it is safe for me to go ahead with my plan? I'd like to pay lobola and I can't do that without my father's family."

Ntate Buda: (burping) "Would you kindly make me some tea? Let us wait upon your mother, shall we?"

Aaron nodded and went to the kitchen to make him some tea, while he started sniffing on his snuff. After he got him some tea and biscuits, Rachel came back down stairs.

Rachel: "Buda, how are you doing?"

Ntate Buda: "I've had better days. You look like you've been getting beatings at night. What's troubling you?"

Rachel: "The same dream I told you about."

Ntate Buda: (nodding) "Hmm. Tell me, son, why haven't you brought your wife here today?"

Aaron: "I didn't want to expose her to this side of my life – not yet at least."

Ntate Buda: "If you want to do things right, you will need to expose her."

Aaron: "To everything."

Ntate Buda: (nodding) "That will make her stronger. She needs the strength."

Rachel: "Has Aaron spoken to you?"

Ntate Buda: "Yes, he has. Well, Aaron, I don't know what you want me to say because I have told you countless times what

your grandfather has said. He did tell you that he will be with you every step of the way. So, why do you doubt yourself? Why do you still continue to doubt him?"

Aaron: (sigh) "I don't know. I am not a coward or a man who fears a lot of things, but I am petrified of what I am about to do."

Ntate Buda: "Believe me, he is expecting you, your uncle that is. He is awaiting your appearance."

Rachel: "How does he know that Aaron wants to see him?"

Ntate Buda: "He is and has always been into dark magic. His sources told him all about where you are. They are all expecting you."

Rachel: (panicking) "What will they do to us? Surely this can't be safe."

Ntate Buda: "Go and find out for yourself. I would not send you there if it was going to be dangerous for you to even set foot there."

Aaron: (nodding) "Okay."

Ntate Buda: "Take the girl with you."

Aaron looked at him in confusion.

Ntate Buda: "You heard me correctly. Take Samarah with you. They need to see your wife."

With that said, Aaron knew what he had to do. They greeted Ntate Buda goodbye and went back to his flat. Luckily she had taken a shower though she was not in the mood to leave the bedroom. She was watching tv and eating some pretzels when she saw a rather distraught Aaron standing before her.

Samarah: "Oh, you're back. How did it go?"

Aaron: (calmly) "Can you please put on a dress with a headwrap? We need to go somewhere."

Samarah: "Oh, where are we going?"

Aaron: "I'll tell you in the car."

Samarah was unsuspecting though she could sense that his mood was a bit off. She agreed and changed into a decent long dress with a head wrap as he asked. When she got into the car, she saw Ruth in the back seat.

Samarah: (smiling) "Hi, Ma. I didn't realize you were also here. Why didn't you come up?"

Rachel: "I am sorry, I didn't mean to be rude. It's just that we have some urgent matters to deal with."

Samarah: "Oh, alright then."

She put on her seatbelt and the drive became awkward along the way as no one was talking. Something didn't feel right; they were both anxious and she grew weary as the drive progressed. She could not take it any longer and decided to ask.

Samarah: "Are you going to tell me what we're doing in Soweto?"

Aaron: "We're here to see my father's family."

She suddenly felt a huge knot in her throat. She remained silent ever since he responded to her. Once Aaron found the house, he parked outside and hesitated walking out for a few minutes.

Rachel: "Are you ready, son? We have to do this."

Aaron nodded and got out of the car. He proceeded to open his mother's door and then the worried Samarah's door. Once she was out, he didn't let go of her hand – not one bit. The house looked really nice from the outside, with really high walls. It

was impossible to see what was happening behind them. The gate even had an intercom, and it was a large double storey house, with gorgeous gray paint. Aaron pressed the intercom button and someone answered nearly immediately. It was the voice of a woman.

Woman: "Yes?"

Aaron: (Clearing throat) "Good day, I'd like to see Mr. Moeng, please."

Woman: "And you are?"

Aaron: "Tell him it's Tebogo, Philemon's son."

Woman: (shocked) "Eh, eh, eh! Palesa! Go tell your father that his brother's son is here to see him. Ka nnete (truthfully), the devil is about to enter my house."

They could hear a lot of scuffling about and someone mumbling in the background. Within minutes, the gate was opened for

them. He chose to park outside the house for safety reasons. The three of them walked in slowly, but they didn't even reach the door when his uncle Bra P, his mother Eunice and his wife Daphney walked out of the house looking ready for a big fight. Bra P was a tall and dark man. He looked like he was quite handsome back in his day though his face was filled with a lot of scars. Samarah could see where Aaron took his genes.

Eunice: (shouting) "Yoh (wow), ka nnete (really)! Satan wa nteka (Satan is truly testing me)! Moloji yo o batla eng g aka (what is this witch doing in my house)?!"

By witch she was referring to Rachel as she pointed her knob kieire towards her direction. She was quite an old woman with a bent back and a very feisty attitude. She seemed to hate Rachel, of which really confused Samarah.

Bra P: "What do you want? Is it not bad enough that you killed my brother?!"

Aaron: "I come in peace. I have come to talk to you."

Daphney: (shouting) “Hehe! Talk?! There is nothing to talk about here, boy! In fact, Paul, you should really shoot this boy. An eye for an eye, right?”

Bra P: “Ema pele wena (wait a minute), Daphney. I don’t know what you expect from me after all these years.”

Aaron: “Forgive me for coming unannounced, but if it is an apology you seek – you won’t get one. We all know what my father was doing to my mother and I saved her from him that night.”

Aaron’s lack of remorse was frustrating his father’s family to the core even though he looked beyond calm. Daphney and Eunice’s noise was aggravating the situation. He looked Aaron straight in the eye while Aaron did not bat an eyelid. Rachel was also calm though her heart was beating beyond control, while Samarah was trembling. Bra P took out a gun from behind his pants, cocked it and pointed it straight at Aaron. Samarah could feel the onset of urine about to flow down her legs, but Aaron held her hand tightly, without batting an eyelid. Daphney and Eunice were both screaming, saying the opposite of one another, rather.

Daphne: (shouting) “Thunya selo se (shoot this thing)! You’ve been waiting years for this day!”

Eunice: (pleading) “You cannot possibly want to kill Philemon’s only offspring! Are you mad?! He will never forgive you! If you feel the need to shoot anyone – shoot her! (pointing at Rachel) She’s the root of all these problems!”

Aaron: (calmly) “Shooting me right in front of my mother and wife to be will not bring you any peace. You of all people, Koko (granny), should know better than to want my mother dead. She suffered at the hands of your son and you want her dead? I have come here because I am getting married. For years I have run away from you because of fear, but I am standing right here before you – fearless. God is my witness, I was protecting my mother from being murdered that evening. Would you have wanted me to grow up without a loving mother and remain with an abusive father? If that is the case, then shoot me now. You have been waiting for over ten years, right? Get it over and done with and see if it will bring you any peace.”

Bra P remained calm though he started hyperventilating. Aaron's anger took over him and he walked closer to him with his face right against the gun. Samarah's fear took over and she felt a little bit of urine coming out of her. Rachel was saying a silent prayer while Daphney and Eunice were shouting on top of one another.

Aaron: "Go ahead. Shoot me. I am here now."

People could hear the noise levels going up from the Moeng household, but nothing prepared them for what was about to happen. Suddenly, a dark cloud emerged out of the bright sky and uncontrollable rain started to pour down the Moeng household. It was strange since the rain was only occurring in that yard and nowhere else. Aaron was still bewildered with anger and he did not let go of the trembling Samarah. None of them wanted to move, though Daphney and Eunice thought of moving right into the house. Palesa, Bra P's daughter was shouting at them to get out of the rain. She could see the onset of a very bad lighting about to strike. Everyone could hear thunder rumbling, but Aaron and Bra P refused to move. Then, thunder struck the noisy Eunice and she fell onto the ground. It was only when Palesa started screaming that everyone came back to their senses. Bra P withdrew his gun and asked Palesa

and Daphney to help him carry his unconscious mother into the house. By then, Aaron, Samarah and Rachel were soaking wet, but the thought of digesting what had just happened was more important to them.

Rachel: “Let’s go, we’ll all get flu if we don’t move out of this rain.”

As soon as she said that, the rain stopped, so did the lighting and thunder. The sky was immediately clear again and the clouds had returned back to normal. Everyone could see the sun again. Aaron didn’t flinch one bit as he knew why that happened, while Samarah was just clueless and afraid.

Samarah: (shaking) “Aaron, let’s go, please.”

Aaron didn’t want to leave, but after the traumatic events, he decided to listen to Samarah and leave. The three of them walked out of the gate, and by then nearly the entire community was standing just outside Bra P’s house, asking themselves who had died. Samara was too distraught to even notice Langa standing right across the gate staring at them.

They got into Aaron's car and drove off in silence. It was only then that the after effects kicked in and Samarah started crying while shaking.

Rachel: "Oh, my God, Samarah, honey, are you alright?"

It was as if Rachel was adding fuel to the fire by asking that. She started crying louder, while Aaron felt so guilty.

Rachel: "Pull over, Aaron."

He did as told. He didn't know how to comfort her, while Rachel tried to calm her down. Rachel had rushed out of the backseat and went to calm her down as she was sitting in the front.

Rachel: "It's okay, honey. I am very sorry you had to experience that, but you need to calm down, please. It is not good for the babies nor for you."

It was quite hard for her to calm down when she saw a real gun pointed at Aaron right in front of her. She thought he was going

to die. She was even too embarrassed to tell Aaron that she had wet herself in the process. Aaron stood outside and refrained by all means from crying. He lit a cigarette a bit farther from both his mother and Samarah. He hardly smoked in front of his mother, but he was stressed that day and needed something to take off the edge. It pained him seeing his woman crying like that – all because of him. Had he not taken her there, she would have never been in that situation.

Samarah: (sniffing) “I am very sorry, Mama. I didn’t mean to lose it like that.”

Rachel: “It is okay, really. No one would be calm after seeing a gun pointed at any one in front of them.”

Samarah: “I... I wet myself. I didn’t want to tell Aaron. I am so embarrassed.”

Rachel: “It is just urine, it is no big deal. It comes with the shock. He can get the car cleaned up. Come, let us go home before you catch a cold, okay?”

Samarah nodded.

Rachel: "Come sit with me in the back."

She did as told and lay her head in Rachel's soft bosom, while Aaron threw the remainder of his cigarette, adjusted his glasses and got into the car. He drove off in complete silence and once they got back to the flat, Rachel ran Samarah a warm bath and got her into her pajamas and put her in bed. She offered to make her some soup, though it wasn't raining any longer. Aaron was outside smoking a bit. He couldn't even vent to anyone seeing that Ntate Tau was not on duty that day. After a few smokes he went back to the flat and found his mother making soup in the kitchen. He sat down on the couch and Rachel went to sit right next to him.

Rachel: (firmly) "What were you thinking, really?"

Aaron: "I did what I had to do. You heard Buda yourself, Ma. I had to do it."

Rachel: "I know, but couldn't you have done something else other than aggravating that fuck? What if he killed you?"

Aaron: "Then I would have been dead and you and Samarah would have been taken care of."

Rachel: "Are you being serious right now?"

Aaron: "Yes, I am, Ma. I will no longer let Paul control our lives like this. He has done so for too long, alongside his ruthless family. Did you see that old hag? She still hates you when you have done nothing but be good to my father."

Rachel: "I am not worried about her."

She got up and went back to the kitchen. Her ex mother in law was still a sore subject and thank goodness they were separated by death.

Aaron: "You know very well she never treated you right. I for one know you never healed from it."

Rachel: "I have. God has ensured that I heal from it."

Aaron: (nodding) "I won't bother you about this any longer. I am going to check on Samarah."

While he went to the bedroom, Rachel quickly wiped away a tear from her face. She hated crying and hated people seeing her crying even more. Aaron hated himself for exposing Samarah to such an ordeal. He couldn't understand why Buda said that he should have taken her with him, only for her to come back feeling dreadfully afraid. He sat on the bed and stared at her for a very long time before dozing off. Rachel slept in the guest bedroom that evening

but nothing prepared them for the coming events. At about 5am in the morning, Aaron received a call from a number he couldn't recognize.

Aaron: "Hello."

Man: “Dumela (Hello), Aaron. How are you, motlogolo (nephew)?”

He recognized that voice very well and he felt temporarily paralyzed by the shock at the fact that his grandmother’s brother was calling him.

Malome: “I am very sorry to call you so early in the morning, more especially after so many years. If anything, I feel so horrible about it all.”

Aaron: “What can I do for you, Malome (uncle)?”

Malome: “I am afraid you need to come over to Paul’s house as soon as possible. You, your wife and your mother.”

Aaron: “No, I am afraid I cannot do that. I nearly died today at the hands of my father’s brother in case you haven’t heard. History was yet about to repeat itself.”

Malome: "I am afraid you will have to come see this for yourself. I would not be asking you to come if I didn't feel the need to. Please."

Aaron: (sigh) "Okay."

Malome: "Please hurry. There doesn't seem to be much time."

Aaron hung up in confusion. He thought that it was perhaps his father's family's attempt to finish him off or something, so he tried to doze off soon after the call. Just as he put his head back on that pillow, he heard his grandfather's voice.

Grandfather: (shouting) "Get up and do as you're told!"

He jumped out of bed, alarming Samarah.

Samarah: "What is it? What's happening?"

He could still hear that voice as if the person was in that room.

Aaron: "Oh, nothing. Please get up. We have to go."

Samarah: "Where are we going?"

Aaron: "I'll explain later. We don't have much time. Let's just brush our teeth and wash our faces."

She did as told as he went to wake his mother up. She was very reluctant to leave.

Rachel: "I am not going back there, Aaron."

Aaron: "Papa shouted at me and told me to get up and do as I'm told."

He used to call his grandfather "Papa".

Rachel: (surprised) "When did that happen?"

Aaron: "Just after I answered the call."

Rachel: "Okay, let me quickly brush my teeth then we'll leave."

Rache and Samarah both wore dresses and head wraps, while Aaron ensured that he wore a jacked to cover his arms and shoulders. The Moeng family was very traditional and did not budge when it came to the attire of everyone in the family. Soon after they were done freshening up, they got into the car. Just as he was about to start the car, he received yet another call from the exact same number.

Aaron: "Malome."

Malome: "Please, do tell me that you are on your way at least."

Aaron: "I am about to leave the house."

Malome: "Please, your grandfather won't leave her alone until you come."

He hung up right after saying that, causing Aaron to be even more confused.

Rachel: "What is he saying?"

Aaron: "He just said we should hurry."

Rachel nodded while Samarah couldn't keep quiet any more.

Samarah: "Where are we going?"

Rachel: "We are going back to the Moeng household. Please, darling, do not panic."

Samarah: (worried) "What if they do what they did yesterday?"

Rachel: "They won't. We were summoned by Aaron's elder uncle. Nothing will happen to any of us, okay?"

She nodded though she felt very much afraid. She chose to put her trust and faith in Rachel. The further they drove into Soweto, the heavier her heart felt. She tried to refrain from trembling and shaking, but it was near impossible. They got out of the house and found quite a lot of cars right outside. The uncle was waiting for them right outside.

Malome: (smiling) "Good, you finally came. Dumela (hello), Rachel. Are you well?"

Rachel: "Hello, Malome. I am well, how are you?"

Malome: "I've had better days. This must be your wife, Aaron. What a beaut she is. Come, we don't have much time, we can do the formalities later on."

Aaron: "Re ya kae (where are we going)?"

Malome: “You will know soon enough.”

The house was packed with family members, causing Rachel to feel a bit out of place. Samarah’s hand tightened around Aaron’s as they walked up the stairs. Aaron could feel a few of the eyes of the other relatives sting. He was known as the son who killed his own father, yet they didn’t even care about the reasons. The closer they got to the bedroom they were being led to, they started hearing unbearable screams. The three of them stopped right behind Malome, but he assured them that everything was okay.

Malome: “Please do follow me, I am not throwing you into the lion’s den. I promise.”

They followed him reluctantly, and upon entering the room, they were met by a rather startling sight. Eunice was lying in bed with a bulging stomach. Something seemed to have been moving in her stomach and she just couldn’t stop screaming out in pain. Her skin looked green with all her veins from all over her body protruding. They looked like they were about to pop with each scream she let out. Each time that thing moved in her stomach, she screamed out in pain and grabbed hold of the

sheets. Paul was sitting right across the bed alongside his wife Daphney and there was a sangoma on the floor busy throwing bones. With each time he checked the bones, he kept shaking his head.

Malome: "They are here."

The sangoma looked up and looked relieved at the sight of Rachel, Samarah and Aaron.

Sangoma: "Oh, good. Please, sit."

The three of them sat on the three chairs provided for them right across where Paul and Daphney were seated. Samarah felt even more frightened than the day before. Rachel and Aaron both had each of her hands in theirs as a sign of comfort.

Malome: "You have nothing to be afraid of. You may begin."

He was referring to the Sangoma who started putting all the bones back into the bag and asked Aaron to blow.

Sangoma: “Futsetsa (blow).”

He did so reluctantly and once the bones were thrown onto the ground, lighting started rumbling just like the day before.

Sangoma: (nodding) “Yes, as I predicted, the bones remain the same.”

Malome: “Makhosi (agreed). Please do explain to them – all of them.”

Sangoma: (nodding) “Aaron, your grandfather let you here – all three of you. He said he wants you to witness his power and by doing so, you will put your entire faith in him as your guardian from this point forward.”

Aaron nodded. Rachel looked at Eunice and could feel nothing but hatred towards the woman who made her entire marriage hell; the woman who made her feel inadequate instead of showing her love.

Sangoma: “Rachel, I know what you feel right now, believe me I do. Mkhulu (grandfather) led you here because you have been waiting for this day for your entire life.”

Rachel could feel the onset of long overdue tears.

Sangoma: “Samarah, you are one of a kind. You have yet to discover who you are – who you truly are, but you are about to marry into a very traditional family, and in so, you were led here so you could see things that happen beyond our control, spiritual things. Do not be afraid, it is not good for the babies.”

As soon as he said that, Daphney looked at Samarah with so much shock within her, tinted with envy. She had always been pressured to birth twins, but failed to even produce an heir, according to her husband. After endless miscarriages, Palesa was the only child they could ever have. The Sangoma started chanting and saying things that no one could understand. The more he chanted the more Eunice started screaming. She let out one high-pitched scream and the room got darker, yet it looked as if a very odd bright light was shining upon her face.

The voice that came out of her mouth was not hers, it was in fact that of Aaron's grandfather.

Eunice: "Rachel, my wonderful daughter in law. Please, do forgive me for not being there to rescue you from the claws of this woman. I have tried my level best to protect you from her when I was alive, but she too got rid of me by poisoning me. I too left this earth prematurely all the hands of someone who claimed to love me!"

With every ounce of anger he produced, Eunice screamed even louder.

Eunice: "I know, you have lived your entire life doubting yourself and your choices, but fear not – I am here. I have always been there for you. Who do you think ensured that you escaped safely? Who do you think ensured that both you and Aaron remained out of harm's way – even that time when you had that inexplicable accident back in Canada? I was there every step of the way. Fear not, for your suffering is over. This woman has always been tainted with greed and felt that Philemon was too good for you. She favoured him more than our other children, hence Paul never came right. I say this unto

each and every one of you right this moment; if any of you dare to touch any of those three, I will personally ensure that my wrath comes upon you tenfolds. I will not rest until you all die like flies. You can see that Philemon is dead and yes, Aaron killed him – not by choice. You should all be ashamed that as young as he was, he had to face his father and kill the monster he was by protecting his mother. I am not afraid of any of you – if anything, you should all be afraid of me. Rachel, my child, I leave you with this; I am always with you. Do not worry, my wife is finally going to suffer for what she has done to you. You are loved.”

Just like that, it seemed that Aaron’s grandfather left Eunice’s soul along with hers. She let out a piercing scream that nearly broke all the windows in the house. Her stomach began swelling even bigger and after about an entire minute of screaming, Eunice took her last breath on that bed and her stomach remained swollen. The sky was temporarily black throughout the entire ordeal and once her soul left her body, the sky was clear again. It was a rather surreal moment for Samarah which left her speechless. It hurt her even more to see Rachel let out one loud cry; she was crying for all the years of pain brought onto her by her mother in law. They let her be

and allowed her to cry for a while, as Paul and Daphney left the room filled with nothing but rage.

Sangoma: “Let her cry. She will calm down in a moment.”

The last time Aaron saw his mother break down like that, was when his father broke a beer bottle right on her head. She had a scar right at the back of her head to prove it. She cried and let it all out. It is just amazing how much the human body can store away and force us to break down – even when we try to refuse. She cried for a good ten minutes, and they let her be. The moment her tears subsided, so did Aaron’s heartache. He couldn’t cope with seeing his mother break down like that. Samarah felt his grip tighten while Rachel’s grip was a lot tighter than his. Aaron tried to hide his tears away but his body betrayed him. He cried silently and Samarah just sat in between them, comforting them in silence.

Sangoma: “Now that it is all out of the way, how are you feeling?”

Rachel spoke while still looking at Eunice's dead body on the bed.

Rachel: (sniffing) "That woman abused me, to put it in lighter words. I can never expose my daughter-in-law to everything she has done to me. I vowed a long time ago that should Aaron find a wife, I would love her more than the word itself."

Malome: (nodding) "Firstly, I would like to apologize to you, makoti (daughter-in-law). I never knew of all the things he did to you. He hid it well and so did Eunice. The day I heard everything and how she was still blaming you, I just couldn't believe my ears. When you and Aaron left, it was hard for me to get over it all. I wished that I could have been there to save you. Please, allow me to mend my ways while I still can in the flesh."

Rachel: "Malome, you and Papa (grandfather) have always been kind to me. You did nothing wrong. Some things are just inevitable and you couldn't stop him – no one can. Now, my son has had to live with the burden of being his own father's killer. Though they know the truth, they refuse to accept it. That will forever pain me."

Sangoma: “Fear not, Rachel. The time for your redemption has come. I say unto you now, as of this moment onwards, you have been reborn. Papa has big things in store for you all.”

Rachel: (nodding) “I feel the onset of a migraine. Are we allowed to leave?”

Sangoma: (nodding) “Yes, do go and get some rest. There is a lot to prepare.”

Rachel: “Malome, thank you for doing this. I can’t say I enjoyed it, but I will say that I indeed needed it.”

Malome: “Of course, let me walk you out.”

Aaron remained quiet alongside Samarah, while Malome walked alongside Rachel. As they were walking down the stairs, everyone was staring at her, but this time – the stares were divided. Some were still looking at her as if she was the monster Eunice made her out to be, while others looked at her

with the utmost respect. She could not see it and didn't even bother to. One of her dead husband's cousins wanted to come closer and speak to her, but Malome raised his hand and forbade her to. It was just not the time. He greeted them goodbye all the way to the car and saw them driving off. Rachel was quiet in the backseat and Samarah chose to be her shoulder of comfort for a change. Rachel sobbed silently while Samarah gently brushed her back. Aaron kept glancing at them from the rearview mirror. The cold memories of his father's hatred kept playing in his mind throughout that drive. Once they got to Rachel's house, she headed straight to bed and asked to be alone. Samarah respected that wholeheartedly.

Aaron: "I am going to get us some takeaways."

Samarah: "I'm coming with you."

Aaron: "No, stay here."

Samarah held his hands and gently brushed them while looking him in the eye. He looked away and tried to hide his glistening tears. She gently pulled his face towards hers.

Samarah: (softly) “Aaron, you can’t always be the strong one. Allow me to be strong for you – just this once.”

Aaron: (tearfully) “I can’t. You shouldn’t see me like this.”

Samarah: “Let me see you like this. Vulnerability is the whole point of love. Allow me to see you and comfort you, my love.”

Aaron broke down without looking in her eyes.

Aaron: (crying) “Seeing her break down like that was the worst thing to ever happen today. I feel like such a failure. Perhaps I should have let him kill me instead.”

Samarah: “Had you allowed him to do that – do you honestly think he was going to let her live? Don’t do this to yourself.”

Aaron: “The last time she broke down like that – you don’t even want to know. My mother looks like she is forever happy, but it

took her eternity to get to where she is today, Samarah. Those people – his family... they just opened up wounds that should have remained closed.”

Samarah: “I know, love, I know. You did nothing wrong. Everything will be okay. Trust in me, the three of us will be okay.”

She allowed him to cry in her arms for a while. It was the most helpless she had ever seen him, but then even giants have a weakness.

Exodus 14 verse 14 says; “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

The journey to healing can take forever, while others never get to even heal. Rachel’s healing had just begun and in turn, all those who had made her suffer and ridiculed her throughout her marriage were about to live to tell the tale.

“When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.”

Luke 10:19 – “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.”

Rachel had the best sleep in years that evening. Aaron went out to buy takeaways with Samarah and while they ate together, his mother barely took a bite of hers as she was emotionally worn out. They had no idea but right after she locked herself in her bedroom, she cried for hours. The pain of being detested and ostracized not only by your in-laws, but your own family as well proved to burn a bigger scar than she had anticipated. Both her parents treated her like a foul-smelling animal right after she went back to Philemon the very first time he attacked her. It was hard for them to understand why their only child loved that animal. She had to break down in order to heal and make peace with whatever had happened.

A few days went by and Rachel was back to her old self again. The Moeng's however, requested Rachel, Aaron and Samarah's presence at the funeral. Well, it was actually Malome and a few other elders who asked for them to make an appearance because they too needed to discuss the way forward with Aaron's lobola negotiations. They went there the evening before the funeral and of course, they heard of a few uncommon tales that had occurred during that week. If it wasn't for her eyes mysteriously being open even after days at the mortuary, it was her corpse peculiarly changing its position while being cleaned.

Rachel prayed and asked God to relieve her of her heavy heart and asked Him to grant her forgiveness towards Eunice. The moment she stepped into that household, everything and everyone stood still for a brief moment. They were in disbelief, so to say. Rachel carried her elegant self and greeted everyone. Although some didn't greet her back, she remained unbothered. Soon, a lot of them started following her around and asking her what to do. She was not even in charge of the funeral – yet they made it seem as if she was. Eunice having had no daughters, she was supposed to have given both her daughters in law the love they needed. Rachel kept to herself but didn't mind conversing with those who were talking to

her. Daphney's mind went ballistic when she noticed how people were flocking behind Rachel.

Daphney: (angrily) "Excuse me?! Can't you all see that this is a funeral and not a fashion parade?! We're here to cook for my mother-in-law, whom I loved dearly. Can you just keep it together and focus!"

A few of them looked at her as if she was insane, while Rachel paid no mind to her. It was no secret that Daphney loathed Rachel, obviously for the fact that she always had more class and money than her. Rachel kept it moving and hours later, the peeling was done and the men were cooking the meat outside. She had Samarah right by her side and didn't want to sleep in any of the bedrooms, so she opted for the couch instead. It was a bit brutal for Samarah, but rather her keeping an eye on her than someone finishing her off. Rachel was drinking wine without anyone noticing in her mug, and she finally sat down to keep the tired Samarah company. Daphney had kept an eye on them for quite some time and she got really frustrated with Rachel paying no mind to her. She went to sit right across her.

Daphney: "Hmm, while the rest of us are slaving ourselves off you two are busy lazing around on the couch."

Rachel: (frowning) "I'm sorry, are you talking to me, Daphney?"

Daphney: "Of course I am talking to you! Are you trying to avoid me?"

Rachel: "Daphney, I have avoided you all my life. It has been over ten years since you last saw me. What do you want?"

Daphney: "This is your mother in law's funeral! The mother in law you killed! Had it not been for you arriving here, she'd still be here! I guess killing must be your motto, huh?"

Rachel: (sigh) "Daphney, that saying is so old now. Why don't you come up with new insults or something? I mean, really now."

Daphney: (angrily) "You are still useless! Philemon did a good thing by cheating on you all those years! No wonder he would

beat you up and leave you to death! You have always thought that you're better than the rest of us!"

Rachel: "Daphney, you're making a scene. Is this how you want to remember your mother in law?"

Daphney became so frustrated with Rachel's lack of argument and decided to walk away. She didn't get too far because just as she was about to walk out of the door, she fell mysteriously. The fall was so bad that everyone heard a bone crack. Daphney let out one loud scream and couldn't stop screaming ever since. Bra P came running once he heard her screaming.

Bra P: "Daphney, keng (what is it)?"

She pointed at Rachel.

Daphney: "Ke o (it's her)! She did this to me!"

Other relatives explained how she fell, but of course Daphney wouldn't hear the end of it.

Malome: "Take her to the hospital. She is making an unnecessary scene."

Bra P was annoyed by Malome's keenness on Rachel, but she just remained unbothered.

Samarah: "I am so tired, I wish I could help."

Rachel: "No, you're not married into this family, so you're not forced to help with anything. Let us wait for Aaron to finish, he booked us a room at a guest house nearby."

Samarah was relieved since she could not phathom sleeping on someone's couch with one eye open. Aaron came back into the house immediately after Daphney was taken away.

Aaron: "How are you two doing? Are you guys alright?"

Rachel: "We're fine, but Samarah is getting tired now."

Aaron: "That's why I came. I think it is time for us to leave before the drama becomes worse."

Rachel: "What about you? Aren't you going to help out with the cooking and the fire outside?"

Aaron: "I've done my part, besides I have two women I need to take good care of right now. Shall we leave?"

Samarah: "You don't have to ask me twice."

Rachel: "Hold on a second, let me carry my bag out carefully."

Aaron: (frowning) "Mama, you're seriously drinking wine right now?"

Rachel: “Everyone else is drinking. How else was I going to cope with all these people around me?”

Aaron chuckled as they said their goodbyes and proceeded to the guest house. They had a peaceful night's sleep, although Aaron had a weird dream about Langa that evening. Ever since then, it was impossible for him to sleep. He didn't want to toss and turn all night and wake Samarah up, so he resorted to watching Netflix on his phone. The morning of the funeral finally came and Rachel was well rested, all thanks to that wine. They all got up and got dressed and were just in time for the funeral. Aaron and Samarah both saw Langa at the funeral. It wasn't really odd since everyone in the township attend funerals, but what puzzled them was how well dressed he was.

His entire attire cost about R5000 if not more. What was even more mystifying was that he was seated alongside the family. Samara and Rachel didn't want to be sitting next to the Moeng family

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but of course it would have been deemed rude had they not. Langa was really sure of himself, even by the way he

greeted Samarah. He completely ignored Aaron and Rachel at that point. Aaron respected funerals enough to know that fights were not necessary at such gatherings. The service was held in a tent right outside the yard as there was a lot of drama with Eunice's church.

She was a regular church goer which was not unusual with most witches, but the pastor and the congregation all agreed that "her kind" was not to be buried in that church. Apparently the stories of her being a ghost and terrorizing everyone had spread all around the community. They said that she was haunting everyone. The crowd was more than anticipated for someone that old, but they all figured that they had come to see if she was really haunted or not. Mrs. Dladla was not around, but Phume was there and she greeted Samarah from a distance. She was a sensible person who hated intruding. Vee was seen with her partner in crime Zaneled, with Nobuhle right behind them. She was still the follower so it seemed. The crowd started singing as soon as the casket was being led out of the house and into the tent. The entire setting was quite funny for a funeral.

Bra P was one of the pall bearers; he looked so serious with an expensive-looking suit on and sunglasses. Daphney was being

wheeled crying by her daughter Palesa into the tent with a cemented leg. She cried even louder when she saw Rachel. She, much like most family members were dressed in black with purple blouses, but clearly Aaron, Rachel and Samarah didn't get the memo because they were dressed in their own way – Versace style. They were not bothered, though. Who sets a theme for funeral attire though? Malome was walking right behind them and greeted Rachel, Samarah and Aaron with hugs.

Everyone knew that Malome was not a hugger, but for those three he was. That made everyone envious and they all asked themselves the same question; “what was so special about them?” Most family members thought that Malome wanted a share of Aaron's money, but that was beyond the case. The family Sangoma was also present, dressed in his usual attire. Malome and the sangoma sat right next to the infamous trio, making everyone speculate their own theories. They were asked to sit down and the MC started speaking.

MC: “Greetings to you all. I would have loved to say that we are gathered here today for a joyous occasion, but sadly, we have come to bid farewell to one of our own, Mrs. Eunice Moeng. She was loved by many and has lived her life. Though

we may not know the circumstances around her death as many are already speculating, may we all agree and say that God has called her home.”

Rachel was sighing to herself as the MC was speaking. “He clearly didn’t know her” she thought to herself.

MC: “I will now ask that you please respect the family although it is now time for the viewing. The family is going to view first, so if we could please allow them the diligence.”

The crowd started singing a song and of course, Paul went to view first, while Daphney and Palesa were second. Slowly but surely relatives were viewing the body, but instead of the usual cries everyone hears at funerals, they were all gasping in shock right after seeing her. Rachel was left in wonder and decided to go next. She noticed indeed why they were all so shocked. Eunice was a light skinned woman, but she looked pitch black in that casket with her veins still protruding just like that day she died. She looked really small, as if she had lost weight or shrunk.

In the township there is a belief that if a woman is a witch she shrinks almost to the size of a baby when she dies. Perhaps that was what the people were whispering about. And so, the viewing continued and of course, Langa had to walk the slowest of them all. He intentionally did that so that Samarah could get a glimpse of him. He looked nothing like Aaron and if anything – that man knew nothing about class. He slowly turned and Samarah could swear she saw him wink at her through those sunglasses. Aaron was getting angry, she could feel his hands, but she asked him to stay calm and ignore him. None of the people had any idea of the drama that was about to unfold; halfway through the sermon, the MC's microphone went mute as he started speaking about how wonderful she was. It was plugged in but it just went mute. When he tried to continue without the microphone, uncontrollable dust came flying through the tent knocking the entire tent down, leaving people dumbstruck. When the MC tried to continue one more time, thunder struck the podium he was standing on out of nowhere. It wasn't even raining that day. Some of the people ran away in fear while others exclaimed that she was indeed a witch.

Sangoma: "MC, cut it short, we need to leave for the graveyard now before we all die."

The MC was left thunderstruck; both literally and figuratively. He led the way as the pallbearers carried the coffin to the hearse. By then, not many relatives wanted to drive with the undertakers in their family cars. They were all just afraid of what might happen next. On their way to the graveyard, a few cars mysteriously broke down and refused to start. Once they arrived, fewer people were at the graveyard – probably half of the initial number of people due to their cars breaking down. Some decided to just park alongside the road to avoid their cars being victims of the mysterious events. The MC was about to start preaching when the Sangoma stopped him right in his tracks.

Sangoma: “Carry on delaying getting her into the ground and you’ll make him even angrier.”

MC: “Who?”

Sangoma: “Stop wasting time.”

The MC instructed the pall bearers to drop the casket down. Right after his instruction, the casket rolled over and fell onto the ground and the corpse fell right out of it. Everyone was beyond shocked, while Daphney started screaming as always. Most of them became numb and resorted to just thoughts. They quickly placed her body back into the coffin and lowered it. When the people started singing, heavy rain began to fall down. The men had never seen such a funeral in their lives before. It took longer than usual for them to close the grave again. By the time they went back to the house, all the food was off; they all had a weird stench coming out of it, and some had maggots crawling all over them. It was over all a very unpleasant and unusual funeral. Bra P felt highly embarrassed by all the events and offered to buy them food and drinks. And so, the DJ that was hired started playing them music. Aaron ensured that he ordered their own food for Rachel, Samarah and himself as well as Malome and the Sangoma. They sat in the yard – far away from all the commotion and noise. While eating, Malome just had to ask about the unusual turn of events.

Malome: “Please, do tell me; what on earth happened there today?”

Sangoma: "Have you forgotten that man's words? He told you all that Eunice will reap what she has indeed sown all her life. He ensured that she was embarrassed on a day which was meant to be a dignified sendoff."

Malome: "But to do that?"

Sangoma: "Wouldn't you do it too if your wife poisoned you?"

Malome: (chuckling) "Luckily mine died years ago."

They all laughed. Rachel paid no mind to everyone who claimed that Rachel was walking with a highly regarded spirit and that was the reason why all that had happened. Ever since her little accident, Daphney ensured to stay far away from Rachel. In turn, Rachel got the redemption she sought after for so long and God was indeed fighting her battles. Whatever it is they were saying about her, they never had the guts to tell her to her face ever again. Just as God prepared a table for David before his enemies in Psalm 23 verse 5, so He did the same for Rachel.

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

Psalm 30:5 – “For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”

A few weeks later...

It had been a few weeks since Eunice’s funeral. While the Moeng family was still coming to terms with what had happened, Rachel had never felt so liberated. She finally felt free from her dead husband and his family. She communicated with Malome every now and then, more especially since the lobola day was near. She was feeling very good about it all and though she was excited, she was still against the entire idea – despite Mr. Buda telling Aaron that he had to involve his father’s family. All along Bra P was making Aaron’s life a living hell by being difficult, though he wasn’t even needed in the negotiations. As soon as he noticed that he was not really a threat, he decided to be nice – overly nice, which was

something everyone should have taken guard of, but failed to. Richard was not happy with Aaron's intention to marry his daughter, but he let her be more especially since they needed the money. He still couldn't tell whether Samarah was pregnant or not, since she wasn't saying a word about it. Her entire persona and physique was changing drastically and it was showing on her face, but she kept telling Richard and Beatrice that she was just overwhelmed with her studies hence she was always tired. Little did everyone know that the lobola weekend was about to end in tears.

While Samarah hardly slept at her house, she asked Lydia to sleep over and help her with all the preparations for the coming lobola weekend. Beatrice asked her family to come and assist, though Samarah had no idea that they weren't even her maternal family. She was in her room with Lydia and was not allowed to leave until Aaron's family had arrived with his uncles.

Lydia: "Hey, friend. I brought you some breakfast. Eat up because you are really going to need it."

Samarah: “What for since I am not even allowed to leave this bloody bedroom? I can’t even recall the last time I slept here.”

Lydia: “You will need it because I have a feeling that your father and so called aunties are going to be quite difficult. I swear, they really are set out on making this entire process harder for the both of you.”

Samarah: (sigh) “It is getting harder to even hide this pregnancy from all of them. They keep asking me funny shit and I am just not in the mood.”

Lydia: (shaking head) “Don’t you allow them to find out – not now at least. You’re still in a fragile state and we all know that black people never want to see anyone pregnant, you know.”

Samarah: (Sigh) “Beatrice is just annoying me. I don’t know why Aaron just keeps on insisting on this nonsense. I don’t have a good feeling about this at all.”

Lydia: “It’s just the nerves, babe.”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, Lydia. I have had a huge knot in my stomach ever since last night. I couldn’t even sleep. I am just not feeling this whole thing.”

Lydia: “It’s just nerves, honestly. Just don’t let them get to you. Try to eat.”

She grew increasingly weary and she couldn’t understand why, but something just didn’t feel right. Meanwhile, Rachel was with Aaron and helping him get dressed for his big day. They decided to have a traditional wedding on the lobola day as well, to fast forward things. Aaron even ensured that his mother was going to officiate the wedding and also ensure that they register their marriage.

Rachel: (smiling) “Look at you all handsome – even with those glasses.”

Aaron: “These glasses are the first thing that made Samarah like me, you know.”

Rachel: (chuckling) “Well, thanks to them, you’re a chic magnet.”

Aaron chuckled.

Rachel: “Seriously, though, my son. Do you think it is a good idea to have those people involved? I mean my family is here, but they are the ones doing everything.”

Aaron: (sigh) “Ma, we have already been through this. I want my marriage to be a long lasting and happy one. And besides, you were here when Buda told me to do it.”

Rachel: “I know, but I just don’t feel very good about this. I feel like... like something bad is going to happen, you know. I mean, last night I saw an owl – an owl, Aaron! Right outside my window. An owl signifies death, you know. What if – “

Aaron: (interjecting) “Mama, stop thinking like that. You are a faithful woman and you never allow the Devil to cloud your judgment. Why now?”

Rachel: “I don’t know, son. I am just not having a good feeling about this.”

Aaron: “Everything is fine, Ma. Samarah is fine and so are the babies. I’ll call her right now for you to see. In fact, let me video call her.”

He dialled her and she answered almost immediately.

Samarah: (smiling) “My husband.”

Aaron: “Hello, my wife. Are you well?”

Samarah: “I am trying.”

Aaron: (frowning) “What is wrong? Is someone bothering you? Is it the babies? They had better not give you a hard time.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Stop it. No one is giving me a hard time, well, not really. It’s just that – “

Aaron: “What is it?”

Samarah: “I have just been having a really bad feeling since last night. I just can’t shake it off, you know.”

Rachel: “You see? That’s the exact same thing I have been telling him, Sammy! Maybe he will listen to you.”

Aaron stepped out of the bedroom for some privacy and left his mother there.

Aaron: “Baby, don’t you trust me?”

Samarah: "I do."

Aaron: "Then you know that I will never jeopardize your life in any way. You and those babies mean the world to me. You are indeed the reason why am doing this. I would like our union to be blessed in all corners. Ephesians 1 verse 11 says; "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. I truly believe that you and I have obtained good favour from the Lord. Just trust me, please."

Samarah: "Forever and always."

Aaron: "I love you. I can't wait to see you."

Samarah: "I love you too."

They said their goodbyes and hung up. Rachel walked out of the bedroom. I still don't have a good feeling about this."

Aaron: "Can we please go now before we run late?"

Rachel: "Fine, we can go, But if anything goes wrong I will personally hold you responsible."

Aaron : "You can be so dramatic, Ma."

Aaron was completely blinded by oblivion. He drove with his mother to the house and waited just outside in the car, while Malome reassured him that everything was going to go smoothly before he went in.

Malome: "Aaron, relax. I have everything under control. I will do all the talking."

Rachel: "I trust you, Malome. Thanks for doing this."

Malome: "No need to thank me, Rachel. This is what I am here for."

After reassuring them, he walked closer the gate to call upon the Moloji family. Bra P emerged out of nowhere and greeted them with a wide, rather sly smile on his face.

Bra P: “(smiling) “Motlogolo (nephew), skweeza (sister-in-law). How are you guys on this glorious morning?”

Rachel: (firmly) “We’re fine. Aren’t you supposed to be joining the uncles over there?”

Bra P: “Bathong (goodness), Rachel. Why are you so hostile? I thought we put the past behind us already.”

Aaron and Rachel could hardly hide their annoyance, but Malome called him swiftly and the conversation ended abruptly.

Malome: “Paul! Re go emetse (we’re waiting on you)!”

Bra P: “I guess I’ll see you later, family. May this day be the beginning of a great journey for you, Aaron.”

He winked at him, but it just seemed very odd.

Rachel: "I told you, I have a very bad feeling about all this."

Aaron: "Ignore him, Ma and focus on the positives, will you?"

Rachel: "How is Samarah?"

Aaron: "We're texting and she says she hasn't been able to keep any food in. It must be the nerves."

Rachel: "Tell Lydia to give her some garlic to chew on. The nausea will subside."

Aaron nodded while the drama was about to start at the gate. Malome and the Moeng elders were at the gate and called out to the Moloji family to ask for entry.

Malome: (calling out) “Dumelang ba ga Moloji (Greetings, the Moloji family)!”

They took about ten minutes to come out once Beatrice was saw the amount of money and whiskey they were placing right in front of the gate. Beatrice’s sister, Annah, was busy commenting on everything they were wearing.

Annah: “Yoh (wow)! Look at that one dressed in Gucci! This family must be loaded. Did you tell Richard to charge them a shit load?!”

Beatrice: “Believe me, I don’t know what that boy sees in that dark goat Samarah, but believe me, he is willing to pop out any amount we demand from him.”

Annah: “Wena (you), e re Richard a go utlwe (let Richard hear you say that).”

Beatrice: “He can’t do anything to me. I have so much leverage on him and besides, who wants a cripple?”

They both laughed.

Beatrice: "Let me go tell him we're ready."

She went to tell Richard that she was ready to go out and open the gate for them. She walked to the gate and picked up the money immediately. They greeted yet again and stated their reason for the visit. She opened the gate and they walked in. Richard was already seated in the lounge awaiting them.

Malome: "Dumela Ntate Moloji (Greetings, Mr. Moloji). I am from the Moeng family. I believe you received our letter and adhered to our request for this visit."

Richard kept quiet. It was a sign that they needed to pop out some more money as a form of "Vula mlomo". Malome put R500 on the table yet Richard still refused to open his mouth. Malome knew that Richard was a difficult man but he didn't realize the extent thereof. After R2000 on the table and a bottle of Hennessy, they finally started talking. Bra P was annoyed and nearly ruined things, but Malome was old enough

to know how to deal with all those. Beatrice was one of the people who sat in the negotiations along with her sisters. She kept running up and down to check on Samarah, while they were trying to negotiate. When she went to check in on Samarah

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she was trying to get her vomiting to subside.

Beatrice: (frowning) "What's happening here?"

Lydia: "She's vomiting non stop. She is just too nervous."

Beatrice: "Are you sure you're not pregnant, Samarah? Is that why Aaron is rushing the wedding like this?"

Lydia: (annoye) "Is that why you're here? To interrogate her or to help her?"

Beatrice: "Oh, I will quickly make her something to drink."

It was as if a light flashed in her mind and she thought of yet another devious plan, but Lydia was always one step ahead.

Lydia: “No, she is fine. I gave her some garlic.”

Beatrice: (frowning) “I am not about to poison my own daughter if that’s what you’re thinking.”

Lydia: “For someone who claims they are always thinking of the most innocent things, you sure do say a lot of bad stuff, you know.”

Beatrice got annoyed and walked away. Samarah was starting to feel a little better, though the nausea would not go away. Lydia peeped every now and then and heard ridiculous amounts being said yet Malome had no disapproval, much to Richard’s annoyance. Once they were done, they asked for their bride. Beatrice wanted to do things the traditional way, by bringing one or two girls forward and they had to identify their bride. Should they get it wrong, they were going to get fined, but Malome simply said “We know our bride, let us not delay anything. Please bring her out.” As Beatrice was about to

get Samarah, the vomiting started yet again and Lydia had to head for the bucket yet again.

Malome: “Why is it taking so long?”

Annah: “Oh, apologies, Malome. She is just not feeling well. Apparently, she has been vomiting all morning. If I didn’t know better, I’d say your bride is expecting.”

Richard: (angrily) “Is that true?! I had my suspicions, but I mean, if it is true then you owe me double than what I have asked for! Le nsenyeditse ngwana (you have ruined my daughter)! Yet you come here and disguise it as lobola! You are fruadsters!”

Bra P: (angrily) “A reng o (What is this one saying)?!”

Malome: “Paul, ema pele (wait a minute). Mr. Moloji, with all due respect, I have never seen anyone eager to pay R1 million for a bride price, yet it has happened today. I sincerely hope that you’re joking because should your daughter even find out,

she wouldn't be impressed from what I know about her. In all my years on this earth, I have never come across such a disrespectful, arrogant and selfish father. I have met scammers of all forms, shapes and sizes yet you remain the worst. What you did today was so distasteful and your conduct was truly appalling. I am really amazed that Aaron has never even laid a hand on you because I would have a long time ago. I only remained my composure and kept mum for the sake of the both of them because they love one another. Now, that we have concluded the negotiations, I truly am proud to say that Samarah is now a member of the Moeng family, she is our bride. Whether she is pregnant or not is not of your concern right now. Now, please ask her to answer her phone when I call her right now."

Beatrice and Richard were so embarrassed by Malome's words. If someone that old could tell that they were not being genuine, then they were rather too obvious. He just gave Beatrice the look and she knew that she had to do it. She went to Lydia and Samarah and asked her to answer her phone when Malome called. Beatrice went back to the lounge ashamedly and nodded to him. Malome called Samarah and they all just listened to him attentively, though they could barely look him in the eye.

Samarah: "Hello, Malome (uncle)."

Malome: "Put the phone on your stomach, please."

She did as told and while Malome was speaking to the unborn twins, she was starting to feel a lot better. She couldn't hear him but whatever he said eased her tension and nausea and it all went away. He hung up and she could now stand up and move around.

Lydia: (shocked) "I have no idea what just happened, but all I can say is that I am grateful for Malome."

Within seconds, Beatrice walked in and summoned Samarah.

Beatrice: "Bao nyaka wena (they are calling for you)."

Lydia just gave her a dirty look.

Lydia: (clicked tongue) “Don’t mind her, she is just jealous, hey. Let’s get you ready, Makoti wa ga Moeng (The Moeng bride).”

Samarah could suddenly feel excited for her big day again without any nausea or vomiting ruining it for her. The moment she walked out of the bedroom door and Malome saw her approaching, he started chanting his clan names while Beatrice’s family was forcefully ululating. They were so fake, but Malome didn’t care. He was very excited to see her right before him. She was about to kneel before him, but he stopped her.

Malome: “No, please stand.”

He gave her a long look and smiled.

Malome: “I know, the females usually do this, but my brother told me to do this. You shall be named Warona, which means you are ours. He chose this name for you and gave it to me in a dream last night. He told me that this would happen; that you would be nauseated beyond control today, but alerted me on

what to do – he told me to speak to your babies. You are our chosen one, Samarah and I pray that you become even more blessed beyond measure.”

The moment Beatrice heard “babies” her entire face changed and she could barely hide it. Richard couldn’t hide his anger, but he had to after accepting so much money from the family, while Beatrice couldn’t hide her envy. Malome led Samarah out hand in hand, while Lydia was singing and ululating behind her friend. The moment Aaron saw her coming out of the house with Malome, he could tell the deal was sealed. He rushed out and went to meet her, while Rachel followed soon afterwards. Aaron could not hide the joy he felt from deep within and kissed her right away. They hadn’t even said their vows yet, but he just couldn’t take it any more.

Aaron: “Being away from you was the hardest today. I am so happy you are officially mine!”

They did the traditional things such as slaughtering of the cow to join the two families and ancestors, and immediately it rained. Malome reassured them that it was a sign that Aaron’s grandfather was blessing their union. They were supposed to

say their vows, but Aaron was just too excited, so they just signed their marriage license and started feasting immediately. The day was filled with joy and laughter, much to the dismay of others, but they were not important. They were last on their list. They danced together and made memories as a married couple.

Aaron: “Are you sure you’re okay? I was so worried about you.”

Samarah: “I didn’t have a good start to my day, you know, but after your uncle spoke to my tummy, I just felt better.”

Aaron: (frowning) “What did he say?”

Samarah: “I don’t know, but whatever it is – it worked.”

Their day ended on a good note, but it wasn’t meant to last forever. Rachel, Aaron and Samarah got into the car, and Lydia was about to get into the car, when her parents called her.

Lydia: “Oh, I was going to leave with you guys, but my mom is calling me. Are you sure you’re going to be okay, friend?”

Samarah: “Of course, babe. Thank you so much for everything.”

Lydia said her goodbyes. It was a blessing in disguise that she did not get into that car that day. Aaron was behind the wheel and was driving as careful as always, but they didn’t last long. Fifteen minutes onto the next robot, the car swerved on its own without any effort and started spinning. The shock too over Samarah’s body when she was thrown out of the windshield without warning. She usually wore her seatbelt, but that day she felt rather bloated and Aaron told her not to wear it. She was in so much pain and could see the car about a kilometre away. She tried screaming out to Aaron and Rachel, but the car soon caught fire. Her body could not resist the state of shock she was in.

Samarah: (Screaming) “Aaron!”

She soon collapsed after that and it was the very last day she saw the love of her life again.

- "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

While it took Samarah even longer to adjust to the fact that Aaron had left her money and was indeed never coming back, news spread like wildfire that he had left her a huge sum of money. Lydia never told anyone, while it was obviously clear that someone was doing the digging. It was pointless for Samarah to be a millionaire while pregnant and recently widowed. Going to see their graves was the hardest for her; knowing very well that they were buried while she was in a non-responsive state almost killed her. Therapy was not doing it for her, but Ntate Tau made her come to her senses. He managed to at least get her to try and live again; at least for the unborn twins. After two months away from Campus, she finally went back. Forcing herself out of bed was indeed the hardest and facing the crowd yet again was even worse. Lydia was right by her side and tried to get her to dress up a little bit. She hadn't even been to the salon in ages, and her dreadlocks weren't as upkept as usual. The moment she got out of her car, she noticed the stares, glares and uncomfortable whispers.

Lydia: “Ignore them, Sammy. Remember one thing; you are not here for them.”

She nodded as she tried to walk a little further. She had no idea how she was even going to face everyone after the entire ordeal. With each step she took, the tears were slowly warming up her eyes.

Lydia: “No, Sam, please don’t do this – not here. You are stronger than that.”

Samarah: (shaking head) “Everyone is pitying me, Lydia. Can’t you see that?”

Lydia: “There is nothing to pity here; if anything self pity is the worst. I know, it is hard. I can only imagine what you’re going through, but do you honestly think that Aaron and Rachel would want you to wallow in a pit of self pity like this? Do you really think they’d enjoy seeing you like this had they been here? You can’t possibly believe that. You are going to be a mother in a few months. Please, try to pick yourself up – for them.”

She nodded painfully.

Samarah: "I'll try."

She managed to push herself until she found herself inside of the lecture hall. Lydia wanted to be beside her and attend the class with her, but she asked her to go to her own class. It wouldn't have been fair towards Lydia had she attended class with Samarah and missed her own. She tried to ignore the stares and think of what Aaron would do. Halfway into the lecture, she had completely managed to ignore all the people who were looking. As much as everything dies out, so does gossip. Within two weeks after she had returned to Campus, everyone had forgotten about her tragedy and life went on. While she was slowly managing to get herself back into her studies, Beatrice was slowly trying to get into Samarah's good books, for bad intentions obviously. She found her studying one Saturday afternoon at her flat when she knocked and walked in abruptly.

Samarah: (frowning) "Since when do you throw yourself into my flat?"

Beatrice: (laughing nervously) "Oh, I am so sorry, honey. I didn't mean to be rude. I thought you wouldn't mind."

Samarah: "What can I do for you?"

Beatrice: "I thought you and I could have some lunch together, you know."

Samarah: "Hmm, I'm not hungry. I have a busy week ahead and as you can see I have so much work to catch up on."

Beatrice: "Oh, okay. How about this? I'll leave the food for you in the fridge and you can eat whenever you feel hungry, okay?"

Samarah: "Fine. Is that all?"

Beatrice looked rather inquisitive. She was looking around hoping to see something new and out of the ordinary.

Beatrice: “Oh, uh, no, that’s it. I thought I’d come by and clean up a little bit.”

Samarah: “There’s no need. I can do my own cleaning.”

Beatrice: “Oh, well with carrying twins, it won’t be easy, you know.”

She had never told her that she was carrying twins to begin with, though she was visibly pregnant.

Samarah: (frowning) “I don’t recall ever telling you such.”

Beatrice: (nervously) “Oh, I mean, I just assumed, you know, since you are a twin and since Aaron has twins on his father’s side of the family. I mean, wow! You’re expecting twins?! That’s so amazing! I’m going to be a grandmother to twins!”

She tried getting closer to Samarah in efforts to forge a hug, but Samarah politely pulled away from her.

Beatrice: "Oh, my apologies. I can get so excited sometimes. I mean, I forget what you have gone through."

Samarah: "If you don't mind, I'd like to get back to studying."

Beatrice: "Oh, of course. I just need the bathroom real quickly. Do you mind?"

Samarah just shook her head and let her be. She ignored her strange behaviour and dug right into her books again. While Beatrice noticed Samarah's oblivion, she went straight to her bedroom and into the bathroom. It didn't take her long to get what she had come for and once she found it, she was out before she knew it.

Beatrice: "Well then, I am out. Be sure to call if you ever need anything, okay?"

Samarah: "Cool."

Beatrice walked out with a new swing in her step. One careless mistake was about to cost Samarah something very dear to her. Ever since that day, Beatrice would show up unannounced and sometimes she would call to check up on Samarah. At times she would offer to cook or even bring cooked food for her. She had been so busy that she hardly had the time to cook, so it felt convenient for her that Beatrice was trying to change her ways. It was odd, but Samarah appreciated the efforts, though Lydia told her that something just wasn't right about that woman's behaviour. She didn't see anything wrong, although she found her to be a bit much at times. The desperate always prey on the vulnerable. She was having a relaxed day with Lydia one Saturday afternoon, when things took a bad turn. They were watching tv while Lydia had her usual drinks and Samarah was snacking on some peanuts.

Lydia: "You know that I am not a bad friend, right?"

Samarah: "What is it?"

Lydia: "I just mean that Beatrice is just acting funny."

Samarah: "In what way?"

Lydia: "She is being overly nice. I just don't trust her and I don't think you should either."

Samarah: "Come on, surely she is trying to mend her ways as my mother."

Lydia: "Still, I'm just saying, you know."

Samarah: "I hear you and I am grateful for you – you know that."

Lydia: "Just promise me you'll be careful."

Samarah: "I promise."

They continued eating and having a pleasant day when she started feeling a peculiar pain in her abdomen. The pain was so sharp that it forced her to try and jump up.

Lydia: (frowning) "What is it? What is wrong?"

Samarah: "I don't know, I just don't feel so well all of a sudden. I feel this sharp pain in my stomach."

Lydia: (worried) "Can you get up?"

Samarah: "I can try."

The moment she got up, she got the shock of her life when Lydia was bewildered with fear. She looked at Samarah who had her back facing her as if she was about to cry.

Samarah: "What is it?"

Lydia's fear paralyzed her so much she couldn't speak. She just looked at Samarah's stained dress and then the couch. Once Samarah noticed what was wrong, she had indescribable pain written on her face.

Lydia: (teary) "I'll call Collin. He'll take us straight to the ER."

Samarah just nodded and refused to sit down again. It felt to her as if she would bleed yet again if she sat down, but the damage was already done. The blood started running down uncontrollably, to the point where even the pad that she wore didn't help at all. Collin came as soon as he could and drove them to the hospital. The car ride there was deadly quiet; even a pin could have killed anyone who tried to speak. Lydia had Samarah's hand in hers and they were both trembling with both fear and shock. Collin was hoping for the best, but they all knew somehow that the worst had happened. Once Samarah was taken to the ER, it didn't take them long to confirm their fears.

Doctor: "I'm sorry, you've lost too much blood. The babies could not make it."

She felt yet again as if her heart was being torn to shreds piece by piece. It was bad enough that she lost Aaron and now she had lost her most prized possession that was the only tie she had to him. Lydia burst into tears as she looked at her friend

who just cried silently without even looking at anyone. It wouldn't take much for her to be driven over the edge. Richard and Beatrice were informed when she wouldn't let the doctors operate on her and take the babies out. It was either that or get induced and give birth to them. She refused to speak to anyone, until Richard and Beatrice came to her aid. The doctor begged them to speak some sense to her.

Richard: (teary) "My baby, how are you feeling?"

Samarah: (softly) "How do you think I'm feeling, Papa? I mean, I am widowed and I have just lost my babies. I now have to be cut open for them to get out of me. How the fuck do you think I'm feeling?"

Beatrice: "Sam, will you stop being so selfish? We all care about you and now is not the time to put yourself first. We need you – we all need you. You will be able to have other children! You're still young!"

Samarah snapped.

Samarah: (shouting) “Get out! Get the fuck out of here!”

Beatrice: (shocked) “I was just trying to help – “

Richard: “Get out, Beatrice! You’re just making things worse.”

Beatrice walked out with her tail between her legs while Lydia could not help but suspect her. Samarah had one sharp pain and then started bleeding. That was it. She had no other pain after that. She was healthy just the day before and then that happened. Richard spoke at length with her; for about three hours when she finally agreed. She refused to give birth to deceased children and be reminded daily of that amount of hardship and resorted to a C-section. Once the operation was done, she wanted to see the babies and could not even bring herself to stop looking. They were girls and were so incredibly small. They were still underdeveloped and she still couldn’t believe that she had suffered yet another tragedy.

Her wail was something that no one could compare to or even begin to explain. Days went by and everyone visited trying to cheer her up, but it felt as if they were doing even more

damage. Ntate Tau came by and lit candles for her each and every day, even after she became discharged. Three months went by and she still couldn't bring herself to eat much or do anything. She had lost so much weight – despite Ntate Tau cleansing her. Beatrice was the “perfect” mother without fail which surprised everyone. She would not do anything, until one particular day.

She found a bunch of Sunflowers delivered by her doorstep with a Bible verse; John 16 verse 22; “So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” She nearly got excited thinking that it was from Aaron since he would always send her sweet messages in the morning without fail; until she read the end – Love Langa.” She became instantly annoyed and threw the entire bunch along with the card in the bin. And just like that, with each and every day, she received a bunch of flowers with a Bible verse. It became a norm and she fell for it, another three months later.

Langa never called or sent any text messages, apart from sending the flowers. He was baiting her until she fell for it. After yet another bunch of flowers with a Bible verse, she decided to send him a text message via WhatsApp. “Thank you

for the flowers and verses. They have slowly become a norm for me and have helped me keep my faith. Samarah.” That was enough for him to reel her in. He was online almost instantly after he received her message and responded. “Hi, Sammy, how are you? I am glad you feel a sense of comfort by my gestures. I didn’t want to call or text you as I felt it would be a bother. Can we meet up sometime for lunch? Only if that’s okay with you.”

She smiled to herself, but did not want to meet up with anyone. She still wasn’t feeling too comfortable about it. She had been couped up in her flat for six months and missed nearly an entire year of her studies.

Samarah: “Perhaps another time and another day. Right now I am still trying to find my feet.”

Langa: “Can I call you?”

Samarah: “Sure.”

He called immediately after reading her response. There was something different about his demeanor from the moment he

said hello. His voice was huskier and he sounded a little more – mature. Of course he had grown quite a bit as expected within three years, but he sounded completely altered; even his English sounded rather polished. She was thinking that the entire “taxi driver” attitude was gone.

Langa: “Hey, Samarah. How are you?”

Samarah: “You already asked me that, you know.”

Langa: “My apologies. I didn’t want to make you feel awkward.”

Samarah: “It’s alright. As I said, thank you so much for the verses and flowers you have been sending me. They have really helped me – quite a lot, actually.”

Langa: “I can only imagine what you have been going through.”

Samarah: “Yes, well, it is life after all.”

Langa: “Yes, but it is still quite unfortunate, but God is with you.”

Samarah: “Indeed. So, how are things on your side? How is your son?”

Langa: “I mean no harm, but I don’t think it would be appropriate to speak of him gathering your situation.”

Samarah: “I am the one who asked.”

Langa: “I know, but it would be rather insensitive of me. On the bright side, everything is good and well.”

Samarah: “I hope you went to study as you have always wanted to.”

Langa: “That was my initial plan, but I am a taxi owner now – I have four.”

That was quite surprising considering that he had nothing when she left

Samarah: "Wow, that's impressive, actually. Uhm, congratulations are in order."

Langa: "Yes, perhaps I will be able to tell you more about it when I see you."

Samarah: "Yes, well, I don't know when that will be considering the fact that I haven't left the house in months. I am just not ready to see people yet, you know."

Langa: "Well, I do hope you managed to finish your studies."

Samarah: (sigh) "No, I never managed to go back after the first semester. I am still yet to complete that and do my practicals, I don't know when that will be."

Langa: “Well, I don’t know about you, but the Samarah I know is and has always been a warrior of note. You have taught me to never give up; to follow my dreams. I have never met anyone as passionate as you in my life and I don’t see why you have to stop now. You owe it to your children, to Aaron and most importantly to yourself to get back up and move forward. I mean, you’re no quitter – you were never meant to be one.”

Langa had truly changed – or so she thought. He said all the right things, much like a predator when it wants to attack its prey.

Samarah: “Well, thank you so much for the encouraging words. I promise, I will keep them in mind and perhaps one day when I am ready, I will take heed of them.”

They said their goodbyes and ended their call. The phone calls went on for an entire month and Lydia started noticing a few changes in Samarah. She went to visit her on Christmas, as she was alone in her flat and didn’t want to visit her parents. She also requested to them that she didn’t want them to visit her

either. Lydia was kind enough to come alone and be with her instead of her own family and Collin.

Lydia: “Knock knock!”

As usual, she barged in after two knocks. She found Samarah humming to Versace on the floor, one of her and Aaron’s favourite songs, while she was dusting off the tv. She even had her hair done; she cut her dreadlocks to bob length and dyed them red at the bottom; she had gained quite an amount of weight but she was glowing. She hadn’t looked that happy in a long time.

Lydia: (surprised) “And then? Dintshang (what’s happening)?”

Samarah: “O ra bjang (what do you mean)?”

Lydia: “You’re glowing. Is there something you would like to tell me?”

Samarah: “Something like what?”

Lydia: "I don't know, maybe you got laid or something."

Samarah: (laughing) "You're so funny it is ridiculous, Lydia."

Lydia: (surprised) "You haven't laughed at my jokes in months! Alright, who is it?!"

Samarah: "It is no one. I am just slowly picking myself up. I mean, you guys always say; the living have to keep living, right?"

Lydia: "I don't buy it."

Samarah: "Ska bolela thata (stop talking so much) and pour us some wine, will you?"

Lydia was still trying to figure out what had changed in Samarah's mood. She had tried everything in the book to get her best friend back and none of those tactics worked. She

knew that the only person who could make a woman change her hair is indeed a man. She analysed Samarah's behaviour the entire day and nothing came to mind. She didn't receive any strange messages or phone calls, until at about 4pm that afternoon. Her phone rang and it only took Lydia a few seconds to realize that it was a man. She was about to get excited that at least Samarah was making an effort to move on, but once she heard the familiar voice over the phone and her calling his name, she couldn't believe her ears.

Samarah: (blushing) "Hey. How are you?"

Langa: "I'm well, how are you?"

Samarah: "I'm alright, thanks."

Langa: "I am calling to find out if you have any plans for today. I have been delaying calling you because I didn't want to be a nuisance. I mean

I already call you so much."

Samarah noticed how attentive Lydia was and moved towards the balcony.

Samarah: "Oh, it is no bother, really."

Langa: "Well, do you have plans today?"

Samarah: "No, I am just chilling with Lydia. She just cooked an entire feast for us yet we're only two."

Langa: "Do you mind if we come?"

Samarah: "Who's we?"

Langa: "It is Mama, Phume and I. I mean, I know that you and Phume used to get along so much unlike my other two sisters. Vusi and Vee won't be coming. I can't handle their negativity."

That was quite a shocker. He never spoke about them in the open like that although she knew he hated their behaviour.

Samarah: "I don't mind and I am pretty sure Lydia won't mind."

Langa: "I am not so sure about that. She has never liked me, of which I don't blame her. I mean, I was such a jerk towards you and I still regret that til today."

Samarah: "She's over that and besides, Lydia is not that petty. Seriously, you can come."

Langa: "Alright then. I'll see you soon."

Samarah: "Bye."

She had a new swing in her step when she walked back into the flat.

Lydia: (annoyed) "Don't tell me that was who I think it was."

Samarah: "Who do you think it was?"

Lydia: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, don't play dumb with me, Samarah. I know that was Langa."

Samarah: (sigh) "So what if it was? We're just friends."

Lydia: "Haven't I heard that line before? Have you forgotten you have just gone through the most? Do you want to go back to that?"

Samarah: "No one is saying anything about going back to anybody. Come on, I am just having a good time with him, okay. He calls and comforts me every now and then. It's no big deal."

Lydia: "Well, I still don't like him."

Samarah: "Well, it is kind of late for that."

Lydia: “What do you mean?”

Samarah: “I mean I have invited him, his mother and Phume over for Christmas lunch.”

Lydia: (annoyed) “Seriously, friend. You could have asked me first. I chose to spend today with you and you invite other people from the past?”

Samarah: “Lydia, come on. It’s just lunch, honestly.”

Lydia: (Shaking head) “You’re playing with fire and I hope you realize it before you get burnt – badly.”

Samarah: “I won’t. It’s just two friends having lunch.”

Lydia: “What about Ntombi?”

Samarah: "They're not together anymore."

Lydia: (clapping hands) "Haven't I heard it all."

Samarah: "Please, behave. That's all I am asking of you."

Lydia: "I'll try, but I won't promise you anything."

That was enough for Samarah to be at ease. She even went back to her bedroom to change even though her outfit was just fine. It was a bad sign for her best friend. She kept asking her how she looked which really annoyed Lydia. She knew Langa was just bad news. Within an hour they had arrived. Sure, Orlando wasn't so far from them, but she got the feeling he had been planning the so called impromptu visit for a while. The moment the long awaited knock landed on the flat door, Samarah rushed to open the door. Lydia just kept downing her wine. Samarah temporarily lost sanity as she hugged Langa and the rest of her visitors. Langa looked really different; with a very good looking suit on, he looked more buffed than ever so which meant he was working out a lot and, but what stood

out was the glasses he was wearing. He never had eye problems, but oh well, people do change, right?

Samarah: (excitedly) “Oh, it is so good to see you guys! Ma! Phume! I really don’t know what to say! It has indeed been so long! Do come in, please!”

Mrs. Dladla looked quite frail for her age. She had lost a lot of weight and her face just represented sadness. Her husband had died few years prior, but the sadness she displayed was just something else. Apart from the annoying Langa, Lydia was really happy to see Phume and Mrs. Dladla.

Lydia: (smiling) “Phumeza! You have grown so much! My goodness, look at you!”

They hugged.

Phume: “Look at you. You just don’t change, do you?”

Lydia: “How do you know me? I’m still me, just a lot prettier!”

They both laughed.

Lydia: “Ma! It is so good to see you.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Believe me, I wasn’t sure if I wanted to even come, you know. When Langa told me that Samarah invited us over, I honestly didn’t know.”

Lydia: (frowning) “He said that?”

Langa: (interjecting) “Well, now that we’re all here, I suppose we can leave the past buried in the past, yes?”

Lydia tried so hard not to roll her eyes.

Samarah: “Yes, I agree. Ma, Phume, please sit. We cooked earlier on but I am glad you guys are here. If anything I am starving all over again.”

While Phume assisted Samarah with taking out the plates for the rest of them, Mrs. Dladla got comfortable in her chair. Langa took it as an opportunity to get the feels of where he stood with Lydia.

Langa: "Lydia, long time no see."

Lydia: "Hmm, clearly not long enough."

Langa: "Bathong (Goodness), you're not serious, are you?"

Lydia: "About what, Langa?"

Langa: "You surely can't still be mad at me. I mean, I am a grown man now."

Lydia: "Hmm, if you say so. I can't say I like the new look."

Langa: "Well, this goes to show that people do change and grow."

Lydia: “No, it just seems so – I don’t know yet. I can’t put my finger on it, but I will catch you out.”

Langa: “Can’t you give a person the benefit of the doubt?”

Lydia: (chuckling) “You’re so funny. It is obvious you’re only here because of all the money Aaron left her.”

Langa: (surprised) “What money?”

She gulped the remainder of her wine and left him beyond curious. They finally sat down, blessed the food and had a lovely meal. Langa had a sudden change of heart; well, he was overly complimenting and nice more especially towards Lydia, but she could see right through him.

Phume: “Wow, I haven’t had such a great meal in ages – no offence, Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “No offence yani (for what)? You are the one who cooks nowadays, remember?”

They all laughed except for Lydia.

Langa: “Well, I know we all owe this dinner invite to Samarah, but we also need to thank the chef – Ms. Lydia herself. She really outdid herself.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Yes, I totally agree. Thank you once again, Lydia.”

Lydia: “It is a great pleasure, Ma, always.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Well, I think we have enjoyed ourselves quite a lot. I’d like to go home if that’s fine with you, Langa.”

Phume: “Ah, Ma. Already?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Phume, you guys are young. You can always come back, however, I don’t think we should impose on Samarah like that.”

Samarah: “It’s honestly okay, Ma. I don’t mind visitors.”

Lydia tried so hard not to roll her eyes.

Mrs. Dladla: “Well, I do hope to see you soon and catch up with you, Samarah. I am rather tired. Keep well angithi (okay)?”

Samarah: “Yes, Ma. Go well.”

Langa: “Samarah, do you mind walking Ma and Phume out? I’d like to take some Skhafthini (left overs) of Lydia’s pudding, if you don’t mind.”

Samarah: “Of course.”

Samarah and Phume walked alongside Mrs. Dladla. She wasn't as strong as she had remembered her, physically. She relied on her cane for assistance in walking although she still enjoyed her castle life. Life was just never the same again after losing her husband. While they walked out, Langa grabbed the perfect opportunity to try and play nice. Once the door closed behind them, Lydia couldn't wait to unleash all her thoughts and feelings.

Lydia: "Well, that must have been quite hard for you."

Langa: "What?"

Lydia: "The pretense. Gosh, you have always been such an actor."

Langa: "I don't follow, Lydia. I thought you and I made peace."

Lydia: (chuckling) "Peace? How odd is it that you rock up right after she lost her husband and unborn children?"

Langa: “Wow, Lydia. This goes to show how little you think of me.”

Lydia: “As if you never thought any less of me. The drunkard best friend who was pretty much a whore in your eyes, right?”

Langa: “Wow, Lydia. I’ve always known you have thought of me as a bastard but this! It truly takes the cup.”

Lydia: “What do you really want from Samarah, Langa? I mean, really. Be frank with me here, bitch to bitch.”

Langa: (Chuckling) “You’re funny. I love Samarah – I have always loved her.”

Lydia laughed.

Langa: “I am serious. I have grown and I have realized my mistakes and I am determined to fix them, even if they take me my entire lifetime.”

Lydia: "Good luck with that. Stay away from her if you know what's good for you. Samarah is still fragile and she's dealing with a lot. The last thing she needs is to be dealing with the likes of you."

Langa: "I just don't get it. I mean, I have always thought you thought so low of me because of my socio economic status, but now that I have money, you still think of me as a low life. Why is that?"

Lydia: "Because in my eyes, a leopard never changes its spots. You are and will always be the loser that she fell for. You will always be a cheater. Energy doesn't lie, Langa. You might be draped in expensive suits but deep down you're a leech."

Langa: "Wow, I truly hope that one day you get to see the real me."

Lydia: "Please, stay away from her. If you are human at all you'll stay away from her, Langa."

Langa: "Only Samarah can request that from me. Keep well."

Despite her plea, he left her like that. He basically told her that he won't let go of her no matter what. While he was saying his goodbyes to the worried Lydia, Mrs. Dladla was relaying fears of her own to Samarah.

Mrs. Dladla: "How are you really, my child?"

Samarah: "I am honestly doing better than expected, Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: "Are you, really?"

Samarah: "Yes, what do you mean?"

Mrs. Dladla: "You know I have always loved you, right?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes..."

Mrs. Dladla: “Deep down, you know how I feel – how I have always felt. Langa is my son and I know him. I honestly feel that you deserve the best because you are the best there is. Langa is not what you deserve, that is my point of view. I have always stuck to what I believe in, but I failed you. Had I spoken the truth from the get go, you wouldn’t be in this position today.”

Samarah: (frowning) “What do you mean now, Ma? I mean Langa and I are just friends.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Exes can never be friends.”

She was about to elaborate when Langa interrupted their intense conversation.

Langa: (smiling) “What am I missing? Are you three gossiping about me just like old times?”

He put his arm around Samarah's shoulder, much to Mrs. Dladla's dislike.

Mrs. Dladla: "Can we go now, please."

Langa: "Hawu (goodness), you guys were having such a jolly conversation before I arrived."

Mrs. Dladla: "Now, please! Samarah, I'll see you soon."

Samarah nodded while Langa got into the car feeling confused. They said their goodbyes.

Langa: "I'll call you."

He winked at her, irking his mother and once they drove out of the complex, she couldn't bring herself to keep quiet any more.

Mrs. Dladla: (sigh) "It is bad enough you killed your father, but now it seems as if you want to kill me too."

Langa: (frowning) "What did I do now, Ma?"

Phume: "You know exactly what you did, or at least, what you're trying to do, Langa."

Langa: "Hey, wena (you)! Phuma endabeni zabantu abadala (stay out of adult business)!"

Mrs. Dladla: "You think she doesn't notice? She is so fragile yet you just keep poking her. Lydia has already noticed. I am telling you, whatever you are planning stop it, just stop it."

Langa: "Ma, I am not trying anything. I am just being there for a woman I once loved, whom I still love."

Mrs. Dladla: "We accepted Ntombi when you brought her home, you know. Despite it all, we accepted her. Now you threw her away like trash the moment you heard that Aaron died. Are you even sure that you're not behind it all?"

Langa: (shocked) “Hayibo (Wow), Ma!”

Mrs. Dladla: “I pray every day that your father comes to get me so I can be with him because I cannot deal with such nonsense on a daily basis.”

Langa: “I am not doing anything, Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You know very well what we all know; you’re trying to be like him – to act like him; in hopes that she would love you the way she loved him. One thing I can tell you is that you are playing with fire. That is someone’s wife; a man who is now deceased.”

Langa: “Koda (But) Ma – “

Mrs. Dladla: (raising hand) “Thula (keep quiet) and just drive.”

They drove in silence while Mrs. Dladla’s heart was aching in silence. Langa took none of his mother’s words nor Lydia’s words into consideration. He had one mission on his mind and one only; to get Samarah back – no matter what it took.

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“So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

After Langa left, Lydia was not going to let her feelings slide. She was going to tell Samarah exactly what she thought of the entire situation. Samarah was all smiles, but Lydia did not let that get to her.

Lydia: “Hmm, you seem at ease.”

Samarah: “Ag, yeah, sort of. It was actually nice to see Ma and Phume.”

Lydia: “And Langa?”

Samarah: “What about him?”

Lydia: “I mean was it nice seeing him too?”

Samarah: "Uhm, yeah, I guess."

Lydia: (sigh) "You know I love you right?"

Samarah: "Say it. Just say it."

Lydia: "I think you're being really foolish right now. Actually, you're being quite stupid."

Samarah: "Excuse me?"

Lydia: "You think that guy still loves you? Sure, he might still, but do you honestly think he has come back on good intentions? I mean come on, Samarah. Wake the fuck up! You're a millionaire widow who just recently lost her twin babies! When will you start living again? When will you do that instead of dragging yourself back to that horrible pit you used to call a relationship with Langa? I admit, I am not perfect and neither is Collin, but I refuse to be with a man who doesn't value nor respect me. Aaron respected you, in fact, he

worshipped you. You can find someone like that again, but that person is not Langa. That much I can assure you.”

Samarah: (deep breath) “Well, that was quite a mouthful.”

Lydia: “You can be angry, it is fine. I can take it. As long as I have said my piece, it is fine.”

Samarah: “Well, then. I appreciate your piece. Please leave.”

Lydia: “Fine. I’m a phone call away whenever you cool down.”

Samarah did not say anything further to Lydia. Her words stung, it was no secret, but she knew deep down that Lydia was telling the truth indeed. She ignored Lydia’s warnings and chose to continue whatever she had going on with Langa. She didn’t call it a relationship per say, but she enjoyed the company. A few days later, She went out of the house, for the first time in months, with Langa. He drove her to the nearest mall in his BMW X6. She went all out and despite gaining quite an amount of weight, she looked really good in a short

dress. Her bust was accentuated along with her gorgeous legs. Langa was quite forward and held her hand after opening the door for her. It eased her heart a little knowing there was someone like Aaron still out there, but little did she know. They walked around looking at some of the shops. They came across a Pick n Pay clothing and he paused.

Langa: "Do you still remember the first day we met?"

Samarah: "Yes."

Langa: "I will never forget that day; I will forever regret losing you like that when I should have done right by you."

Samarah: "Yes, well... Where will we go eat?"

She was feeling a little uncomfortable in public.

Langa: "Come with me. Just relax, at least try, okay?"

She nodded and he held her hand. He took her to a nearby restaurant and smiled. He was trying to reminisce with her of all the days they would go to Spur and now he could afford fancy restaurants. She wasn't really interested in going down memory lane, but she appreciated all the effort he was putting in. Three cocktails later, he got her right where he wanted her. She was tipsy and started talking.

Samarah: (chuckling) "I still remember how Baba would scold at you whenever he thought I was mad at you."

Langa: "Yes, my father. He was truly one of a kind."

Samarah: "I am sure you miss him, though."

Langa: "Each and every day."

Samarah: "Well, he is in a better place. At least you know that he will always be in your heart and you will always have the memories of him."

Langa: "If I can be half the man he was, I'd be very happy."

Samarah: "Well, it is never too late indeed."

Langa: "You look like you have had quite a lot to drink."

Samarah: "Yes, I think I am tipsy."

She chuckled. He paid the bill and they left the mall walking hand in hand yet again. They had no idea that there were eyes everywhere and despite Lydia's warnings she still went ahead and continued seeing Langa. The signs were there, including what they were about to encounter that day. Just as Samarah was about to get comfortable in the car, Langa had not one but two flat tyres in the front of the car.

Langa: (sigh) "Oh, dammit."

Samarah: "What is it?"

Langa: "I have two flat tyres."

Samarah: "That's so odd."

Langa: "Yes, I know."

Samarah: "It's okay, I can catch an Uber ride home."

Langa didn't exactly want her to leave on her own for his own benefit.

Langa: "No, I don't want you to leave like this. It is not safe out there, you know."

Samarah: "Oh, you're right. But then, what are we going to do since your car is flat?"

Langa: "Well, we could take an Uber together. I just need to ensure you're safe."

Samarah: "Oh, okay then. We can do that."

He requested an Uber and jumped in alongside of her. Once he got to her building, he didn't want to leave further with the driver.

Samarah: "Well, thank you so much for taking care of me. I really had such a good time."

Langa: "Well, are you sure you're going to be alright up there?"

Samarah: "Yes, I mean everyone knows me here. I am safe. I mean, it is my building after all."

She chuckled which was music to Langa's ears.

Langa: "Well, I am quite pressed. Do you mind if I come in?"

Samarah: "Oh, sure."

He paid the driver and walked out with Samarah. Ntate Tau was on duty and once he realized who was right beside her, his smile faded away instantly. He greeted her with so much concern written all over his face, while Langa was just not bothered. They got to her flat.

Samarah: "The bathroom is right over there, in case you forgot."

Langa: "Sure, thanks."

She headed straight to her bedroom and took off her dress. She felt the need to change into something more comfortable since she was now back home. After removing her bra, she was left in her underwear. She was about to take out her Summer robe, when Langa walked into the bedroom, startling her.

Samarah: (surprised) “My goodness, Langa! Don’t you know how to knock?!”

Langa: “Oh, I am so sorry. I just wanted to say goodbye.”

Samarah hid herself really quickly and put on her robe.

Samarah: “You could have shouted or something.”

Langa: “I did, you just didn’t hear me.”

He was lying of course.

Samarah: “I didn’t hear that.”

Langa: (softly) “You look so beautiful – even more beautiful than we first met.”

Samarah: "You're just saying that. You're in my bedroom by the way."

Langa: "Oh, my apologies. I will leave now."

Samarah: "Okay."

Langa: "I'll see you soon?"

She nodded anxiously waiting for him to leave. As he was about to leave

Lydia walked in and her mood drastically changed after seeing Langa. When she looked at Samarah in her short summer robe, she thought of the unthinkable.

Langa: (smiling) "Hi, Lydia. It is good to see you again."

Lydia: "Well, I couldn't say the same for you."

Langa chuckled and walked out. Lydia just gave Samarah a bland look.

Samarah: "It's not what you think."

Lydia: "Guilty people always say that."

Samarah: "I just got home and he took an Uber with me. His tyres were flat for some reason and we couldn't drive home."

Lydia: (shaking head) "You are playing with fire. That guy is a married man."

Samarah: "He didn't tell me that. In fact, he said that he and Ntombi are over."

Lydia: "Well, men will tell you anything just to get into your pants."

Samarah: "If he wanted to do that, he would have tried something by now."

Lydia: "Did he not just see you naked?"

Samarah: "Half naked and it was an accident."

Lydia: (shaking head) "Ja, neh."

Samarah: "What brings you here?"

Lydia: "I have come to see if my best friend is okay since she is spending most of the festive season alone. Apart from that, I wanted to tell you the good news myself."

Samarah: "What good news?"

Lydia showed her her ring finger. She had a beautiful emerald diamond engagement ring on. Samarah got so excited for her.

Samarah: (excitedly) “This is so amazing! When did this happen?!”

Lydia: (smiling) “Yesterday. He said we’ve had so many good memories on the 26th of December each year, so he just wanted to make things official. He said he is tired of grooving with his girlfriend, instead of his wife.”

Samarah: “I am so happy for you, my friend! Congratulations! My goodness! Collin has class, hey! Look at this ring.”

Lydia: “Yes, well, I wanted to tell you the moment it happened, but I just didn’t want to seem insensitive, you know.”

Samarah: “Nonsense, I am alive and well.”

Lydia: “You know what I mean, Sam.”

Samarah: “You’re the one who said I needed to move on, aren’t you?”

Lydia: “Yes, but I also said you need to be careful of those who will try and take advantage of you. You don’t need to date right now.”

Samarah: “I am not dating anyone. Stop worrying about me.”

Lydia didn’t want to ruin her mood by discussing Langa, although she had much bigger news to share. She had done so much of that to last her a life time. They continued to talk about the forthcoming wedding. Ever since then, Lydia was busy planning her wedding with Collin, as they wanted to get married as soon as possible in preparation for their Internships and Practicals for the coming year. Lydia decided that she would wait before telling her the big news regarding her plans for the following year. For the next few days up until New Year’s Eve, Samarah was spending a lot of time with Langa. Ntate Tau had gone home despite wanting to stay with Samarah. It was going to be her first New Year’s without Aaron and so many were concerned about her. She was finding some solace in Langa, who was more than delighted to be a shoulder

to cry on. After spending days at her house leaving later on, she made a rather startling request.

Langa: "Well, look at the time. I think it is best I leave. I wouldn't want to find myself with a flat tyre yet again."

Samarah: "Well, I mean, it is only 8pm. You could spend the night if you wish."

Langa: "I don't want to seem as if I am taking advantage of you."

Samarah: (shaking head) "You're just spending time with a lonely woman. It really is not that deep, you know."

Langa: "Well then in that case, I should order us some food and drinks. I mean it is indeed a few more hours until another year."

Samarah: (sigh) "Sure. I am going to take a bath. I'll see you in a bit. Feel free to get comfortable."

Langa: "I'd take a shower as well, but I just don't have anything to wear."

Samarah: "There isn't much for you to wear here. I will see if I can find something rather old of Aaron's for you to wear."

Langa: (frowning) "You still have his clothes?"

Samarah nodded and left him wondering there on his own. While he was alone, he felt a rather weird, chilly breeze fly past him. He felt ice cold for a few seconds. It felt as if someone else was in that room. He looked around and thought it was his mind playing games on him. He continued to order some food and drinks and everything arrived within the hour. Samarah had finished taking a bath and found an old tracksuit of Aaron's for Langa.

Samarah: "Here, you can wear this."

Langa: "Are you sure? I don't want to make you uncomfortable."

Samarah: "It is some of his old clothes which we intended to give away, so it's okay."

Langa nodded in thanks.

Samarah: "You can use the guest bathroom. There's fresh towels and soap in there as well as lotions. You can help yourself."

Langa: "Thanks. I won't take too long."

Samarah nodded and continued to the kitchen. Langa felt too comfortable; forgetting that he was in another man's house. As soon as he went into the shower he started to enjoy the warm water. It didn't last long when he suddenly felt a rush of cold water all over his body. Langa was screaming out trying to turn the tap, but the warm water wouldn't come through. The tap wouldn't even close when he tried to. When he tried to open

the shower door, it suddenly got mysteriously stuck. He cried out in agony and tried to call out to Samarah, but she couldn't hear him. He endured a half an hour long struggle between him and the ice cold water. By the time he walked out of there, he felt as if he was in the fridge. In his mind, he thought that Aaron was haunting him for trying to get into his wife's pants.

Langa: (angrily) "You won't get to me, Aaron. No matter what you try."

He should not have done that because he was about to have a very agonizing night. He got dressed in Aaron's old clothes, but he felt rather weird the moment he wore them. He was lighter than Aaron and also fit, but his handsomeness was nothing compared to Aaron's. Once he was done, he met Samarah in the lounge who had the food ready on the table with a drink in her hand.

Samarah: "Oh, you're done?"

Langa: (sniffing) "Yes."

Samarah: (frowning) "Are you coming down with something?"

Langa: "Yes, I took a cold shower."

Samarah: (frowning) "You hate cold showers."

Langa: "Yes, I know. The hot water wouldn't run."

Samarah: "Oh, I think that must have been my fault. Perhaps I stayed in the bath tub for rather too long."

Langa: "It's okay. What are we watching?"

Samarah: "Oh, I am just watching a movie on Netflix. Nothing too serious. I was just passing the time until you were done."

Langa: "Okay."

Langa's phone rang and he ignored it. It rang again and he ignored it. After the third time, he switched it off.

Samarah: "It might be important."

Langa: "No, it's not. I said I'd spend the night with you and I was adamant about that. I don't want any disturbances."

Samarah nodded. Out of nowhere, the TV changed itself to Bruno Mars' YouTube channel. Versace on the floor was the very first song that popped up, bringing bitter-sweet memories back to Samarah.

Langa: "What's wrong?"

Samarah: "Nothing. This is – was Aaron and I's favourite song. Well, one of many."

Langa: "Oh, I'm sorry."

Samarah: "I'm not even the one who touched the remote. I can change it if it makes you uncomfortable."

Langa: "Oh, no. It's okay. I really don't mind."

For the next hour, all they listened to and watched was Bruno Mars's music videos. A few drinks down and Samarah found herself dancing and reminiscing of Aaron. Langa was annoyed deep down but he played along. She was just happy to find herself dipping into those memories of Aaron in laughter once again. Langa danced with her and started touching her before she knew it. Whenever he tried to touch her thighs and sensual parts, the TV volume would turn up on its own out of nowhere. It would be so high, that it interrupted everything and they had to turn it down. After two hours of trying, he gave up. His balls were blue and he couldn't understand why a "ghost" would cockblock him. They didn't even realize the time had flown by. Fireworks were lit and it was officially the New Year. Samarah looked outside her balcony with tears in her eyes. It dawned on her that she had lost so much within the past year, and she had no idea what was in store for her in the New Year. Langa hugged her from behind as a manner of solace.

Langa: (softly) "Happy New Year, Sammy."

Samarah just nodded and let him embrace her. It was not even about her appreciating that it was him who was embracing her, but for the mere fact that there was just someone doing that at that given moment. Her quiet tears rushed down her cheeks until she felt she had cried enough. They went back into the house and she felt like sleeping immediately after sitting on the couch, she dozed off. She fell asleep on his chest and he was hoping to take advantage of her, but he had no idea what was coming. An hour after she had fallen asleep, he felt his dick rise and harden as he looked at her protruded breasts. He touched one of her breasts and as he was about to start rubbing her nipples, he felt as if an entity was punching him.

He felt a few hard punches and landed against the kitchen wall and fell onto the ground. He didn't even have enough time to get up and embrace the shock, when he was being kicked around while lying on the floor. He was bleeding from both his nose and mouth. Yet again, he felt a cold breeze rush against him. This time, the coldness didn't leave the room and he felt ice cold as if it was winter time. Samarah was asleep the entire time. Each time he got up and tried to go sit with Samarah again, a punch would land on his cheek. Clearly he was unwanted and should he have continued who knew what was in store for him?

“For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”

They say that the person of spirit is not the same as that of the flesh. You get to see things differently when you become deceased; you get to see the wrongs you have done and you get to fix them by not allowing those you have left behind to fall into the same trap as you did whilst alive. It is hard to understand when you are still of the flesh because you are still angry at those who have passed, but once you are dead you do not feel anger like those alive. There is no time in the spirit world, although they give you a time limit. Should you fail to listen and they decide to give up on you, you will be in deep trouble. Spirit can be good yet also dangerous should they direct their anger at you.

The following morning, Samarah woke up with a message from Langa yet again. He sent her a good morning message without fail, and flowers would get delivered at her flat each morning – even on holidays. She heard her phone beep with the incoming message and she read it. “Good morning Sunshine. I hope you

slept like a baby. Sorry I left you all alone. I had a runny stomach out of nowhere and decided not to bother you. See you soon. Xoxo Langa.”

She smiled to herself and within half an hour, the flowers were delivered accompanied by a Bible verse. “For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him.” – Ecclesiastes 8 verse 6. There is something creepy about a person who steals one’s ideas to get what he feels is due to him, but it is even creepier to use God to get your way into someone’s life. She felt it was a good gesture, though it reminded her more of Aaron each time she received that bunch of flowers. She received messages from her father, Beatrice, Lydia and Mrs. Dladla, as well as Phume. She decided to take Lydia’s words into mind and consider going back to finish her last semester. It was not going to be that difficult since she just needed to write two more modules and do her practicals. She emailed the faculty regarding her consideration and had to wait until the 7th of January, since it was still holidays. With nothing much to do, she thought perhaps it was time to visit her parents as her father was nagging her non-stop. She took a bath and got herself ready. She got into her car and drove to Fernadale to visit her parents. Ever since Rachel and Aaron passed on, she couldn’t bring herself to go to the house. She

was the owner now, but she still wasn't ready to go there. It didn't take Beatrice long to notice that someone was at the gate. She was about to call them to open the gate, when she saw it being opened. She drove in and Beatrice was awkwardly excited to see her. She couldn't even wait for Samarah to exit the car, as she rushed towards her window. Samarah found it really weird, but she just thought that her mother was trying to become a better person. As she got out, Beatrice attacked her with a hug.

Beatrice: (excitedly) "Oh, my daughter! It is so lovely to see you! It feels like I haven't seen you in like forever!"

Samarah: (frowning) "Yes... well, you seem happy today."

Beatrice: "Oh, come on. I am always happy to see you! You can be so dramatic sometimes. Come, come, come. Your father and I have been awaiting your visit."

Samarah: "Oh, really? I didn't tell either of you that I was coming."

Beatrice: "Yes, well we thought you might come so we cooked a mean feast."

She grabbed Samarah by her arm and walked in with her. Richard was watching tv on his wheelchair and was really happy to see her.

Samarah: "Hi, Papa."

Richard: (smiling) "Hi, my baby. You came! Come give your father a hug."

She gave him a hug and couldn't understand why they were showering her with love so much. They were overdoing it, actually.

Beatrice: "Sit, sit. Have you eaten yet?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, I haven't."

Beatrice: "You're in luck! I have made quite a feast for us! It is going to be a good day, you know!"

She sat down with her father sitting right next to her.

Samarah: "What's going on? What have I missed?"

Richard: "Nothing much. We are just happy to see you, you know. More especially after yesterday's sermon at church."

Samarah: "Oh? What was the pastor preaching about?"

Beatrice: "He was preaching about appreciating life. I mean, I never took it to heart how short life is until what happened to you – to us, you know. We have really lost a lot in the past year and it is up to us to change all that and appreciate life, appreciate you more than ever now."

Samarah: (frowning) "I don't get it. I mean you weren't very happy about Aaron being a part of my life, and you were most certainly even more unhappy about me being pregnant."

Richard: "That's all in the past now, Sam."

Beatrice: "We both would like to take this opportunity to apologize to you. You really didn't deserve the way we treated you. You found someone who treated you like gold and we just took that for granted."

Richard: (teary) "And now you lost my grand babies. I would have loved those girls to death. I feel like God is punishing me for my sins."

Richard burst out in silent tears, leaving Samarah stunned. Those two were good at pulling stunts but that was just the tip of the iceberg.

Samarah: "Oh, bathong (goodness), Papa. We have been over this. I mean, I never thought you felt so strongly about this."

Richard: (crying) "I have failed you, my child. I really have. I left you all alone to fend for yourself and got hurt in the

process. You had to care for me when Beatrice left me. Yes, I have forgiven her, but the damage I have done to you have left permanent scars. You have lost the love of your life at your tender age and now you are childless. This is all because of me. I am being punished through my children.”

Beatrice wasn't too happy about Richard's speech, but she had to play along. Once she realized Samarah was tearing up, her plan was slowly working.

Samarah: “Oh, daddy. Please, don't cry. It is okay. I am slowly learning how to heal from all of that. You shouldn't do this to yourself. It is not your duty to carry all this weight on your shoulders.”

Richard: “Please, forgive me, my daughter. Forgive me.”

Samarah: “I forgive you. You have done nothing wrong.”

Richard: "Yes, I have. Otherwise you would not stay away from me for so long. Visiting me seems like so much effort for you. You don't want me around you."

Samarah: "I am sorry you feel that way

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Papa. I am not angry at you in any way. I promise I will make time to see you more often."

Richard: "It would really help if you were near, you know. I worry about you."

Beatrice: "We both do."

Samarah: "I will try my best."

Beatrice: "Perhaps you could move into your Ferndale house."

Samarah: "No. I am not ready for that."

Richard: "We are not trying to pressurize you in any way. We just worry about you."

Samarah: "I appreciate that, I really do. I will do things in my own time. Please, respect that."

Beatrice: "Of course, we meant no harm."

Samarah: "No harm done."

They carried on eating their meal and managed to have some laughter and banter while at it. As the day progressed, Samarah became a lot more open to them as they were drinking a bit. Of course Beatrice didn't waste any time and sipped as much as she could. She was drinking like someone who hadn't tasted beer in a very long while.

Samarah: "Yes, so how did you guys spend your New Year's Eve?"

Richard: "Ag, it was just Beatrice and I as usual. We do wish you were here, though."

Beatrice: "Yes, we don't like it when you are alone."

Samarah: "I wasn't alone."

They both had their eyebrows raised waiting for her to finish her statement.

Samarah: "I was with Langa. He came to visit me and spent the day with me until just after midnight."

Richard: "Oh."

Richard wasn't too pleased about it, unlike Beatrice.

Beatrice: "Well, that's good, isn't it? I mean, at least you were with someone who cares about you."

Samarah: "Yes, well. I guess so, but we are just friends, you know."

Beatrice: "Your father and I were friends just before we met too. I mean, I honestly don't see the reason to keep holding onto the past. No offence, but if the chance arises, grab it with both hands. You never know how much time you still have on this earth."

Samarah: "I suppose you're right."

Richard: "Well, either way. You shouldn't pressurise yourself into doing things hastily. You still have to finish your studies. We would really love to see you graduate and achieve your dreams."

Samarah: "Yes, that is exactly what Lydia told me."

Beatrice: "Hmm, well I still think she is not a good friend for you. She parties too much."

Samarah: (frowning) “Since when is partying too much a basis of judgment for someone’s friendship?”

Beatrice: “I am just saying I don’t know how that boy of hers copes with her.”

Samarah: “Well, that “boy” of hers proposed to her. As we speak they are getting married in a few weeks. She has been there for me when both of you couldn’t so I wouldn’t speak of her like that. Please, if you want me around, refrain from speaking about my loved ones in such a manner.”

Richard signalled to Beatrice to shut her mouth.

Beatrice: “You are absolutely right. I am sorry for saying that. I truly wasn’t thinking.”

They realized they had to be careful as to not to step on her toes that entire day, but it remained fruitful for them as they had Samarah right where they wanted her. Meanwhile at

Langa's household, it was getting really messy on his side. He could barely sleep after all the pain inflicted on him by the unseen entity back at Samarah's flat. When he woke up the following morning and Phume brought him breakfast, he was bruised and swollen.

Phume: (knocking) "Bhuti (brother)! Open up. I have brought you some breakfast."

He opened and Phume nearly dropped the tray of food.

Phume: (shocked) "Bhuti (Brother)! Why do you look like that?! Who did that to you?"

Langa: "Ukhuluma ngani (what are you talking about)?"

Phume: "Haven't you seen yourself?"

Langa shook his head and looked in the mirror. He hid the shock and horror he had within. One of his eyes was nearly shut, his lips were bust open and his entire face was swollen.

Langa: "Oh, this. Someone tried to hijack me last night."

Phume: "Why do you insist on driving so late at night? Let me go and call Ma."

Langa: "No! Leave her. I will go see a doctor later on."

Phume: "You look bad, though. You should have stayed home with us. Uvelaphi vele (where were you anyway)?"

Langa: "I was with your future sister in law."

Phume: (frowning) "You told us that you are no longer with Ntombi."

Langa: "Not her – Samarah."

Phume: (angrily) “You don’t listen, do you? How many times must you be told to stay away from her? You are not good for her and you know it. You don’t love her. We all know why you want her.”

Langa: “Hey, wena (you). I am still your elder brother. Respect me.”

Phume: “Act accordingly and then – only then will I respect you. Langa, you are a man and how would you feel if a man treated me the way you treated her?”

Langa: “That was a long time ago. Besides, you don’t have time for boys. You still have to graduate.”

Phume: (shaking head) “You are playing with fire.”

Langa: “That’s up to me to decide. Just don’t tell uMa (mom).”

Phume: “You know I am going to tell her.”

Langa: “No, don’t. I will do anything.”

Phume: “I can’t stand in the way and watch you hurt Samarah. What kind of role model do you want to be for Mthokozisi?”

Langa: “What does my son have to do with this?”

Phume: “What do you think will happen to him should you marry her as you have planned? She will have to be a step mother at her age, just after losing her own children. Don’t be selfish, buthi (brother). I know you to be better than that.”

Langa: “I love her.”

Phume: (shaking head) “No, you don’t. You love what could have been; you love what she can offer you – more especially now.”

Langa: "What are you trying to say? Are you saying that I am a gold digger?"

Phume: "I am saying exactly what I have said. It is up to you to conclude."

Langa: "Please, don't tell uMa (mom)."

Phume: "Too late."

She walked out and left him to tend to his wounds. When Phume went into the house, she found her mother deep in thought.

Phume: "Ma, can I get you some tea?"

Mrs. Dladla: "How about a Castle lite?"

Phume: (Chuckling) "At 10am in the morning? Haibo (goodness), Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: “What is the point of God keeping me here on this earth? I want to join my husband.”

Phume: “Kodwa (goodness), Ma. You still have to see some of our grandchildren.”

Mrs. Dladla: “I will see them in spirit.”

Phume: (sigh) “Ma, Langa is giving me grey hair.”

Mrs. Dladla: “At your age? Usangene (you’re mad).”

Phume: “I am being serious. He is bruised and looks like someone beat him really badly. He told me that someone tried to hijack him after he came back from Samarah’s flat.”

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) “That boy is playing with fire. I am really worried and judging by my dreams and what they mean, he is headed for disaster.”

Phume: (curious) “What do you mean, Ma?”

Mrs. Dladla: “He has done the unthinkable; and they will all come crumbling down one by one.”

Phume: “Ma, stop talking in riddles.”

Mrs. Dladla: “All I know is that all those who have hurt Samarah will live to regret it – including your brother. Sadly, he is about to hurt her even more. Hence, I don’t want to live to see the day.”

Phume: “What are you on about?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Your brother has caused that girl so much pain, unnecessarily. He did it all for his own selfish gains, and it won’t end well. He will suffer the most, including all those he has been in cahoots with.”

Phume: "What are you saying ma?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I am saying go get me a Castle Lite. Make it a set."

Phume: "He won't be happy seeing you drink so early in the morning."

Mrs. Dladla: "He is not my husband. Go."

Phume: "Only if I get to keep the change."

Mrs. Dladla: "Fine."

Phume chuckled and kissed her mother's cheek as she walked out. Mrs. Dladla was deep in thought. She had no idea that the dreams she kept having were visions of the near future until she asked Gogo about them. "For as long as he continues to hurt that girl, your son will be faced with eternal suffering and danger." Those were Gogo's words. They couldn't stop ringing in Mrs. Dladla's head.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Three weeks later...

It had been exactly three weeks since Samarah had seen Langa, although they spoke daily and the flowers and bible verses came through without fail. She also saw a lot more of Beatrice and Richard and they were happy. She could confide in Beatrice a lot more and finally made it to Rachel's house. Beatrice went to assist her with spring cleaning there although she got injured while assisting her and had to wear a leg cast. Of course, Samarah had to pay for the medical care since neither she nor Richard had any medical aid. She didn't mind as she was doing it for her “mother”. Meanwhile, the faculty responded to her email with some exciting news. She was allowed to write the two modules she missed out on and was set to do her practicals for the next six months. If she passed them all, she would be allowed to graduate in June. She didn't know how it was possible, but she was happy and she sort of knew that Aaron was looking out for her. She couldn't wait to share the news with Lydia, whom she was set to see

later that day for her bachelorette party. Lydia was set to marry the following day which was a Saturday, as she also had big news to share with Samarah. She was packing her clothes with Beatrice by her side.

Beatrice: "I am sorry I can't assist much. I hate being so useless, you know."

Samarah: "It's okay. I am glad you are here, though."

Beatrice: "So, tell me, how is it going with Langa?"

Samarah: "I don't know. I can say that it is okay."

Beatrice: "Do you like him?"

Samarah: "I don't know. I mean, yes, I think so. I just don't want to find myself rushing into things, you know. He has a son to think of."

Beatrice: “Well, it is not bad being a stepmother. Yes, it is an adjustment, but it is not the end of the world. You will adjust and hopefully, have your own children.”

Samarah: “Why does it seem as if you have had experience with it?”

Beatrice: “Oh, no. My sister has, though.”

Samarah: “Oh, okay. I will see as time goes.”

Beatrice: “All I am saying is that men are not designed to be like women, you know. They can’t be patient like us. What if he doesn’t wait much longer for you and you find he has moved on by the time you become ready for him?”

Samarah: “Perhaps that would mean it would not be meant to be.”

Beatrice: “Ai (oh), you children of today. All I am saying is that be open to him. He could be your last chance at happiness.”

Samarah nodded and continued packing her clothes. It wasn't long before she received a call from Lydia.

Samarah: "Hey."

Lydia: "What's up, bitch! I'm downstairs."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I am almost done packing."

Lydia: "Samarah, you have so many clothes – some you have never even worn yet, man. The drinks are getting warm and I am sloshed without my bestie!"

She could hear a few other ladies laughing.

Samarah: "Okay, I am coming down."

Lydia: "Five minutes, or I am leaving you."

Samarah: "Sharp."

They both hung up.

Beatrice: "Hmm, was that Lydia?"

Samarah: "Yes."

Beatrice: "Oh, okay. Well, do enjoy yourselves."

Samarah: "Okay, you can feel at home."

Beatrice: "Yes, I will only be a while until Papa comes."

Samarah: "You guys can spend the entire weekend here if you wish. Bye."

She gave her a kiss on the cheek and walked out. She found Lydia wearing a “Bride to be” sash and a tiara with pink fur. She looked a bit tipsy and was so happy to see Samarah, alongside her cousins. Samarah was her only friend and she preferred it that way.

Lydia: (happily) “My bestie! Man, am I happy to see you!”

Samarah: “You look like you’ve had quite a lot to drink.”

Lydia: “Stop worrying! It’s my bachelorette! Let’s go!”

She greeted the rest of the cousins and one was driving and off they went. They went straight to the club, in broad daylight for a few hours. It was lit to say the least and the best fun she had had in almost a year. The last time she had such fun was during her Tokyo vacation with Aaron. From there, they went to the hotel where they were going to stay and it was massage time and from there, they got into their pajamas and relaxed over a few glasses of champagne.

Samarah: “You really need to stop drinking now. Do you want to say your vows to Collin while hungover?”

Lydia: “Oh, he will still be hungover as well. It will be the start of a good marriage.”

She laughed.

Samarah: “Seriously, though. How do you feel?”

Lydia: “To be honest, I never thought that I’d be settling down at this age. I mean, I am graduating soon, you know. I thought that I’d still be whoring around at this age looking for Mr. Right, but God had other plans. Here I am, with my Mr. Right I found years ago. I really feel blessed, my friend.”

Samarah: “I am very happy for you, really.”

Lydia: “Look, I know you have been through so much and I feel so bad about not allowing Langa to be here for my wedding.”

Samarah: "It's honestly okay. I totally get it."

Lydia: "No, you have always been there for me and I might not like nor understand why he is a part of your life right now, but I think your feelings also deserve to be validated."

Samarah: "It's honestly okay."

Lydia: "I guess what I am saying is that, if you still want him there, you can invite him."

Samarah: (excitedly) "Are you serious?! You don't feel obligated or pressured or anything, right?"

Lydia: (shaking head) "No, I am just making my best friend happy."

Samarah: "Thank you so much, Lydia! On the brighter side of things, I also have some news to share with you."

Lydia: "Yes?"

Samarah: "I have been accepted to come and write my last two modules by the faculty. As we speak, I will be writing them this coming week and I am starting my practicals the week thereafter. I will graduate in June."

Lydia: (excitedly) "Wow! I don't know how they managed to get that right, but this has Aaron written all over it. Money talks, babe and you should be glad that your man left you with so many connections."

Samarah: "I am just glad I am slowly getting back on my feet."

Lydia: "Speaking of news, I also have some to share."

Samarah: "What is it? Are you pregnant?"

Lydia: “Oh, my word no! I have decided to do my articles at UP since KPMG has offered me space at their company to do my internship there.”

Samarah: (surprised) “You’re relocating?”

Lydia: “Well

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yeah. Collin will also be working at a law firm in Pretoria until he is able to start his own. We will need all the money we can get, so I have decided to sell my flat. I hope this won’t be a big issue since Aaron left it to me.”

Samarah: “Oh, honey. This is your time. You will be officially married tomorrow, so obviously you will need to start afresh. I am just surprised you didn’t tell me earlier on. You are not one for surprises.”

Lydia: “I was just afraid, I guess. I mean you still need me and who will you lean on while I am not around?”

Samarah: “Physically you won’t be around, yes, but I know that you will be a phone call away. I can’t expect you to put your entire life on hold just because mine fell apart.”

Lydia: (relieved) “I am so glad you feel this way. I have been dying to tell you, but I felt that the timing was never right.”

Samarah: “You should never feel the need to alter your life for me, Lydia. You have already done so much for me – ever since we were young and if anything, I owe you the world.”

Lydia: (teary) “Oh, Sam. Stop it. You are going to make me cry.”

Samarah: “I am serious. I owe you the world, L. You are my entire life.”

Lydia: “I love you.”

Samarah: “I love you too.”

The bachelorette evening ended pleasantly and they both enjoyed themselves until they dozed off. The wedding day finally arrived and as expected, Lydia was hungover.

Samarah: "Wakey wakey!"

Lydia: "Yoh (oh)! I should have listened to you."

Samarah: "Yes, you should have, but drink up. This will help you."

Lydia: "What's this?"

Samarah: "It is a hangover remedy Aaron gave me back in Tokyo. It works like a bomb."

Samarah handed Lydia the drink and she drank up.

Lydia: "Oh, it is vile."

Samarah: "You will thank me later, believe me. Come, we have lots to do. Go take a shower."

Lydia: "I feel like a bath."

Samarah: "No, you will cause us all to be late. I already let you sleep a little longer."

Lydia: "Ag, I hate you."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I love you too."

While Lydia went to take a quick shower, Samarah was excited to hear from Langa. She had sent him a text earlier the evening prior to let him know that he was allowed to come to the wedding. He never responded until that morning when she checked on him again.

Samarah: "Hey, did you get my text?"

He had blue ticked her, which meant he got the text but she had no other way of starting the conversation.

Langa: "Hey, yes, I did. Sorry, I was caught up. Battery died."

That was odd, since his last seen was two hours after she sent the text.

Samarah: "Okay, it's alright. So? Are you coming?"

Langa: "I would love to, but I don't think your friend wants me there."

Samarah: "She is the one who asked me to invite you."

Langa: "I see. I will see if I can make it. I am swamped with work, actually."

Samarah tried calling him but he hung up before he could even answer.

Langa: "I am in the middle of something. I will call you later, okay?"

She just responded with a simple "ok" and let him be. He was not one to just hang up on her or ignore her calls, but she didn't want to dampen her mood. Her best friend was getting married and it was a big deal. Lydia finished up with her shower and they got their make up and hair done. They got dressed hours later and Lydia was back to her normal self.

Lydia: "Friend, I am so glad you gave me that remedy. I feel brand new! You really need to write it down for me because Collin and I will most definitely be partying up a storm in Ibiza!"

They both laughed although Samarah seemed distracted.

Lydia: "What's wrong?"

Samarah: “Nothing, it is just that Langa hasn’t gotten back to me since I asked him if he would like to make an appearance today.”

Lydia: “Maybe he just doesn’t want to come and is afraid to tell you. Men are very obvious with their feelings. You should know that.”

Samarah: “Yeah, but perhaps he is caught up or something. I mean I tried calling him but he hasn’t responded or anything. Instead, he just keeps texting me.”

Lydia: “Let him be. Don’t pester him. If he wants to talk to you – he will call you back.”

She nodded but was deeply worried about why Langa was just avoiding her like that. He was acting fine the past few months. Once they got dressed, it was time for the ceremony. Samarah was right beside her best friend until the very end of the ceremony. Langa temporarily left her mind and all went well with the reception. Langa only decided to make

an appearance after they changed into their traditional attire. He also seemed rather distracted. By then everyone had finished eating dessert and it was a merry affair with drinks flowing. He tapped her shoulder from behind.

Samarah: "Oh, hi. You finally made it."

Langa: "Hey, I'm sorry for being so late. I was just caught up with work."

Samarah: "It's alright. Would you like some food?"

Langa: "That would be fine, thanks."

Samarah: "And a drink?"

Langa: "A black label for now."

Samarah nodded and went to dish up for him. She had no idea what was about to transpire. She dished up for him and

handed him a bottle of beer. He thanked her and ate with her right beside him. The music was flowing and Lydia was too busy having a good time to focus on Langa. It was not the right time to tell him off. Right after his meal and halfway through his beer, a very unexpected person stormed in.

Ntombi: (shouting) “Hey, wena (you)! Uyenzani ne ndoda yami (what are you doing with my man)?!”

Samarah was beyond shocked to find Ntombi so livid, while Langa was speechless for a while.

Samarah: (surprised) “I’m sorry. I don’t follow.”

She had seen a few photos of her but never met her in person.

Ntombi: “Don’t tell me shit! You are busy dishing up for my man at your friend’s wedding. It’s bad enough yours died and now you want to take mine away from me?!”

So she knew about her loss. We could only guess who told her all that.

Langa: “Ntombi, stop it, you’re causing a scene.”

Ntombi: “iScence ya masimba (fuck a scene)! I’ll do what I want! Why are you with this fat bitch?! Didn’t you tell her you’re a married man now?”

Samarah: (shocked) “Married?”

Langa: “No, we’re not married.”

Ntombi: “He paid lobola for me, bitch – using your money! Right after my son was born. Don’t you remember his aunt suddenly falling ill? He was with me the entire time. (chuckling) “Gosh, fat bitches are stupid.”

Langa: “Don’t call her that! It is time for you to leave!”

Ntombi: "I am not going anywhere. I came to get you! I didn't take an Uber for nothing! Who's going to pay that driver?"

Langa: "I'll pay him, but know this; you and I are done. We have been done. I love Samarah and she is the one I want to spend the rest of my life with."

Ntombi: "You're fucking with me, Langa, aren't you?"

Langa: "Try me."

Ntombi: (chuckling) "You are messing with the wrong person. You're doing this for money, aren't you? You want all that money she inherited from her dead husband."

How did she even know that? Langa took out money from his purse and handed it to her.

Langa: "Take this to pay the driver. There is enough to take an Uber back home. Go now before I call security on you."

Ntombi looked around while all eyes were on her. For once Langa didn't worry about her feelings. She looked at the dreadful Samarah who was almost about to cry. Ntombi felt a wince of pain in her heart, but it was nothing compared to the humiliation Samarah felt.

Ntombi: "Wena (you)! He will drop you like a hot potato. He doesn't love you and never will."

She walked out with her tail between her legs, while Samarah was still trying to gather her thoughts. She felt outright mortified. The last time she felt like that was finding out that he cheated on her.

Langa: "Samarah, look, I had no idea she was going to cause a scene like that. She just can't seem to accept that we are over."

Lydia: "I think it is time for you to leave, Langa."

Langa: "I just want a minute with her – please."

Samarah: (teary) "Delete my number. I don't want to see you ever again."

She rushed out of the venue and headed straight to her hotel room with Lydia running after her. The moment that door closed behind her, she cried.

Lydia: "Hey, babe. It's okay."

Samarah: "No, it's not okay. I feel so stupid. I never should have thought that he had changed."

Lydia: "We all make mistakes."

Samarah: "Oh, no. How many women make the same mistake like I did? I allowed that fuck to mess with me. I mean, I should never have. How could I have trusted him like that again? I nearly fell victim for his scam."

Lydia: "It's okay. It is all over now."

Samarah: "To think I blamed you for not wanting him here. Look now. He has turned me into the laughing stock of the evening."

Lydia: "If anything – the joke is on him. Learn to be at peace and accept that you have made a mistake. It is all over now. Be glad that God showed you way before it got too far."

Samarah: "I feel so stupid, friend."

Lydia: "It is okay to feel like that. Let it go. He will get what is due to him."

Sadly, most women, much like Samarah don't take heed from the first sign of danger.

“My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!”

It took Samarah a while to recover from the scene at Lydia’s wedding, more especially since she felt that she ruined her best friend’s wedding. Though Lydia was perfectly fine with it and had gone past it, Samarah hadn’t. She struggled for many sleepless nights to get over that – even after Lydia left. After Lydia told her she wanted to sell the flat, she surprised her by buying it from her, adding a few extra thousands on top of the asking price as a wedding gift. She and Collin had relocated to Pretoria. Langa tried to call her endlessly after the whole incident until she eventually blocked him everywhere. He would still attempt to call her with numerous unfamiliar numbers, but stopped for a while. She wrote her two modules and passed them. She had just started her practicals at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital in Johannesburg and would travel there from Rachel’s house. She also spent her birthday with her parents for the first time in a very long while. She was glad that it was spent differently, though it was not with Aaron.

That was one hole in her heart that would take forever to heal. She was looking forward to a new beginning and fresh start in her life, although it was painful it had to be done. She was not happy about saying goodbye to Ntate Tau since she had officially moved out of the flat. She took everything of hers along with Aaron's things and placed them at Rachel's house. She slept in Aaron's bedroom there and she felt like he and Rachel were still present. It felt like a peaceful home for her. She was still upset at them for not visiting her in her dreams, but she was told to be patient and that it would happen at the right time. It always felt to her as if they were still alive, though. She couldn't explain it, but she knew had she told people that they would have thought she was losing it again. The very first night she slept there, she dreamt of an old man holding two babies in his arms. Malome would often check in on her and he told her not to worry, it was Aaron's grandfather. He had accepted the children the moment they crossed over. She cried all day that day. It was yet another Monday and she was ready to face the world again. She got dressed in her uniform. She wasn't a doctor as yet but since she was in her last year she was called a Doctor. She had her own badge and had to wear it at all times, along with her white coat. She took pride in that and although she had gained quite a bit of weight, she absolutely loved it. She knew that Aaron was happy wherever he was. She took her bag and headed

out. Her dreadlocks were cut short so there was no need to style them. She parked her car and greeted the Nurses at reception. One of them was Sister Joy who just adored Samarah. She said she reminded her of her younger self.

Samarah: "Good morning. How are you today?"

Sister Joy: (smiling) "Good morning, Dr. Mosue. It is such a great pleasure to greet you this morning. I am well, how are you doing today?"

Samarah: "I am feeling confident today. I don't really know why."

Sister Joy: "It comes with the perks of being new in the profession. Do not lose your passion, alright?"

Samarah: "I won't. I owe it to a lot of people. What do I have today?"

Sister Joy: “Here are your files today. We have quite a lot of cases that need diagnosing.”

Samarah: “I am on it. See you at lunch.”

Sister Joy: “Yes, I shall see you then. And I am buying today – no excuses.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Alright then. Ciao (bye).”

She went to the lab and sat in her usual chair. She would only be brought into the patient’s room if they needed consulting on a matter that required her assistance. She was an intern, so she needed to have a mentor. Doctors were always busy, but her go-to mentor who would always call her into cases was Professor Bester, a middle-aged white woman with a killer body who hardly smiled. She hated being challenged and appreciated the extra pair of hands. Thanks to Samarah’s presence, she had someone to send to pathology, to do X-ray’s and all the unnecessary work for her. It didn’t take her very long before she was called in by Prof. Bester. Prof. Bester hated people who weren’t punctual and first impressions

always count for her. She got a good impression from Samarah, until she saw the car she drove and became rather envious. Ever since then, she tried to make it a point to keep Samarah on her toes – always. It comes with the territory of being female. She rushed to the patient’s room and found Prof. Bester already waiting.

Samarah: “Good morning, Prof. Bester.”

Prof. Bester: “Hmm, you’re about twenty seconds late today. You need to up your game.”

Samarah: “Oh, sorry. I just got here.”

Prof. Bester: “Well, you will have to exercise if you want to keep up with me. I expect you to be punctual at all times.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, Doctor. What do we have today?”

There was an elderly female patient on the bed, approximately 60 years of age.

Prof. Bester: "This patient has been quite ill for a few weeks. She started by complaining of tiredness which then escalated to stomach pain, night sweats and an incredible amount of weight loss and now she has swelling in her lymph nodes. What do you think we should do?"

Samarah: "Well, firstly I think we should get her blood work checked right away. Seeing as that is usually the first option, judging by the swelling in her neck and arms, we should rather do a biopsy, as it will determine what we are trying to look for a lot faster."

Prof. Bester: "What are we looking for?"

Samarah: "Well, my suspicion is that it is Lymphoma, although it could be Leukemia. My bet is on Lymphoma – no offence."

Prof. Bester: "Good work, Doctor. Alert Pathology that we need this test done ASAP."

Samarah: (nodding) "On it, Prof."

She walked away smiling to herself. She was always nervous around that woman, but she knew that she was getting there and doing something right. She did what she had to do and of course, she had to be on stand by and get the results to the Professor. She was doing a lot of walking and that was straining. She realized quickly that she had to go back to working out. After the results came back, it was indeed Lymphoma. It was rather heart-breaking to see the patients and family members break down whenever they heard the news. Sadly, that woman's cancer was already on Stage 3. Chemotherapy was an option and so was radiation, but chances of her getting out cancer free and of it actually working were very slim. That part ruined the latter part of her day. She didn't realize it was lunch time until Sister Joy called her just outside the lab. She looked back and saw her waving at her and showing her a paper bag. She headed out.

Samarah: "Is it lunch already?"

Sister Joy: "Yes, you have been so busy you didn't even realize it."

Samarah: “Yoh, Sister Joy. Had I known I’d be working like a mad woman, I’d have chosen something else.”

Sister Joy: (laughing) “Some of us are the ones who have to do these kind o jobs. If everyone went for teaching or the police force, who would do this job?”

Samarah: “You have a point right there.”

They sat right outside the canteen for some fresh air. She bought her a grilled chicken burger with a fruit salad and berry smoothie.

Samarah: (smiling) “You got me a berry smoothie. How did you know it was my favourite?”

Sister Joy: “I pay attention when spoken to. You told me once in one of our conversations.”

Samarah: "Yes, well. My husband enjoyed making smoothies for me."

Sister Joy: "Hmm, well, he was a very special man. I can tell."

Samarah: "He was the best. If I could turn back the time, I most definitely would."

Sister Joy: "Oh, well. You are blessed to have found love like that. I too miss my husband dearly. I never remarried because of that."

Samarah: "Do you think you can experience love twice?"

Sister Joy: "Oh, absolutely. But at my age, it is either I should opt for a friend with benefits or just be single. I mean, don't get me wrong, I loved my husband. I somehow missed being single and now that I have been without a man for more than ten years, I feel alive again. I get to do what I want and when I want to. My children are grown and I live alone. I wouldn't trade my current freedom for anyone. It would be lovely to

have my husband with me again, but I just love doing me right now.”

Samarah: (nodding) “I hear you.”

Sister Joy: “Do you have someone in mind?”

Samarah: “Oh, no. Not really. I sort of had, but it just wasn’t meant to be. He was an ex, so – “

Sister Joy: “One thing I can tell you about exes – never go back. There is a reason why you left him, so don’t go back. Very rarely you find that they do change, but don’t risk it. It just isn’t worth it, more especially for someone in your situation. You’re not just recently widowed, but you are monied. He knows your situation and might abuse it.”

Samarah: “I hear you. You are a very wise woman.”

Sister Joy: “It most definitely comes with age. Believe me, I have been stupid in my years. When I was your age, I got up to

a lot of nonsense. I gave my mother grey hairs before her time. God bless her soul.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “No way! I cannot picture you as a wild girl.”

Sister Joy: “One day, I will tell you all about my days. You might learn a thing or two from it.”

Samarah: “I can’t wait.”

Sister Joy: “You remind me so much of someone, but I just can’t put my finger on it.”

Samarah: “You already said that I remind you of the younger you.”

Sister Joy: “Yes, but you do look a lot like someone I know. I just can’t figure it out now, but it will come to me.”

Samarah: “Oh, maybe I have a doppelganger. You never know.”

Sister Joy: “Yes, well, it will come to me. Finish up before Prof. Bester comes rushing here.”

Samarah: “Eish (Oh), that one. She just keeps me busy. My feet are already aching and it is not even 7pm as of yet.”

Sister Joy: “That one has endured her own trauma and we’re all paying for it.”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Sister Joy: “I am not gossiping, but she was married. She was fat – ska mmona a le so (she wasn’t like this at all). She was abused quite a lot, shame. So, she redirected all that energy to her studies and once she became a professor at the age of 40, she shed all that weight and became who she is now. She left that asshole and took 50% of his money along with her.”

Samarah: “That’s incredibly sad yet motivating at the same time. Does she have kids?”

Sister Joy: “She had one daughter with him, but she sadly passed away three years ago in a horrible car accident. People aren’t what they seem, you know. Deep down, she is a real softie. She just puts that rock hard exterior on as a barrier. No one wants to be disrespected twice.”

She was absolutely right about that part. Lunch time was over and it was back to work. She was swamped with work and the Prof was making her work, but she refused to quit. After a long day, she finally knocked off at 7pm. She said goodbye to Sister Joy and went home. She hardly had time to cook, so she would buy takeaways on her way home and eat just before taking a bath and then it was bed time. At times she would read a book and speak to Lydia just before bed time, but that was her life. She enjoyed working, though. She was grateful that Beatrice would come and assist with the cleaning sometimes along with her sister, and she would pay them. It was going to be a long road before she got any decent off days.

Three weeks later...

She finally settled into a routine and managed to start jogging again before work. It brought her peace of mind and reminded her a lot of her time with Aaron. She hadn't heard from Langa in a long while, although she occasionally spoke to Mrs. Dladla and Phume. She didn't want to pry and make it seem like she wanted back into Langa's life. That particular morning, her life was about to change for a brief moment. She decided to put make up on for a change. Why? She also had no apparent reason. When she got to the hospital, she was met with the best news ever.

Samarah: "Good morning, Sister Joy."

Sister Joy: "Good morning, Sammy! How are you?"

Samarah: "I am well, thanks. How are you?"

Sister Joy: "I am always blessed. I see you look different today. Are you trying to catch a fish?"

Samarah: (laughing) “Maybe.”

Sister Joy: “Well, I have some exciting news for you. Believe me, you are going to smile all day.”

Samarah: “What is it? You found yourself a Ben 10?”

Sister Joy: (laughing) “I wish. Prof. Bester is going away on a Symposium – for six months. She trains new doctors and gives lectures, so she will be in Cape Town for quite some time.”

Samarah: (excitedly) “Sister Joy, you have literally made my day! Lunch is on me!”

Sister Joy: “Oh, there is something else. You will be working under a new doctor.”

Samarah: “Oh, please tell me he or she is way better than Bester.”

Sister Joy: "He is – in all kinds of ways."

She winked at her but she had no clue what she was on about.

Samarah: "You're not saying anything."

Sister Joy: "You are going to find out for yourself soon enough."

Samarah: "Okay then. See you later."

Sister Joy: "Wait. Do you remember when I told you that you look like someone I know?"

Samarah: "Yes, that was three weeks ago."

Sister Joy: "I remember now. You look so much like Dr. White."

Samarah: "Does she work here?"

Sister Joy: “Yes, she has your figure, very deep dimples. She is just a lighter than you – a lot lighter. I swear if I didn’t know better, I’d say she is your mother.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Well, I do have a mother, but I look nothing like her. She is most probably my doppleganger.”

Sister Joy: “Yes, well, perhaps. I do hope you meet her one day. She is an Oncologist but also a Psychologist. She does a lot, hey.”

Samarah: “I sure do hope to meet her soon. Bye.”

She went to her desk as usual and started working through her files so long. While she was busy, she felt a gentle tap on her shoulder that alarmed her a little as she was deep in thought. When she turned around in fright, it soon turned into ease. Her eyes had landed on the most beautiful man she had seen in a while; he was tall, well built, light skinned with the most beautiful curly hair she had ever come across and grey eyes.

Man: (smiling) “Oh, I am sorry. I didn’t mean to frighten you like that. I believe you are Dr. Mosue?”

Samarah: (nervously) “Uh, I believe so. I mean, yes.”

Man: (chuckling) “Well, that’s good to know. I have never seen such a beautiful lady in my life before.”

Samarah: “Uh, I’m sorry. Who are you? I mean, obviously you’re a doctor, I mean which doctor are you?”

Man: “Oh, I am sorry. How rude of me. (extending hand) Hi, I am Dr. Brian Roberts. You may call me Dr. Brian.”

She shook his hand and could feel hers vibrating in nervousness.

Samarah: (shaky) “Nice to meet you

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Dr. Brian. I think it would be best for me to call you Dr. Roberts. It would seem inappropriate for a junior to call you with your first name.”

Dr. Brian: (laughing) “Everyone calls me Dr. Brian.”

Samarah: “Uh, okay then, Dr. Roberts.”

Dr. Brian: “Suit yourself, but don’t be alarmed if I don’t respond. I am not used to being called that.”

She nodded.

Dr. Brian: “Shall we take a walk? We have our first patient of the day.”

Samarah: “Uh, yes. Let me just grab my coat.”

She normally took it off whenever she was in the lab. She walked hastily next to him and was in total awe. She had to

stop herself from staring. For a brief moment it felt as if her legs were not co-operating with her because they felt numb.

Dr. Brian: “This patient is in her 70s and has been complaining of stomach ache for about a week now. She is a drinker, not a heavy one though. I haven’t checked her as I would love your input.”

Samarah: “Oh, I am humbled. I mean, of course.”

Dr. Brian: “Please, feel at ease. I am not like the Prof. Yes, I may be your superior, but feel free should you see something and would like to explore that, okay?”

Samarah: “Okay.”

It was like a dream come true; to have someone to work with who valued her opinion so much. She was quite stunned to find Mrs. Dladla as the patient, with Phume by her side.

Samarah: (frowning) “Ma, Phume. What are you guys doing here?”

Phume: “Hey, sis. Long time indeed. I brought uMa in here. She’s been complaining of stomach pain for the past week now. I took her to a doctor, who said she needed urgent medical assistance from the hospital.”

Samarah: “Uh, may I, Doctor?”

Dr. Brian: “Sure. They know you and might feel a lot more comfortable around you.”

Samarah: (nodding) “What did he say?”

Phume: “He said uMa has signs of a burst appendix, but it just doesn’t seem like it. She is in serious pain, just look at her.”

Samarah: “Okay. Uh, Dr. Roberts. May I relay my thoughts?”

Dr. Brian: "Of course."

Samarah: "I think that an abdominal check up should be conducted and then an ultrasound to be sure. From there, once we have an idea of what is happening, we should take her for blood work if the scan does not provide us with what we need. Alternatively, an Xray would be best."

Dr. Brian: (smiling) "Bester was right about you."

Samarah: (frowning) "Right about me?"

Dr. Brian: "Don't you worry about that. Get your gloves on, Doctor. You will aid me in performing an abdominal check."

Samarah nodded in agreement.

Mrs. Dladla: "Samarah, my child. I am dying. The Lord has finally heard my cry."

Phume: “Haibo (goodness) Ma. Stop with that nonsense. She still goes about saying that to literally everyone – including the pastor.”

Samarah: “Ma, you’re not dying, okay? Let us check you properly first.”

They checked her thoroughly on the stomach and the moment they went towards her abdomen, she winced in pain.

Mrs. Dladla: (wincing) “Iyo (oh)! The pain is right there.”

Dr. Brian took the ultrasound machine and got the gel ready and handed it over to Samarah. She was a bit worried since she wasn’t technically a Medical doctor who specialized in checking and assessing patients like that, but she went with it.

Samarah: (nervously) “Ma, this might be a bit cold but it won’t hurt you at all, angithi (alright)?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Okay.”

She got the ultrasound ready and assessed further. Everything seemed fine until she got to the uterus. Her face had worry written all over it, making Phume panic.

Phume: "What is it? Is it bad?"

Samarah looked at Dr. Brian for reassurance and he nodded alerting her that she could speak.

Samarah: "I am afraid she has cancer of the womb – uterine cancer. It seems to be in the early stages, but we will have to run more tests just to be sure of what we're dealing with."

The horror written on both Phume and Mrs. Dladla's faces said a lot. Mrs. Dladla was hoping to die, but not a prolonged and painful death.

Mrs. Dladla: "If it turns out to be real, are you able to give me something to speed up the process?"

Samarah: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

Mrs. Dladla: “I mean give me something that will make me die faster. I really don’t want to suffer. I want to be with my husband now.”

Samarah was quite appalled, so much so that she had no words to express after that statement.

Dr. Brian: “Unfortunately we don’t work like that, Ma. We are medical doctors. Assisted suicide is not something we deal with here in South Africa. Should you really have cancer as we suspect, then we will let you know on what your chances are and what we can do for you. In the mean time, please stay put.”

Mrs. Dladla: “I am just saying, should I have cancer, I hope it is stage 4. I am not afraid of death – just suffering before dying.”

Phume: “Please, do not mind uMa. We will wait for the results.”

Samarah nodded and walked out with Dr. Brian.

Dr. Brian: “I don’t mean to pry, but why is she so adamant on dying?”

Samarah: “She lost her husband a few years ago. So, she feels that she no longer has a reason to live as her children are grown.”

Dr. Brian: “I see. Please do send the samples to pathology. In the mean time, I will get her prepped for Xrays and further checking. Please do get the Xray room ready.”

Samarah nodded and did as told. She went about her day and all tests checked out – she indeed had uterine cancer. She was reluctant to do anything, but Phume persuaded her successfully. She was told about her options. Surgery was deemed risky because she had underlying illnesses, but the good news was that removal of the uterus was the best option. The best option was to remove it vaginally, but Mrs. Dladla wouldn’t have any of it.

Mrs. Dladla: "I don't want anything removed. Leave it as is."

Samarah: "But Ma, you have a chance of remission and surviving."

Mrs. Dladla: "You all don't get it, do you? I want to die. This is a sign from God that I should die. Leave me in peace."

Samara and Dr. Brian tried to get Phume to speak to her, but she threw them all out of her hospital room and demanded to be discharged. After two hours of deliberating on what to do, Langa arrived hysterically.

Langa: "Where is she?!"

He even didn't bother to greet Dr. Brian, but he chose to speak to Samarah instead.

Samarah: “Good day to you too, Langa. She is in that room over there.”

Langa: “Oh, sorry. Forgive my manners, but surely you understand.”

Dr. Brian: (nodding) “Yes, we do. She refuses us to operate nor do anything regarding the tumor. In this case, we have to honour her wishes.”

That was enough to send Langa into rage.

Langa: (enraged) “What?! Nothing you can do?! Well, aren’t that the most famous words of doctors and nurses! You can’t possibly tell me that! Fix this! I will sign whatever I need to sign, just get that growth removed!”

Dr. Brian: “I am afraid only the patient has the right to choose what she wants for herself. She is not in an unresponsive state, therefore, it doesn’t give any of us the right to choose for her – not even you.”

Langa was so frustrated that he stormed into his mother's room. After about ten minutes, he walked out looking like death itself.

Langa: "Discharge her. She wants to leave."

He was rather rude, much to Samarah's embarrassment and she couldn't even understand why she was embarrassed as they were not even an item. Dr. Brian was used to such responses and behaviour, that he was not phased at all. Mrs. Dladla signed the discharge papers herself. She had refused to get any surgery done and left with her children hoping that as time went, she would have changed her mind, though she wasn't planning on it. Langa was peculiarly interested in what Samarah was getting up to at her new workplace, though no one knew. Samarah had a rather bad day after the entire incident. She felt as if her entire world was shaken. She couldn't imagine someone as sweet as Mrs. Dladla being served a plate of inevident fate like that. She didn't even eat or say much during her lunch with Sister Joy. After a rather long day, all she wanted to do was go home and curl up in bed. Dr. Brian

couldn't help but notice that she wasn't her usual self when he bumped into her at the parking lot.

Dr. Brian: "Oh, you're still here. I was hoping I'd find you here."

Samarah: "Oh, I am about to leave and head for home."

Dr. Brian: "Oh, I was hoping we'd go eat somewhere and talk. I can sense you have had a very long day."

Samarah: (sigh) "You don't want to know. I doubt I would be good company."

Dr. Brian: "I am good with just silence and eating, but if you're not up for it then it is okay."

Samarah thought about going home, but it was going to be her and her books.

Samarah: "Alright. Where to?"

Dr. Brian: “There are a few quiet restaurants at the mall. Are you going to follow me in your car?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Sure.”

They drove out after one another and found a nice, cosy restaurant. Not many people were there, so it was either the prices were a bit steep or the food was not so nice. He pulled the chair open for her, what a gentleman. He sat down right opposite her and it was at that point she managed to get a good glimpse of him. Little did she know that the walls indeed had ears and most definitely eyes. He looked dreamy with those protruding muscles. Even with his lab coat on, the muscles were quite visible. She wasn't even aware that she was staring.

Dr. Brian: (frowning) “Is there something wrong with me?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, why?”

Dr. Brian: "You've been staring."

Samarah: (embarrassed) "Oh, I am sorry. I didn't mean to. It's just... do you always wear your coat literally everywhere you go?"

She just thought of a distraction from her drooling.

Dr. Brian: (laughing) "Oh, no. I forget to remove it quite often. It is such an old and rather bad habit."

Samarah: "Well, it is understandable. You are literally in it almost the entire day."

Dr. Brian: (nodding) "Yes, shall we order something to drink?"

The waiter had given them the menu and some time to think of their drinks to order. She perused over the menu and indeed, the prices were a bit steep, but the food looked rather delicious.

Samarah: "I don't know, I could do with a good glass of Pinotage."

Dr. Brian: "Hmm, a lady who knows her wine. I like that. I'd like a glass of Chardonnay please."

The waiter went away to get their drinks while they were still contemplating what to eat. After they were done ordering their food, their drinks came. A glass of alcohol always feels soothing after a horrible day. Samarah felt as if she could trust Dr. Brian for some reason and he looked like a really good listener. She sighed deeply, raising deep concern from Dr. Brian's side.

Dr. Brian: "You can speak to me, you know."

Samarah: "I am not very good at opening up to people, but... This entire day is weighing heavily on me."

Dr. Brian: "Is it because you know that elderly lady personally?"

Samarah: (nodded) “She is part of a rather painful past I had with her son. The guy who walked in without greeting you – that’s my ex boyfriend. My very first boyfriend. He was there for me, you know. He was there in ways I could never imagine; he was there when my parents were not.”

She narrated the entire story of what happened during their relationship and explained how close to heart Mrs. Dladla’s illness felt. All this while they were waiting for their food. By the time she was done, the waiter brought the food and she had shed a few inevitable tears.

Samarah: (sniffing) “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to ruin our pleasant dinner.”

Dr. Brian: “You didn’t ruin anything. It is not a bad thing to vent. Believe me, it makes you feel a whole lot better.”

Samarah: “My best friend always says that.”

Dr. Brian: “Well, your ex was not a good guy to you, but it sounds like he really regrets it.”

Samarah: “He probably does, but to think that I was willing to give him a chance out of stupidity a few weeks ago only to find that he is still married to the mother of his child.”

Dr. Brian: “Well, if you ask me – this guy took advantage of your situation. No woman in your situation can ever be ready to be with someone this soon after the great loss you suffered. If anything, he was supposed to be there, as a friend and help you through it all. He was using it as a window of opportunity to break your heart all over again and this time, he would not have stopped until it was in shreds.”

Samarah: “So, you don’t believe that people can change?”

Dr. Brian: “I do, but 98% of the time, men don’t change. I mean, if he did that to you when you were that young and still did a few weeks ago, it shows that he is not an honest person to begin with. If anything, I would really forget about this guy. That is just my two cents worth.”

Samarah: "You are a really good listener, you know."

Dr. Brian: "It comes with the profession. You are still yet to learn. You will see; at times you need to play psychologist because patients just don't grasp what is happening. Sometimes, family gets in the way and it becomes messy. I am more than happy to listen to you whenever you need an ear."

Samarah: "Oh, no. I couldn't possibly do that to you. That would be abusing you."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "By all means, abuse me if you wish."

Samarah: (laughing) "Oh, don't say that. It sounds so..."

Dr. Brian: "So what?"

Samarah: "So, unusual."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) “Let’s eat up. We have night shift tomorrow, so that means we need all the rest we can get.”

Samarah: (shaking head) “Whenever I have night shift it is always the worst for me. I cannot sleep during the day. It really sucks.”

Dr. Brian: “Well, then perhaps you need to keep busy and get the mind going – like I do.”

Samarah: “What is it that you do?”

Dr. Brian: “I read a book and clean sometimes. And then, about two hours before my night shift starts I go to the gym. That way, I am amped enough for the night.”

Samarah: “My fiancé and I used to work out a lot, but after the babies... Let’s just say I haven’t gone to the gym in a really long while.”

Dr. Brian: "I can go with you if you want. It is not just for your physical well being, but you will get to think clearer and have something to keep your mind active."

Samarah: "I will think about it."

Dr. Brian: (nodding) "No pressure."

They had a good and rather pleasant evening that ended in pure enjoyment and pleasing laughter. By the time they were done with dessert, they realized they had been there for about three hours.

Samarah: "Oh, no. I didn't realize that we have been there for so long. I didn't mean to keep you up for so long. You must be tired."

Dr. Brian: "If I didn't want to be here I would have asked to leave a long time ago. I really enjoyed my evening. It is nice to finally be around someone who has the same taste in things I enjoy."

He offered to pay for the bill and they walked out together. He greeted her goodbye and ensured that she was safe. He drove behind her until she made it to her house before he drove to his. He stayed in Cresta, which was 11 minutes away from her house. The moment he got home he gave her a call just to check up on her before they went to bed. Samarah's unpleasant day ended really well, but as usual, she totally oblivious that someone was watching her every move – with a passion.

– “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”

The following day, Samarah woke up and decided to do some cleaning to keep her mind busy. She got up at 6am out of habit and she had no idea what to do with herself since Lydia was not in Jo’burg anymore. While she was cleaning and listening to music, someone rang the intercom at the gate. She rushed to answer to find that it was a delivery guy.

Delivery guy: “Good morning, Miss. I have a delivery for a Ms. Moloji.”

She asked herself who could have been using her maiden name when her marriage was long processed and she was officially called Mrs. Moeng.

Samarah: “Oh, okay. I am on my way to the gate.”

She didn't trust strangers to walk into the house. She walked swiftly to the gate and found the guy waiting with a big parcel and a bunch of yellow roses.

Delivery guy: "Please sign here."

She signed for them and he left. She walked into the kitchen and found a big card in the bunch of flowers. "I hope you have a great morning. Thanks so much for being the one who attended to my mother yesterday, apologies for being so rude to you. Love Mr. Dladla." She frowned to herself. "Since when does he refer to himself as Mr. Dladla?" she thought to herself. She opened the package and found all sorts of chocolate and treats. She became irritated as soon as she remembered Dr. Brian's words "He wanted to drag you back into the dark hole he created for you back then". She immediately went to the bin and dumped everything there and continued to clean again. By the time it was about 3:30pm, she received a call from Dr. Brian.

Dr. Brian: "Hi, I hope I am not disturbing you, am I?"

Samarah: “Oh, no. I just finished doing some spring cleaning.”

Dr. Brian: “Oh, good. I am on my way to the gym. I was hoping you’d say yes before we go for our shift.”

Samarah: “Well, I have nothing better to do. Which gym is it?”

Dr. Brian: “The one in Cresta. I will send you the location. Bring your work clothes with you and you can change right there.”

Samarah: “Okay then. See you in a few minutes.”

Dr. Brian was very nice and he seemed like someone who wanted to be a good friend to her. He did feel attracted to her, much like she did to him, but he was not about to tap into that and take advantage of her. He just wanted some company. The moment she got there, he had her tag ready. He added her onto his membership and it was all systems go. He was dressed in tight gym clothing and she couldn’t help but drool.

Dr. Brian: "Since you haven't been working out in a long while, I don't want you to overwork yourself on the first day."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Don't go so easy on me. I am a lot tougher than you think."

Dr. Brian: "You still have a long night ahead. Come, let's get started."

He got started with a simple workout with her, using dumb bells and they headed for the treadmill, but not for too long. After an hour, she could feel her muscles crying already.

Samarah: "Wow, I think you were right! I might be starting to regret this."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "I thought you were no quitter."

Samarah: "All this feels so horrible right now."

Dr. Brian: "The first time is always the worst."

They went their separate ways for a brief moment and showered. They got ready for work and went there in their cars. They both arrived together and Sister Joy was not on duty as she was off. It was a rather busy evening, with emergencies galore. She was so caught up in her work, that she didn't even think of packing lunch for herself. She only realized by 9pm that she last had a meal around midday. Thankfully, Dr. Brian knew how to treat a woman. He knocked on the laboratory door and waved at her. He showed her a paper bag with two milkshakes. They went to the cafeteria to eat and talk for a while. While they were eating, her phone beeped and a message came through. "Did you get my gift?" She realized it had to be Langa despite her deleting his number. She put her phone right back into her pocket.

Dr. Brian: "Is something the matter?"

Samarah: "Oh, it's just my ex."

Dr. Brian: (frowning) "Is he bothering you?"

Samarah: (sigh) “Not really. He sent me flowers and a package filled with goodies this morning. He just sent me a message asking me if I received it.”

Dr. Brian: “I thought you two weren’t talking anymore.”

Samarah: “We’re not. I deleted his number a long time ago.”

Dr. Brian: “He sounds a bit unstable. Maybe he should be dealt with.”

Samarah: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

He said that in such a dark manner, but once she looked worried he softened up.

Dr. Brian: “No, I mean get a restraining order against him or something.”

Samarah: “He is just looking for attention. It will die out soon.”

Dr. Brian: “Okay, let us hope so, but if he bothers you again – I will have to intervene.”

Samarah nodded and they carried on with their meal. A few weeks later, Dr. Brian and Samarah had gotten into a routine. They were going to the gym together every single day after or before their shift – depending on when they were working. She still made time to eat with Sister Joy during lunch every day and if she was not available, she would spend her lunch break with Dr. Brian. On one particular day, she was eating lunch with Sister Joy and she just came out with it.

Sister Joy: “Hmm, you look great nowadays.”

Samarah: “Yes, I have been working out.”

Sister Joy: “With Dr. Brian?”

Samarah: (frowning) “Who told you that? I didn’t tell you that.”

Sister Joy: (Chuckling) “Relax, I am not spying on you. He told me in a conversation we had a few days ago. What I meant was that you are glowing nowadays, but the weight part well, you really look great.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Bathong (goodness), Sister Joy. I don’t know what you are trying to imply.”

Sister Joy: “Come on, Sammy. You are too intelligent for such. You know exactly what I mean.”

Samarah: “I really don’t, but if you are implying that there is something between Dr. Brian and I – then you’re dead wrong.”

Sister Joy: “Well then, if there is something then I would say go for it. You have nothing to lose.”

Samarah: “If there is – I don’t think that would be appropriate. We work together.”

Sister Joy: “Half the people I know got together with someone they work with. Life is too short to live the same day twice. Live a little, that is all I am saying. It doesn’t have to mean anything – at least not now.”

Sister Joy finished her food and left Samarah who was still finishing up her meal. It was exactly two weeks since Langa had sent that package and that message Samarah didn’t respond to. Right when she was about to get up, she received another message from his unsaved number. “Are you dating doctors now?” That message sent chills down her spine and caused her to look around. For some reason it felt as if she was being watched. She was blissfully unaware that it was happening for weeks on end.

Meanwhile Langa was becoming beyond frustrated with Samarah and outgrowing the patience he had with her. He sent her that message while he was on his way to see Beatrice. Richard was in the lounge at that time when Langa called Beatrice to come outside of the house.

Beatrice: “Are you insane?! My husband is right inside the house.”

Langa: "Of course he is. Where would he go?"

Beatrice: "Did you come all the way here to insult my husband? We all know he is wheelchair bound, but that does not make him completely handicapped."

Langa: (sigh) "My patience is wearing out. Samarah is clearly taking me for a fool and you haven't been keeping your end of the bargain."

Beatrice: "Don't be silly, Langa. I have been keeping my end of the bargain, okay?! I have been telling her about you every chance she gets to the point where she has banned you in our conversations. I have never been this close to her and she trusts me now. I am sure I can sway her your way."

Langa: "Well, it seems as if you failed because she has fallen for that coloured doctor."

Beatrice: “Well, I mean perhaps it is a sign for you to also become educated.”

Langa: (irritably) “Are you trying to fuck with me?!”

Beatrice: “Look, I get you. Samarah is still angry at you. Why the fuck would you still be with Ntombi if you want her to be your wife? I mean you should know by now that she won’t ever want to be second field.”

Langa: “Get it done, Beatrice. I am making sure that you and your husband get to live the life you are living now.”

Beatrice: “A mere R5000 a month does not do me any justice. Don’t get too comfortable, we both know that you and your uncle killed Aaron and Rachel.”

Langa: “Oh

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please. You are just acting on heresay and speculation.”

Beatrice: “You never denied it. I bet if I told her, she would want absolutely nothing to do with you.”

Langa became so enraged that he grabbed Beatrice by the throat.

Langa: (angrily) “You are not one to threaten me, Beatrice. We had a deal. I get her and you get the lobola money from me. Don’t fuck with me. I can make your life a living hell. You don’t know how connected I am. If I want, I can get people to rape you right in front of your crippled husband! Would you like that?! Would you?!”

Beatrice: (Chocking) “Wa nkgama (you’re choking me)!”

He let her go and she coughed a little bit more.

Langa: “Get that shit done before I cancel my deal. Now get the fuck out of my car. You’re spitting all over my leather seats.”

Beatrice rushed out of that car and Langa sped away. He could not understand what she saw in him, until he thought it was time to do what he did best. While Samarah was contemplating finally allowing Brian into her life, Langa was planning to ruin the next phase in her life. Samarah met Brian in the parking lot waiting for her right after their shift.

Samarah: "Hey."

Dr. Brian smiled and gave her a hug.

Dr. Brian: (Smiling) "Hey. I have been waiting for you."

Samarah: "Oh, sorry. I was just caught up in some work."

Dr. Brian: "You shouldn't overwork yourself. Are you ready to leave?"

Samarah: "You are so keen to go to the gym tonight."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "I was hoping we could go a little later, after dinner."

Samarah: "Oh, okay. I will follow you."

Dr. Brian: "I was hoping we could drive in one car tonight."

Samarah: "Oh, okay. You can drive me."

Dr. Brian: "Okay, but we will use my car because it would take a long while for me to get a pass for your car through my estate. That is if you don't mind."

Samarah: (frowning) "I thought we were eating out."

Dr. Brian: "I'd like to cook for you tonight. It is a special evening."

Samarah: "Oh, what are we celebrating?"

Dr. Brian: "You will see. Do we have a deal?"

Samarah: "Oh, okay then. Deal. I don't have changing clothes, though."

Dr. Brian: "It's okay. You can wear some of mine tonight and change tomorrow before work. I will make sure we won't be late."

She nodded and allowed him to open the car door for her. She got in and they drove off to his house. He played Davido's Jowo.

Samarah: "You love Afrobeats?"

Dr. Brian: "Absolutely, well, amongst others."

They exchanged their taste in music and arrived at his estate. It looked really beautiful and safe. She was not surprised to see how elegant and uniquely decorated his house was. It was filled with mostly whites, but red and black as well with modern furniture and a lot of glass.

Dr. Brian: "Welcome to my humble abode."

Samarah: "This house is so beautiful. I can see you are a fan of glass."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "I just like it for some reason. You are more than welcome to go freshen up in the bathroom while I get the food ready. There are fresh towels and wash cloths in the bathroom cupboards. I will ensure that you get a fresh pair of clothes when you come out of the shower."

She nodded without hesitation. She went to the bathroom and found some bath salts. She used one and ignored the candles. She took a luxurious bath and felt her body soothing afterwards. By the time she was done, he had left her a pair of pajamas and a robe on his bed. They were quite big, but she

decided to only wear the shirt as it was big enough to cover her body all the way to her knees. She wore the robe on top. The aroma of the food drove her to the kitchen, but she found he had already set the table for the both of them.

Dr. Brian: (smiling) "You're done already?"

Samarah: "Were you expecting me to take longer?"

Dr. Brian: "I expected you to take your time."

Samarah: (smiling) "What are we eating? It smells divine in here."

Dr. Brian: "Sit and you shall find out."

He pulled the chair for her and poured her a nice glass of pinotage and Chardonnay for himself.

Dr. Brian: "We are having Chorizo ragu with spaghetti. I would have loved to make something else, but time is not on my side. I was afraid that you would fall asleep without eating."

Samarah: (laughing) "You are so crazy. I could never sleep without eating. It just doesn't sit well with me."

Dr. Brian: "Shall we toast?"

Samarah: "To?"

Dr. Brian: "To us."

Samarah felt a bit of nerves roam in her stomach.

Samarah: (frowning) "I don't follow."

Dr. Brian: "Samarah, I am a man of many talents, but being frank with women is not one of them. You have allowed me to break out of my shell and be the person that I would like to

be. You make me smile even on the worst days. When I lost my wife and child, I never thought that I'd ever meet someone I would find an interest in. Ever since the first time we had dinner, I just can't stop thinking about you. You invade my dreams and thoughts unprovoked. One time I was speaking to Sister Joy and she laughed at me for writing your name and surname as the patient's name. It is because I was thinking of you – deeply. I know, you have been through so much – we both have. Your pain is still raw, but I would like you to give me a chance to fix all that. I would like to help you heal and I would like you to invite me into your life. I am not asking you to be my girlfriend right now, but allow me to woo you until such a time you feel ready to be anyone's girlfriend. If you don't feel the need of this then I shall perfectly understand and we can be friends. I just felt the need to do this because life is indeed too short and I don't want to live in regret. Who knows what tomorrow holds? Should I die tomorrow, I'd rather die knowing that I said this to you."

Samarah was humbled by his words. They were quite unexpected, but that was exactly what she had in mind the entire day.

Samarah: “To be honest, Brian, I feel the same way. I have been thinking of you all day today and I just wanted to tell you the same thing. Yes, I agree to it. I will be your – I don’t know what to call myself now.”

Dr. Brian: (laughing) “My woman. Yes, my woman. Are you okay with that?”

Samarah: “Yes, I am.”

They toasted and had a sip.

Dr. Brian: “May I do something I have been dying to do for a few weeks?”

She nodded and he did the unexpected. He got up from his chair and pulled her up from hers and gave her the most succulent, gently kiss she had had in a long time. Damn, he was a good kisser. He was tall too and managed to get her weak to her knees. When he heard her moan in his mouth, he broke the kiss leaving her embarrassed.

Dr. Brian: "Shall we eat?"

Samarah nodded embarrassed.

Dr. Brian: "Don't be embarrassed. To be honest, I have a boner too. It's been a while."

They both laughed and the ice was broken. They had a great meal and the conversation flowed as usual. It is rather unfortunate that Brian was predicting the future in a way unwittingly that evening. After eating, they lay on the couch and watched some tv. The tv was watching them because they continued talking and didn't even make it to the gym. The company was just too good. Around 11pm she fell asleep in his arms and he let her be. They slept on the couch and woke up the next morning. She felt really weird, and couldn't even explain it. The taste of her tongue felt rather bland and she just felt offish. Brian also overslept and he couldn't believe it because he always woke up on time.

Dr. Brian: (smiling) “Hey. I am going to look like an asshole for this, but we need to go. We overslept.”

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Dr. Brian: “No, we only had one glass each. Come, I will take you to your house to change quickly.”

She agreed and hopped into the car. Brian looked strange that morning; every time she looked at him she felt like he was glowing – almost like an angel-like appearance. She couldn’t explain it. The entire time she would stare at him, he would smile at her. After the first robot they stopped at, her heart started racing a lot faster and she could not explain it.

Dr. Brian: “Are you alright?”

Samarah: “I don’t know, my heart is just racing for some reason.”

Dr. Brian: “Perhaps you are having an anxiety attack. Let me get off the road and wait for you to calm down.”

Samarah: “No, we’ll arrive even later. Keep driving, I am okay.”

He nodded and drove on ahead. The drive didn’t last long because just as he was about to turn to the robot just before her house, his car suddenly swerved on its own and he lost control of it. He tried not to panic, but Samarah had a flash back of the very accident that claimed both Rachel and Aaron’s lives. By the time she tried to scream, theirs collided with another car head-on and all she saw was darkness.

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“The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”

The following day, Samarah woke up and decided to do some cleaning to keep her mind busy. She got up at 6am out of habit and she had no idea what to do with herself since Lydia was not in Jo’burg anymore. While she was cleaning and listening to music, someone rang the intercom at the gate. She rushed to answer to find that it was a delivery guy.

Delivery guy: “Good morning, Miss. I have a delivery for a Ms. Moloji.”

She asked herself who could have been using her maiden name when her marriage was long processed and she was officially called Mrs. Moeng.

Samarah: “Oh, okay. I am on my way to the gate.”

She didn't trust strangers to walk into the house. She walked swiftly to the gate and found the guy waiting with a big parcel and a bunch of yellow roses.

Delivery guy: "Please sign here."

She signed for them and he left. She walked into the kitchen and found a big card in the bunch of flowers. "I hope you have a great morning. Thanks so much for being the one who attended to my mother yesterday, apologies for being so rude to you. Love Mr. Dladla." She frowned to herself. "Since when does he refer to himself as Mr. Dladla?" she thought to herself. She opened the package and found all sorts of chocolate and treats. She became irritated as soon as she remembered Dr. Brian's words "He wanted to drag you back into the dark hole he created for you back then". She immediately went to the bin and dumped everything there and continued to clean again. By the time it was about 3:30pm, she received a call from Dr. Brian.

Dr. Brian: "Hi, I hope I am not disturbing you, am I?"

Samarah: "Oh, no. I just finished doing some spring cleaning."

Dr. Brian: "Oh, good. I am on my way to the gym. I was hoping you'd say yes before we go for our shift."

Samarah: "Well, I have nothing better to do. Which gym is it?"

Dr. Brian: "The one in Cresta. I will send you the location. Bring your work clothes with you and you can change right there."

Samarah: "Okay then. See you in a few minutes."

Dr. Brian was very nice and he seemed like someone who wanted to be a good friend to her. He did feel attracted to her, much like she did to him, but he was not about to tap into that and take advantage of her. He just wanted some company. The moment she got there, he had her tag ready. He added her onto his membership and it was all systems go. He was dressed in tight gym clothing and she couldn't help but drool.

Dr. Brian: "Since you haven't been working out in a long while, I don't want you to overwork yourself on the first day."

Samarah: (chuckling) "Don't go so easy on me. I am a lot tougher than you think."

Dr. Brian: "You still have a long night ahead. Come, let's get started."

He got started with a simple workout with her, using dumb bells and they headed for the treadmill, but not for too long. After an hour, she could feel her muscles crying already.

Samarah: "Wow, I think you were right! I might be starting to regret this."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "I thought you were no quitter."

Samarah: "All this feels so horrible right now."

Dr. Brian: "The first time is always the worst."

They went their separate ways for a brief moment and showered. They got ready for work and went there in their cars. They both arrived together and Sister Joy was not on duty as she was off. It was a rather busy evening, with emergencies galore. She was so caught up in her work, that she didn't even think of packing lunch for herself. She only realized by 9pm that she last had a meal around midday. Thankfully, Dr. Brian knew how to treat a woman. He knocked on the laboratory door and waved at her. He showed her a paper bag with two milkshakes. They went to the cafeteria to eat and talk for a while. While they were eating, her phone beeped and a message came through. "Did you get my gift?" She realized it had to be Langa despite her deleting his number. She put her phone right back into her pocket.

Dr. Brian: "Is something the matter?"

Samarah: "Oh, it's just my ex."

Dr. Brian: (frowning) "Is he bothering you?"

Samarah: (sigh) “Not really. He sent me flowers and a package filled with goodies this morning. He just sent me a message asking me if I received it.”

Dr. Brian: “I thought you two weren’t talking anymore.”

Samarah: “We’re not. I deleted his number a long time ago.”

Dr. Brian: “He sounds a bit unstable. Maybe he should be dealt with.”

Samarah: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

He said that in such a dark manner, but once she looked worried he softened up.

Dr. Brian: “No, I mean get a restraining order against him or something.”

Samarah: “He is just looking for attention. It will die out soon.”

Dr. Brian: “Okay, let us hope so, but if he bothers you again – I will have to intervene.”

Samarah nodded and they carried on with their meal. A few weeks later, Dr. Brian and Samarah had gotten into a routine. They were going to the gym together every single day after or before their shift – depending on when they were working. She still made time to eat with Sister Joy during lunch every day and if she was not available, she would spend her lunch break with Dr. Brian. On one particular day, she was eating lunch with Sister Joy and she just came out with it.

Sister Joy: “Hmm, you look great nowadays.”

Samarah: “Yes, I have been working out.”

Sister Joy: “With Dr. Brian?”

Samarah: (frowning) “Who told you that? I didn’t tell you that.”

Sister Joy: (Chuckling) “Relax, I am not spying on you. He told me in a conversation we had a few days ago. What I meant was that you are glowing nowadays, but the weight part well, you really look great.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “Bathong (goodness), Sister Joy. I don’t know what you are trying to imply.”

Sister Joy: “Come on, Sammy. You are too intelligent for such. You know exactly what I mean.”

Samarah: “I really don’t, but if you are implying that there is something between Dr. Brian and I – then you’re dead wrong.”

Sister Joy: “Well then, if there is something then I would say go for it. You have nothing to lose.”

Samarah: “If there is – I don’t think that would be appropriate. We work together.”

Sister Joy: “Half the people I know got together with someone they work with. Life is too short to live the same day twice. Live a little, that is all I am saying. It doesn’t have to mean anything – at least not now.”

Sister Joy finished her food and left Samarah who was still finishing up her meal. It was exactly two weeks since Langa had sent that package and that message Samarah didn’t respond to. Right when she was about to get up, she received another message from his unsaved number. “Are you dating doctors now?” That message sent chills down her spine and caused her to look around. For some reason it felt as if she was being watched. She was blissfully unaware that it was happening for weeks on end.

Meanwhile Langa was becoming beyond frustrated with Samarah and outgrowing the patience he had with her. He sent her that message while he was on his way to see Beatrice. Richard was in the lounge at that time when Langa called Beatrice to come outside of the house.

Beatrice: “Are you insane?! My husband is right inside the house.”

Langa: "Of course he is. Where would he go?"

Beatrice: "Did you come all the way here to insult my husband? We all know he is wheelchair bound, but that does not make him completely handicapped."

Langa: (sigh) "My patience is wearing out. Samarah is clearly taking me for a fool and you haven't been keeping your end of the bargain."

Beatrice: "Don't be silly, Langa. I have been keeping my end of the bargain, okay?! I have been telling her about you every chance she gets to the point where she has banned you in our conversations. I have never been this close to her and she trusts me now. I am sure I can sway her your way."

Langa: "Well, it seems as if you failed because she has fallen for that coloured doctor."

Beatrice: “Well, I mean perhaps it is a sign for you to also become educated.”

Langa: (irritably) “Are you trying to fuck with me?!”

Beatrice: “Look, I get you. Samarah is still angry at you. Why the fuck would you still be with Ntombi if you want her to be your wife? I mean you should know by now that she won’t ever want to be second field.”

Langa: “Get it done, Beatrice. I am making sure that you and your husband get to live the life you are living now.”

Beatrice: “A mere R5000 a month does not do me any justice. Don’t get too comfortable, we both know that you and your uncle killed Aaron and Rachel.”

Langa: “Oh

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please. You are just acting on heresay and speculation.”

Beatrice: “You never denied it. I bet if I told her, she would want absolutely nothing to do with you.”

Langa became so enraged that he grabbed Beatrice by the throat.

Langa: (angrily) “You are not one to threaten me, Beatrice. We had a deal. I get her and you get the lobola money from me. Don’t fuck with me. I can make your life a living hell. You don’t know how connected I am. If I want, I can get people to rape you right in front of your crippled husband! Would you like that?! Would you?!”

Beatrice: (Chocking) “Wa nkgama (you’re choking me)!”

He let her go and she coughed a little bit more.

Langa: “Get that shit done before I cancel my deal. Now get the fuck out of my car. You’re spitting all over my leather seats.”

Beatrice rushed out of that car and Langa sped away. He could not understand what she saw in him, until he thought it was time to do what he did best. While Samarah was contemplating finally allowing Brian into her life, Langa was planning to ruin the next phase in her life. Samarah met Brian in the parking lot waiting for her right after their shift.

Samarah: "Hey."

Dr. Brian smiled and gave her a hug.

Dr. Brian: (Smiling) "Hey. I have been waiting for you."

Samarah: "Oh, sorry. I was just caught up in some work."

Dr. Brian: "You shouldn't overwork yourself. Are you ready to leave?"

Samarah: "You are so keen to go to the gym tonight."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "I was hoping we could go a little later, after dinner."

Samarah: "Oh, okay. I will follow you."

Dr. Brian: "I was hoping we could drive in one car tonight."

Samarah: "Oh, okay. You can drive me."

Dr. Brian: "Okay, but we will use my car because it would take a long while for me to get a pass for your car through my estate. That is if you don't mind."

Samarah: (frowning) "I thought we were eating out."

Dr. Brian: "I'd like to cook for you tonight. It is a special evening."

Samarah: "Oh, what are we celebrating?"

Dr. Brian: "You will see. Do we have a deal?"

Samarah: "Oh, okay then. Deal. I don't have changing clothes, though."

Dr. Brian: "It's okay. You can wear some of mine tonight and change tomorrow before work. I will make sure we won't be late."

She nodded and allowed him to open the car door for her. She got in and they drove off to his house. He played Davido's Jowo.

Samarah: "You love Afrobeats?"

Dr. Brian: "Absolutely, well, amongst others."

They exchanged their taste in music and arrived at his estate. It looked really beautiful and safe. She was not surprised to see how elegant and uniquely decorated his house was. It was filled with mostly whites, but red and black as well with modern furniture and a lot of glass.

Dr. Brian: "Welcome to my humble abode."

Samarah: "This house is so beautiful. I can see you are a fan of glass."

Dr. Brian: (chuckling) "I just like it for some reason. You are more than welcome to go freshen up in the bathroom while I get the food ready. There are fresh towels and wash cloths in the bathroom cupboards. I will ensure that you get a fresh pair of clothes when you come out of the shower."

She nodded without hesitation. She went to the bathroom and found some bath salts. She used one and ignored the candles. She took a luxurious bath and felt her body soothing afterwards. By the time she was done, he had left her a pair of pajamas and a robe on his bed. They were quite big, but she

decided to only wear the shirt as it was big enough to cover her body all the way to her knees. She wore the robe on top. The aroma of the food drove her to the kitchen, but she found he had already set the table for the both of them.

Dr. Brian: (smiling) "You're done already?"

Samarah: "Were you expecting me to take longer?"

Dr. Brian: "I expected you to take your time."

Samarah: (smiling) "What are we eating? It smells divine in here."

Dr. Brian: "Sit and you shall find out."

He pulled the chair for her and poured her a nice glass of pinotage and Chardonnay for himself.

Dr. Brian: "We are having Chorizo ragu with spaghetti. I would have loved to make something else, but time is not on my side. I was afraid that you would fall asleep without eating."

Samarah: (laughing) "You are so crazy. I could never sleep without eating. It just doesn't sit well with me."

Dr. Brian: "Shall we toast?"

Samarah: "To?"

Dr. Brian: "To us."

Samarah felt a bit of nerves roam in her stomach.

Samarah: (frowning) "I don't follow."

Dr. Brian: "Samarah, I am a man of many talents, but being frank with women is not one of them. You have allowed me to break out of my shell and be the person that I would like to

be. You make me smile even on the worst days. When I lost my wife and child, I never thought that I'd ever meet someone I would find an interest in. Ever since the first time we had dinner, I just can't stop thinking about you. You invade my dreams and thoughts unprovoked. One time I was speaking to Sister Joy and she laughed at me for writing your name and surname as the patient's name. It is because I was thinking of you – deeply. I know, you have been through so much – we both have. Your pain is still raw, but I would like you to give me a chance to fix all that. I would like to help you heal and I would like you to invite me into your life. I am not asking you to be my girlfriend right now, but allow me to woo you until such a time you feel ready to be anyone's girlfriend. If you don't feel the need of this then I shall perfectly understand and we can be friends. I just felt the need to do this because life is indeed too short and I don't want to live in regret. Who knows what tomorrow holds? Should I die tomorrow, I'd rather die knowing that I said this to you.”

Samarah was humbled by his words. They were quite unexpected, but that was exactly what she had in mind the entire day.

Samarah: “To be honest, Brian, I feel the same way. I have been thinking of you all day today and I just wanted to tell you the same thing. Yes, I agree to it. I will be your – I don’t know what to call myself now.”

Dr. Brian: (laughing) “My woman. Yes, my woman. Are you okay with that?”

Samarah: “Yes, I am.”

They toasted and had a sip.

Dr. Brian: “May I do something I have been dying to do for a few weeks?”

She nodded and he did the unexpected. He got up from his chair and pulled her up from hers and gave her the most succulent, gently kiss she had had in a long time. Damn, he was a good kisser. He was tall too and managed to get her weak to her knees. When he heard her moan in his mouth, he broke the kiss leaving her embarrassed.

Dr. Brian: "Shall we eat?"

Samarah nodded embarrassed.

Dr. Brian: "Don't be embarrassed. To be honest, I have a boner too. It's been a while."

They both laughed and the ice was broken. They had a great meal and the conversation flowed as usual. It is rather unfortunate that Brian was predicting the future in a way unwittingly that evening. After eating, they lay on the couch and watched some tv. The tv was watching them because they continued talking and didn't even make it to the gym. The company was just too good. Around 11pm she fell asleep in his arms and he let her be. They slept on the couch and woke up the next morning. She felt really weird, and couldn't even explain it. The taste of her tongue felt rather bland and she just felt offish. Brian also overslept and he couldn't believe it because he always woke up on time.

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Samarah: “No, we’ll arrive even later. Keep driving, I am okay.”

He nodded and drove on ahead. The drive didn’t last long because just as he was about to turn to the robot just before her house, his car suddenly swerved on its own and he lost control of it. He tried not to panic, but Samarah had a flash back of the very accident that claimed both Rachel and Aaron’s lives. By the time she tried to scream, theirs collided with another car head-on and all she saw was darkness.

“Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

While Langa was reeling in the joy of Samarah finding him as the perfect man, he was putting all his plans in motion. He went to the Molo household to deliver an entire month’s worth of groceries. While he was doing so, Sister Joy went to visit Samarah. She was rather shocked that she didn’t remember anything about Brian and it saddened her incredibly. She had no words and left there in tears. Meanwhile, Lydia did what any good friend would have done. Samarah was rather surprised to see Lydia with a white man unfamiliar to her as she could not remember anything attached to Aaron.

Lydia: “Hey, I’m back.”

Samarah: “I can see that. Who are you here with?”

Brandon: “Hey, Samarah. We meet again. My name is Brandon. I am your husband’s lawyer. I was cautioned that you might not remember me.”

Samarah: "Oh, okay. I am very sorry, but I don't remember you at all."

Brandon: "May I please sit and discuss a few things with you?"

Samarah: "Sure."

Brandon sat down right next to Samarah's bed and took out an entire pile of documents. Lydia was sitting right across the bed listening attentively. Brandon started by showing Samarah all her assets left to her by Aaron and the documents she signed. She was in disbelief.

Samarah: "Are you sure that I signed all these documents?"

Brandon showed her her recent ID and her surname stated that she was Moeng. He showed her everything step by step and she slowly understood. It was a little frustrating to her as to why she couldn't recall Aaron.

Brandon: “Now, you need to thank your good friend right there because you are not in the right state of mind due to your amnesia. In the event of such, that is where I become the executor of your assets. This means that you cannot make any impulsive decisions such as selling your assets or withdrawing from your investments whilst you are in this state. Should you sign this document, you give me full power to act on your behalf. I cannot allow you to sell unless you regain your full memory back. Is it fine with you?”

Samarah: “Oh, okay. I don’t think I’d ever want to withdraw all those millions, now would I? Yes, I agree.”

Brandon: “Good, sign here. And there.”

She signed all the documents and Brandon wished her a speedy recovery. Once he left she was still in disbelief.

Samarah: “Well, I never thought I’d ever be a millionaire. I mean all that money. And those flats?”

Lydia: "They are yours, babe. You inherited them from Aaron."

Samarah: "Well, perhaps it is a good time for me to go for therapy because I do not want to wonder why I cannot remember him."

Lydia: "I was hoping you'd say that because I have booked you an appointment with your therapist for next week."

Samarah: "What would I do without you?"

Lydia: "You would not survive."

They both chuckled.

Lydia: "Seriously though, are you happy with Langa?"

Samarah: "Yes, I don't see why I wouldn't be."

Lydia: "Even though he has a child?"

Samarah: "That must have been before we met, you know. Either way, he must have a good explanation for it all."

Lydia: "How long do you think you two have been together?"

Samarah: "I don't know. I think a year or two."

Lydia: "Samarah, he was your first boyfriend but you broke up after he cheated."

Samarah: "I don't recall anything, really. I don't want to dwell on that so much. The more I try to remember things, the more my head hurts."

Lydia: "Okay. I will let you sleep for a while, okay? I will see you tomorrow."

Samarah: “Yes, I really appreciate you being there for me. I love you, boo.”

Lydia: “I love you too.”

And so Samarah remained in the hospital for two weeks. Lydia tried to revive her memory up to no avail. She could not recall anything, but she thought it was best to live in her house. That way certain things would jog her memory as the days went by. The very first day she was discharged, she attended a therapy session with her therapist. She hadn't been to therapy in a while because she was doing just fine, but with the constant migraines and insomnia visiting her, she had to go back and get back on medication. She didn't even recall she had a car and could not remember how to drive. That was the perfect opportunity for Langa to immobilize her and keep her on her toes. He was a regular at the hospital where she worked; he dropped her off, brought her lunch and picked her up every single day. Sister Joy didn't like him at all but she still had lunch whenever she could with Samarah. He felt free and had movement to do as he pleased in every aspect of her life – except at her house in Ferndale. Whenever he walked in there, funny things would happen much like when he was at the flat. He would lose items or his phone would mysteriously fall

and break. At one point he parked his car in the driveway and tried to start it only to find that the battery and gearbox mysteriously became ruined. He had to replace them all including his flat tyres which cost him about R8000 in total. After yet another few months, she was deep in thought. She still could not recall anything, but Langa was playing his part. They were having lunch when she just slipped into deep thought.

Langa: "What is it?"

Samarah: "I am just thinking. I am graduating in a month's time and we still aren't married. Why is that?"

Langa: "Well, you said to me that you wanted to wait. I was just adhering to your wishes."

Samarah: "Yes, but what exactly is stopping us?"

Langa: “I want to give you the world, Sam. I mean I don’t have a qualification and I cannot give you the world when I still live in a back room at my mother’s house.”

Samarah: “Well, you could always come to live with me.”

Langa: “I don’t want to live in another man’s house. I need to start my business, the business that I want so that I can be able to provide the life you want – the life you need.”

Samarah: “Okay, then. I thought you were happy with your taxi business.”

Langa: “I am, but I want to give you a lot more than what I can offer right now.”

Samarah: “Let’s set a date and get married first. We will deal with the logistics afterwards.”

Langa: “Alright then. I will get my uncles to draft the letter and send it to your parents.”

Samarah: "I can't wait to be Mrs. Dladla."

Langa: "Only God knows I have been waiting for this day for very long."

Samarah: "Well, clearly you have made me wait for too long. It is high time we got married, man."

Langa: "Ma will be delighted to finally have you as her daughter in law. I just have to sort out a few things."

Samarah: "Yes, well, it is such a pity that Baba passed on. I would have loved to see him see me in my wedding dress."

They went about their day and she went to bed later on. She had night shift that evening and he dropped her off as usual. While he was planning on setting the lobola negotiations in motion, she was about to bump into someone she hadn't seen in a very long while. She left her laboratory and while on

her way to give her new mentor the file she had just finished working on, she heard a man's voice.

Ntate Tau: "Samarah."

She turned around and it was one of the security guards assisting the porter to push one of the females admitted there. She stood there and stared at him for a very long time. She thought she knew him from somewhere, but could not pin point him.

Samarah: "Dumela Ntate (Hello father). Do I know you from somewhere?"

Ntate Tau: "Yes, I used to work at one of your flats. I was the security guard there."

Samarah: "I can't recall much, I am very sorry. I lost my memory apparently."

Ntate Tau: “Yes, I know. Are you busy right now? I would love to have a cup of tea with you and catch up.”

Samarah: “Oh, I am about to take a break in about ten minutes. Won’t I get you into trouble?”

Ntate Tau: “Not at all my dear. I will wait for you at the canteen, okay?”

Samarah: “Sure, thank you.”

She did her duties and within ten minutes, she found the punctual Ntate Tau waiting for her right at the canteen. He had bought her a cup of coffee and a muffin and waved at her. She went to him and sat down before him.

Ntate Tau: “Here, I got you a cup of coffee and a muffin.”

Samarah: “Thank you, Ntate.”

Ntate Tau: “How have you been, really?”

Samarah: “I don’t really know. I mean, good, I think. I am trying my best to remember it all, but the more I try, the more migraines I get.”

Ntate Tau: “That is because your brain has suppressed a lot of trauma – from back when you were a child.”

Samarah: “How will I heal if I can’t remember?”

Ntate Tau: “You will need to take it easy, it will come on its own. By the time you remember everything it won’t be too late.”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Ntate Tau: “The person you have longed for without even realizing it your entire life is the key to solving your problems. She is right under your nose.”

Samarah: "I don't follow."

Ntate Tau: "You will need to connect with your maternal ancestors. Once they connect to you, all your problems will be solved."

Samarah: "You are truly speaking in riddles, Ntate."

Ntate Tau: "The answers will be revealed to you soon. Just don't forget to pray. I will see you soon. Take care."

He left her sitting there trying to ponder her mind as to where she remembered him from, but she still had no recollection of him. He did as the spirit wished and warned her. Sadly, it was to take longer than expected to meet the mystery woman who had her destiny in her hands. Ntate Tau was on her mind throughout her shift. By the time Langa came to fetch her in the morning, she was a bit tired. She hadn't slept like she normally would.

Langa: "Hey, you look rather tired today."

Samarah: "Yoh (oh), you have no idea. I feel so exhausted today."

Langa: "Rough shift?"

Samarah: "Something like that."

While Langa was driving her car as he normally would she heard an odd sound.

Samarah: "What is that sound?"

Langa: "It must be the brake pads. I mean I have been fixing this car ever since I have been fetching you. It will really make me bankrupt, hey."

Samarah: "That's weird. It is only a year old judging from the papers."

Langa: "That's the odd part. Maybe you should sell it."

Samarah: "Hmm, perhaps you are right. Since I cannot even remember how to drive, I should buy myself an automatic. You should teach me."

Langa: "I don't think you are in the state to drive again, love. Not yet."

Samarah: "I recovered. The cast is off and I think it is high time I became independent again, don't you think?"

Langa was not pleased to hear her say that. He enjoyed her being right under his nose every single minute of the day.

Langa: "Of course."

Samarah: "You can drop me off at home. I just want to eat and sleep."

Langa: "I was hoping that you'd go with me to my house, you know. I mean, Ma would be delighted to see you."

Samarah: "I suppose you're right, although I doubt Vee would be happy to see me."

Langa: "Ignore that one. Just focus on us."

Samarah agreed and Langa drove to his house. The moment he drove in, he found Vusi smoking right outside. Vusi wasn't very pleased to see him driving in with Samarah. He still wasn't over the fact that he managed to get back together with her, so he tried to avoid Langa at all costs. Langa knew then that the entire family was home. Vusi and Vee still lived there with their two children, along with Zanele, the family's return soldier from her marriage and Phume was still traveling from home to Varsity every day since her mother was sick. Nobuhle was working in Fourways, and had an apartment which she was paying for, although she wasn't earning much. They were all home, much to Langa's dismay. Samarah felt nervous but battled to explain it to herself since she only remembered bits and pieces from her past with Langa. In her mind, their

relationship was rather recent, hence she could hardly recall Zanele, Vee

Vusi and Buhle along with Langa's son, Mthokozisi. Langa on the other was uneasy due to the fact that his family had all sorts of reservations regarding his relationship with Samarah. He knew very well that Vee and Vusi were not going to keep quiet and could slip anything through their tongues should they have felt like it. Samarah took a deep sigh right after Langa parked the car.

Langa: "Are you alright?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, I am just nervous for some reason. Most probably because your entire family is here."

Langa: "Don't mind them. I did brief them on your situation. I won't allow them to make you feel uncomfortable in any way. I won't allow that."

Samarah: (nodding) "I trust you."

The mind is a tricky part of the body. They got out and he opened the door for her, much like Aaron would. They walked hand in hand much to Vusi's annoyance.

Langa: (smiling) "Mfo (brother)."

Vusi: "Yebo (Yes)."

Langa: "You still remember Samarah, right?"

Vusi: "How could I forget?"

Samarah: (nervously) "It's good to see you again, Vusi."

Vusi: (nodding) "Yeah."

Langa: "Well, let's go in then."

They could hear almost everyone bursting in good laughter and talking freely until they both walked in and one could cut through the tension and silence.

Langa: (smiling) “Sanibonani (Greetings).”

Vee: “Haibo (Goodness), she’s back.”

Langa: “Excuse me?”

Vee: “Nothing.”

Phume: (smiling) “Hey, sis. How are you?”

Samarah: “I’m well, thanks. How is everyone?”

The only two people who seemed interested in answering her question were Mrs. Dladla and Phume. Zanele was still the same jealous bitch she was years ago – if not a bigger one,

while Buhle felt she was in Samarah's league since she was living the blessee life.

Mrs. Dladla: "We are all good, my dear. Come, sit please."

She sat next to Mrs. Dladla while Langa couldn't stop doting at his most precious asset.

Phume: "We were just about to dish up."

Samarah: "I can help."

Zanele: "Yoh (Oh)! Useqalile (she has started)."

The snark comments she kept making made Samarah nervous.

Mrs. Dladla: "No, you sit right here. I wouldn't want anyone poisoning you."

Buhle: “Hawu (goodness), Ma. Do you always have to pick her over your own blood?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Weh (hey), Buhle! I may be sick but I can give you quite a beating.”

She kept quiet and followed Phume and Zanele to the kitchen.

Mrs. Dladla: “Givce us a chance to speak. Awuphumele ngaphanle (go outside for a minute).”

Langa nodded and did as he was told. He joined his brother outside while the kids were playing in the living area.

Mrs. Dladla: “How have you really been doing?”

Samarah: “I don’t know, Ma. I think I have been good to say the least – despite everything that has been happening.”

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) "I see. Are you really happy? I mean with him? I know he is my son, but he has proven to be quite a bastard over the years."

Samarah: "Yes, Ma. I am very happy."

Mrs. Dladla: "He tells me you had an accident and that you seem to have lost your memory."

Samarah: "Yes, it seems so. It is hard to explain since I don't remember."

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) "I see. You really don't remember Aaron?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, Ma. I only remember Langa and how good he has been to me."

Mrs. Dladla knew right there that the situation was worse than she thought.

Mrs. Dladla: “You don’t even remember his son, Mthokozisi?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, Ma. I’d love to meet him.”

Mrs. Dladla: (shocked) “Umhlolo ke lo (this is insanity). Are you sure he didn’t bewitch you?”

Samarah: (laughing) “I am very sure, Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You know, I had a dream about you a few weeks ago. I dreamt my son smiling with so much greed written all over his face. He had money flowing around him and he was being showered with money, almost like it was raining money on him while you were watching him across the table – draped in misery. I have never seen you like that, Samarah and it pains me because my dreams never fail me.”

Samarah: “Rest assured, Ma. Nothing bad will happen to me. I can promise you.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Sadly, I don’t believe that, but let us have hope.”

Phume and her sisters brought the food. She insisted on serving Samarah because she knew her sisters were no good. Once they dished up for everyone, Langa was given a bowl of warm water and a cloth to dry his hands with, along with Vusi being the males of the household. It seemed like a norm in the house; Vee was doing it for Vusi while Zanele, being the elder sister was doing it for Langa since he had no wife.

Mrs. Dladla: “Zanele, you have to stop spoiling Langa like that. You are not his wife.”

Zanele: “Well, he would still had a wife hadn’t someone broken up a happy family.”

Mrs. Dladla: “For someone who was kicked out of her own marital home, you sure do know a lot about other people’s lives.”

Zanele: “Kodwa (But) Ma, do you have to throw it in my face?”

Mrs. Dladla: “I call a spade a spade. Let us pray.”

They blessed the food and they started eating. Mrs. Dladla asked Samarah all about her job and in turn, Phume was also able to talk of her experience of studying Dentistry. Zanele, Buhle and Vee could not say much since they didn't go study. Buhle tried but failed the first semester and decided to call Varsity quits. The dinner was pleasant enough since no one was throwing insults at one another. After eating, Mrs. Dladla felt tired and decided to call it a day, while it was up to the girls to clean up. Vee wanted none of that since she was beyond lazy, along with her partner in crime Zanele. They decided to go to the tavern nearby and grab a few drinks to have in doors, while Samarah offered to do the dishes with Phume and Buhle.

Buhle: “Hmm, so, are you going to sleep here?”

Phume: “I don't think that is any of your business, Buhle.”

Samarah: "It's okay, Phume. Yes, I am."

Buhle: "Ja, neh. Ntombi has barely been out of the picture yet here you are already worming your way into this family."

Samarah: "Who is Ntombi?"

Buhle: "Oh, hayi ke. You really must be faking it, hey. I mean come on. You wanted nothing to do with my brother a few months ago and now you're suddenly back with your fake memory loss."

Phume: "Qubekha wena (carry on) and I will spill the beans on what you actually do in Fourways."

Buhle: (clicking tongue) "You all think she is so amazing, don't you?"

Samarah: "What is your problem with me, Buhle?"

Buhle: “My problem is that I don’t like you – I never have. You walk around like you own the world and that everyone must bow down to you – that’s my problem!”

Samarah: “Wow, Buhle. I never knew you felt that way about me. I am sorry if I ever made you feel uncomfortable around me.”

Phume: “Please, don’t apologize for anything. Buhle thula or else ngizomtshela uMa (quiet or else I will tell mom).”

Buhle clicked her tongue and walked out of there leaving them both to finish up. Samarah felt saddened.

Phume: “It’s alright. I can finish up here.”

Samarah: (softly) “Okay. Thanks once again for the food.”

Phume: “You’re always welcome. Goodnight.”

She said her goodbyes and walked out. She found Vusi and Langa having a smoke over a beer in the yard.

Langa: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: "I'd like to get some sleep. You can stay out here if you wish."

Langa: "No, I'm coming. Mfo (brother), see you tomorrow."

Vusi just nodded and greeted Samarah a very cold good night. They both headed to Langa's room and it looked rather different for her. He had an en-suite bathroom now and a lounge area in there.

Samarah: "This place looks different. How long have I been gone?"

Langa: (chuckling) "Not too long. It is recently built."

Samarah: "I see."

She looked around trying to see any pictures of herself and Langa, but to her surprise, she didn't find any.

Samarah: "I don't see any photo's of us – even on my social media accounts."

Langa: "Oh, I have all of them on my phone."

Samarah: "Hmm, alright then. I am going to take a shower and then sleep."

Langa: "Alright, I'll be right here when you're done."

She nodded and went to shower. He had fresh towels and everything she needed to shower. After she was done, she came out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around her body. Langa was salivating – badly. He could barely contain himself even though he had never seen her naked – ever.

Samarah: "Uh, I didn't bring any clothes to change in, so I need to wear something to sleep."

Langa: "You could sleep naked."

Samarah: (blushing) "I doubt that would be comfortable."

Langa: "Really? You love sleeping naked with me."

Samarah: "Well, I guess so. I just feel a bit uncomfortable since I have gained weight and all, you know."

Langa: "We could go back to jogging together if you wish."

Little did she know that he was incorporating what Aaron was doing with her.

Samarah: "I'd love that."

Langa was about to get closer to her when she burst his bubble.

Samarah: "Aren't you going to shower first? I don't really like the smell of cigarettes on you."

She put a damper in his mood, but he wasn't about to sleep with blue balls that evening.

Langa: (faint smile) "Of course, love. I'll be right back."

He gave her a kiss on the lips and went to shower. While in there, she received a message from Lydia. "Philippians 4 verse 6. Thinking of you. Love, Lydia." She smiled to herself and responded to her. By the time Langa was done, he didn't even give himself the chance to lotion his body. He found her lying on the bed on her stomach; seeing her voluptuous figure protruding from that towel was a true embodiment of a real woman for him. Just looking at her ardent skin got his penis so rock hard, he was like a tiger ready to mate. He slowly got on the bed and placed himself on top of her. He gently moved her dreadlocks out of the way and kissed the back of her neck. She

smiled to herself, pleurably, while he was already panting as his body was urging him for more. She could feel his hardened penis rub against her buttocks. Sadly for her, she had no idea that it was about to be the first time they slept together. He turned her around and removed the towel. Her opulent breasts and pointy nipples were staring him in the face. His eyes were glowing at the alluring sight. He gently placed his warm lips on her nipples and sucked them gently, while his hands were fondling her bossom. She exhaled in abundant pleasure while her body responded. His lips travelled all the way down to her navel, while he twirled his tongue all the way down to her lower abdomen. He was not as good as Aaron – he could never be though it wasa unbeknownst to her. He had to act fast since he had a little problem of his own. He sucked on her clit for a bare minute and he entered her vagina soon afterwards. While stroking in and out, she remembered.

Samarah: “Wait! We’re not using condoms. I don’t want to fall pregnant – at least not now.”

Langa: “It’s alright. I will pull out.”

Samarah: "Please, Langa. I don't want any mistakes. Let's use a condom."

He got annoyed but didn't want to show her and got off.

Langa: "Okay."

He looked around although he was fooling her; he never used condoms with Ntombi and he knew very well that he didn't have any.

Samarah: "What's wrong?"

Langa: "It seems as if we've run out."

Samarah: "Oh, we can just sleep then."

Langa was not about to let go of that chance.

Langa: “I will ask Vusi for some. I’ll be right back.”

His brother also didn’t use any with Vee, but knowing him he had a few side dishes and always ensured he was safe. Langa put on a pair of boxers and headed next door to Vusi and Vee’s room. He knocked sternly on the door. He could hear Vee shout from the inside.

Vee: “Ubani (Who is it)?”

Langa: “It’s me – Langa.”

Vee: “Ufunani (what do you want)?! We’re busy.”

Vusi: “Ai nawe (you though). Ngiyabuya (I’ll be right back).”

He opened up with a towel wrapped around his waist.

Vusi: “Zikhipani (What’s up)?”

Langa: "I need some condoms."

Vusi: (laughing) "Are you mad? Do you think I can just hand you a pack of condoms while Vee is in there? Do you want her to skin me alive?"

Langa: "Please man."

Vusi: "I see you finally managed to get into her pants. (shaking head) The day she comes back to her senses unyile (you'll be fucked)."

Langa: "Are you going to give me or not?"

Vusi: "I'll unlock my car, you will find them where I keep the spare wheel."

Langa: (annoyed) "Why so far?"

Vusi: "If you were married to Vee you'd also hide them far away. Now go."

Langa hurried to Vusi's car and found the pack of condoms as promised. He took two packets hoping it would have been a busy night for him. He went back into his room and found Samarah was not on the bed anymore.

Langa: "Samarah?"

Samarah: "Eish (oh), I'm in here."

She was shouting from the bathroom.

Langa: "What's wrong?"

Samarah: "I'm so embarrassed."

Langa: "What happened?"

Samarah: "I'm on my period."

Langa: (frowning) "You were just fine a few minutes ago."

Samarah: "Yes, I thought so too, but then suddenly I just started my menses. It is flowing quite heavily."

Langa was deeply annoyed.

Langa: "Okay, I will get you some pads from Phume."

Samarah: "Okay."

He went into the house and asked Phume to give him a packet of pads. He handed them over to an embarrassed Samarah. She even removed the linen since she bled all over it. She was too embarrassed to look him in the eye when she got out of the bathroom. He handed her a Tshirt to wear and she got into bed.

Langa: “Hey, it’s okay. You don’t have to feel bad about anything. It happens.”

Samarah nodded while he kissed her on the cheek and dozed off. She had no idea that the Mosue ancestors were at work, while Langa was thinking that Aaron was haunting him. While the both of them were unaware, someone was praying very hard for things to go back to the way they used to be.

“Pray without ceasing.”

A few months later...

After Brian died, the hospital felt rather dead for some time. Samarah found great joy in seeing Sister joy and Ntate Tau whenever she was at work. She did really well in her practicals and it was finally time for her to graduate. The hospital was really happy with the way she carried out her job that they offered her a permanent job there. It was an easy transition since she was already doing her practicals there. Langa was being himself; impatient and downright dirty minded. He had his own plans, though Samarah was quite smart. She still couldn't remember anything about her life with Aaron and her social media feeds being completely dull didn't help much. Lydia tried to show her a few pictures of them when they were together, but they were not enough to jog her memory. Langa drove her to therapy once a week and she still couldn't remember any of that.

Apart from it all, her Mercedes ended up in a car accident with Langa in it. He survived it, though he sprained his

ankle. Insurance paid out and she wanted to buy another Mercedes, just a different brand, but of course, Langa made her go for a Lexus because he liked it. Two weeks later, it crashed too. Ntate Tau advised her to buy a car that she liked and bring it to him for cleansing before Langa could drive it. Ever since then, she had been driving herself to work, much to his dismay. He hated even the smallest thought of her being independent.

It was graduation day and a bitter-sweet moment for Lydia. She really wished to celebrate that day with Samarah's twin girls and Aaron, alongside Rachel but it didn't happen. She was right beside Samarah but her mood was just off. She was helping her with her make up that morning before they left.

Lydia: (softly) "You look so beautiful."

Samarah: "Thank you, but why do you seem so down?"

Lydia: "It's just... never mind."

Samarah: "You can tell me."

Lydia: "I am just genuinely happy for you, that's all."

Samarah: "Are you still upset over Langa?"

Lydia: (shaking head) "No, babe. I can't live your life for you. You are happy and that's all that matters. It's just..."

Samarah: "It's just what? Out with it, please."

Lydia: "Well, I know you might not remember, but just think about it."

Samarah: "Yes?"

Lydia: "I mean, you got into an accident with Aaron and Rachel and they both died mysteriously – yet you survived. Your babies died without any reasonable explanation and yet you survived. Now you met Brian and within less than three

months of you guys actually spending time together the both of you got into an accident and he died – yet you survived.”

Samarah: “Are you saying you wish I were dead?”

Lydia: “No, I am saying perhaps you need to look into this. Langa might be behind all this.”

Samarah: (laughing) “Come on, Lydia. I mean I don’t know these people you are talking about, but Langa is no killer.”

Lydia: “I am just saying. I mean, there is more to all this. You guys were doing just fine until he just walked back into the picture and started appearing everywhere. Why else has he been spending all that time with Bra P? They’re not even related.”

Samarah: “They are business partners, Lydia. I think you are starting to lose it. Please, don’t ruin today. I beg of you.”

Lydia: "I'd never dream of doing that to you. I am just saying – keep an open mind and don't forget to pray."

Samarah: "I really appreciate you, Lydia. I really do. Let us just enjoy today, okay? It is such a big day for me."

Lydia: "I know, babe. I am sorry."

Samarah: "No need to be. Let's finish up before my mother starts calling me."

Lydia felt really off about the entire situation. She didn't like everything that was happening to and around Samarah. She had been giving Richard and Beatrice money every month, while Langa was low-key milking her of money. She even extended their house and everyone got their own bedroom. She bought furniture as well. She tried to get her attorney involved, but he could not do anything to stop her. Spending her own money and dividends was not a crime. Her heart bled for her best friend and she knew that had it been her, she would have done the same. All she could do at that point was pray. They finished up and met her parents right outside the

house. Pictures were taken and Langa was acting like he was the one who made all things possible. He was the leading man, much to Lydia's dismay. She was heartbroken that he was trampling on Aaron's legacy and hard work like that, but Collin told her to be there for her friend. She graduated Cum Laude and everyone was rejoicing. When it was time to celebrate, Lydia came up with an excuse to dodge them as she couldn't bare to look at Langa spending her friend's money like that. Samarah didn't want a party, but Langa insisted on celebrating big. He invited his entire family, while Richard and Beatrice were the only ones from her side of the family. Sister Joy and Ntate Tau were also invited and they came as well. Langa booked half of the restaurant that day with an all expenses paid menu. Of course, his notorious family members went beserk and ordered whatever they could, while those who cared about her felt genuinely concerned.

Langa: "I'd like to make a toast; to the love of my life. Lord knows how long I have been waiting for this day. You motivate me to do better each and every day of my life, Samarah. I love you to the moon and back. You give me so much joy and I am so happy that you have become the person you are today. I cannot wait to spend the rest of my life with you and with that said; I would like to officially do things right."

She smiled in oblivion as she took out a ring box from his pockets and kneeled down on one knee, leaving everyone flabbergasted.

Langa: “Sthandwa sami (my love), will you marry me?”

Samarah: (teary) “Yes, yes I will.”

He kissed her and put the ring on her finger, while they all clapped hands and congratulated them. Some of the congratulatory messages came with severe worry but it would have been wrong timing to show that to them. Langa was over the moon that his plan had worked. He was about to marry a millionaire widow who had become a step mother to his son. The festivities carried on until about 10pm when the restaurant had to close up. They all went home while she went to Langa’s place with him. He couldn’t bring himself to set foot in Rachel’s house because he felt suffocated whenever he was there. After they showered and made rather short yet satisfactory love, they lay in bed together. She couldn’t stop staring at her ring.

Samarah: "I absolutely love this ring. How did you choose such an odd colour?"

Langa: "Ruby is not an odd colour, love. It symbolizes my burning love for you."

Samarah: "You didn't have to propose again. We were already engaged."

Langa: "Yes, but I couldn't afford the ring you deserved at that time. Now that I do, it is time for us to make it official."

Samarah: "It sounds like you have thought of a date already."

Langa: "Yes, how's next week Saturday?"

Samarah: "That's rather short notice."

Langa: “We can afford it, love. Why wait?”

Samarah: “Okay, but I don’t want a big wedding.”

Langa: “We should have a big wedding. I have been waiting for this day for so long. We should also have it right here – in Orlando. I cannot wait to see all those witches swallow their words. It is going to be the best day of my life.”

Despite all the I’s and My’s he was singing, she still didn’t get the picture.

Samarah: “Okay, I guess you’re right.”

While they were chatting away, her phone was flooded with messages. When she checked, she nearly became horrified.

Langa: “What is wrong?”

Samarah: “R56 700 for a restaurant bill, R250 000 for an engagement ring and R355 000 for a brand new Lexus RX350 EX? What is all this Langa?”

Langa: “I did it all for you, babe. I just wanted to make you happy.”

Samarah: “Yes, but I already have a car. Why did you buy another one?”

Langa: “Oh, I bought it for me. I mean, it is only a deposit since I’ll be paying R15000 per month for it, but I thought you’d be happy.”

Gaslighting at its’ finest.

Samarah: “I am, but I mean, a car, Langa? You already have one.”

Langa: "I was thinking of trading it in. I mean, love. We should both travel in style, don't you think? I can take it back if you don't like it. I didn't mean to upset you."

Samarah: "Oh, no. It's not like that."

Langa: "I mean, I am sorry. It is your money after all. You can afford it and I can't. I didn't mean to."

Samarah: "It's not like that at all, Langa. You just caught me off guard, that's all."

Langa: "You did say that I could use your card, didn't you?"

Samarah: "Yes – for the party, but if you bought the car, I am sure you did it for a good cause. I am not angry at you."

Langa: "Are you sure?"

She was reluctant. She should have listened to her inner voice, but chose not to.

Samarah: (faint smile) “Yes, I am sure.”

He kissed her passionately.

Langa: “I love you.”

Samarah: “I love you too.”

He turned around just like that and fell asleep, while she couldn't help but ponder her mind. She thought of all the money he spent behind her back. She thought of lowering her swiping limit, but she chose not to for some reason. All that thinking was the onset of yet another migraine. It was as if Ntate Tau could sense she was going through some internal conflict since a message from him came through her phone. “Whenever you feel something is not right – it usually isn't. Never stop praying, my child. Open your eyes and heart to the Lord.” She felt as if something was missing in her

relationship with Langa, but couldn't pin point it. Just like that, she took her medication and dozed off. She had trouble sleeping because what Langa had done was obviously bothering her. She had no idea how to approach it. While she was busy at work, yet another bank notification came through. "-R560 000 online card payment." She could feel the onset of yet another migraine. She walked out and called him instantly.

Langa: "Oh, hey

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love. I was just about to call you. I bet you saw the notification, didn't you?"

Samarah: "Yes, I did. What is that all about?"

Langa: "Oh, I just paid for our wedding, Sthandwa sami (my love). The wedding attire, décor, food, cars – everything. You're going to love the theme."

Samarah: "You didn't consult with me."

Langa: “I didn’t think I needed to. I mean, you did say you were ready to get married, didn’t you?”

Samarah: “Yes, but – “

Langa: (interjecting) “I am sorry for doing something nice for you – for the both of us. I will tell them to reverse the payment.”

Samarah: “No, no need for that. Please consult with me next time, okay?”

Langa: “Okay. I love you.”

Samarah: “I love you too.”

Saying it back was starting to hurt even before they got married, but something was still holding her back from facing the truth. After she hung up, she sat down outside the cafeteria deep in thought. She didn’t even realize that it was

lunch time already. Sister Joy found her there and brought her some food.

Sister Joy: “Hey, doc. What’s with the long face? Are you already having nightmares about getting married?”

Samarah: (sigh) “Actually, yes.”

Sister Joy: “Hawu (Oh), I was only joking. Do you want to talk about it?”

Samarah: “I don’t know. How did you and your husband handle finances? I mean, did you have a joint account or –“

Sister Joy: (interrupting) “Oh, please don’t you even think of ever getting a joint account! Please don’t do that – more especially with your man.”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Sister Joy: “What I mean is that he is young and young married men tend to do dumb shit. As a married couple, you guys will have to get together and draw up a budget of what you guys will be doing each month. You know, who will pay for what. No one should hide their money from the other party and no one should spend money without the other party knowing.”

Samarah: “What if your husband spent your money without consulting with you first?”

Sister Joy: “Then he would have been in deep shit with me. How much are we talking about?”

Samarah: “Well, a little over a million rand.”

Sister Joy nearly died of shock.

Sister Joy: (shocked) “Eng (what)?!”

Samarah: “Don’t be so loud.”

Sister Joy: “He spend a million doing what?”

Samarah: “Well, he bought my ring, paid for my graduation party – “

Sister Joy: “Ema pele (wait a minute). He bought you an engagement ring with your own money?”

She nodded ashamedly.

Sister Joy: “And you see nothing wrong with that?”

Samarah: “Well, I do, but – “

Sister Joy: “Let me ask you this; does he not work? Why did you give him your card in the first place?”

Samarah: "He works, but it seems as if business has not been going too well on his side. I mean, he just asked if he could pay for a few things with my card and I gave it to him."

Sister Joy: "The first thing you are going to do right now while I am with you is lower your swiping limit to R1000. I don't care how it will make you feel, do it. Now."

Samarah was reluctant.

Sister Joy: "What is it? Does he beat you into this?"

Samarah: "Oh, my goodness, no, Sister Joy."

Sister Joy: "Whose money is it?"

Samarah: "It's mine."

Sister Joy: "Then do it."

She reluctantly lowered her card limit immediately.

Sister Joy: “How does it feel?”

Samarah: “A little good, I guess.”

Sister Joy: “Sammy, darling. My advice? Postpone the wedding for as long as possible. If something feels off – it most probably is. Do not get married to this guy if you are not okay about what he does behind your back. A Million rand? Nka hlanya (I’d go mad). That is your money, and no one has a million rand to play with.”

She heard Sister Joy very well and she tried to register what she was saying, but somehow she was afraid of how Langa would take it. Once her shift was over, she decided to call him to let him know that she would be spending the night at her house. She tried calling him once, and he didn’t answer. She figured perhaps he was busy, so she went to get some takeaways to eat at home. By the time she got home, she realized he hadn’t called her back. So, she called him once

more again, and two more times, but it went straight to voicemail. She let him be and went about her business. She went to take a long warm bath and ate her food and went to bed.

The following morning came and when she switched off her alarm, she realized that he hadn't returned her call. It was Friday morning; a little less than week shy from their supposed wedding date. She took a bath and got dressed with a heavy heart. She worked with an even heavier heart when she realized he hadn't spoken to her ever since they spoke of the wedding payment. She went back home and went about her business. There was still no call from Langa. The following morning, she was starting to get really worried. She called Mrs. Dladla to ask where he was, only to hear her tell her that he hadn't been home for two days.

Samarah: "Two days? Are you sure, Ma?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Yes, I assumed he was with you. Oh, me and my stupid mouth. I shouldn't have said a word. I am sorry, I meant no harm."

She could feel warm tears filling her eyes.

Samarah: "It's okay, Ma. I have to go. See you soon. Bye."

Mrs. Dladla: "Okay, my child. Keep well."

She hung up the phone and cried. She had no idea why she was crying, but being ignored felt like horrid pain. She put on a brave face and went to work. By the time she knocked off, she went straight to her parents' house. Beatrice was "delighted" to see her, while Richard could see the look on her face which raised concern.

Beatrice: (happily) "Oh, my baby. It is so good to see you."

Samarah: "Hi."

Richard: (frowning) "Why do you look so sad?"

Beatrice: "Oh, please, Richard. You just like exaggerating whenever you see her after a long while."

Richard: "Wait a minute, Beatrice. I know my child. What is it?"

Samarah burst into tears, causing great concern on Richard's side. Of course, Beatrice knew very well why she was crying hence she was trying to down play it all.

Richard: "What is it, honey? Sit, sit."

Beatrice: "Oh, it has most probably been a long day, hasn't it, love? Did a patient die? It must be that."

Richard: "Get her some water and stop hovering over her!"

Beatrice walked away and hurried to the kitchen. She came back in the speed of light.

Richard: "What is it?"

Samarah: (crying) "It's Langa."

Richard: (clenching jaw) "What did he do to you? Did he hit you?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, no."

She explained everything that happened, but left out the other monies he spent on the graduation lunch, the ring and the brand new Lexus. Richard was deeply unhappy, while Beatrice was trying to get her to bear it.

Richard: "How dare he? He comes back into my daughter's life the moment he hears she has money and then what? Only to ignore her?"

Beatrice: "Papa, I am sure there is a reasonable explanation for all this."

Richard: "Explanation ya masepa (fuck explanation)! He will have to tell me why he is doing this to my daughter! I knew I should have said no to this – but you just had to accep it, didn't you Beatrice?!"

Beatrice: "I'm sorry. I meant no harm, Samarah, really. I just wanted you to be happy."

Richard: "This is all my doing. My own daughter is suffering because of me. She is paying for my sins."

Beatrice: "Don't be so dramatic, Papa."

Richard: "I will have to talk to this boy."

Samarah: "Please, don't. He will think that I run to you whenever I have problems."

Richard: "That is damn right! We are your parents and we have every right to know what he does to you. How on earth does he even think he will marry you next week without lobola? He must not fuck with me. I might be in a wheel chair but I can still fuck him up!"

Beatrice: "Papa."

Richard: "Nke o thole le wena (you just be quiet, won't you)?! You are going to sleep here, aren't you?"

Samarah: "No, I think it is best that I go to my own house. I would like to be alone, please."

Richard: "Are you sure? We are here for you."

Samarah: "I really appreciate that, but I really need to be alone."

Beatrice: "Okay, call us should you need anything – anything at all."

She went to bed with a heavy heart yet again.

– “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

The following day was a Sunday, and her day off for the week. She immediately enrolled for her honours after graduating, so that she get onto that wagon immediately. She had nothing better to do since she got up very early in the morning, so she cleaned up and decided it was officially time to go back to church. She always went to church with Aaron, but for some odd reason she chose to go to the one she always went to with Langa back in the day. She wore her black double Satin Prada dress with a red handback and a pair of gorgeous Jimmy Choo's. One thing that didn't leave her memory was her sense of style. She paired her look with a red lipstick and since her dreadlocks were dyed red, she looked gorgeous – despite the weight gain.

She had gone up a dress size from a 34 to a 36, but she still looked absolutely gorgeous. She hopped into her red Mercedes Benz GLC Coupe, which she purchased weeks before and drove off. She switched on the radio and a very familiar

song started playing – Rebecca Malope’s inombolo Yocingo, which was Rachel’s favourite gospel song. She had no idea why it sent chills down her spine but it made her heart rejoice. When she drove into the church, of course she was met with a few familiar faces – the church ladies Mrs. Dladla would fight with so often. They all greeted her with the widest smiles on their faces; she reeked of class and money. She went in and sat alone not too far away from the front. She felt like she needed to tap into the word of God.

The Pastor came out and the entire congregation started singing. After a few songs, they all sat back down and she could feel the spirit move within her.

Pastor: “Amen, Hallelujah, bazalwane (congregation). I greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. For it is said in the Book of Job 19 verse 25, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”

Congregation: “Amen.”

Pastor: “The Lord Jesus has 50 names in the Bible, yet today I choose to tell you all about Him as our Redeemer. There is even a statue of Jesus Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It has been used in so many movies as well. If they can believe so much in Christ as a believer that they create a statue of him as such, why can’t we believe? So many of you are lost souls; you come to church because that is what is being done on Sundays, but do you actually believe?! The people of Rio de Janeiro built and placed that statue there as a sign that Jesus protects them like a roof over their head. Christ protects us in many ways; but I tell you this: if He is not the center – the core of your household, it shall collapse. For Acts 16 verse 31 says; “And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

So many households are shaky; some have already collapsed because there is no God in the house. They have stopped praying; they have let themselves fall into the Devil’s trap by allowing third parties to enter their homes. Satan drapes them with the silk of lust, deceit, lies and all sorts of profanities. If you are going through a tough time today; I want you to think of Job. The test that God gave Job in the Bible is bigger than most. He lost everything; his riches, children and was left with his health only. Despite his wife encouraging him to curse the

Lord, he still went ahead and prayed and didn't lose faith. Even when he had nothing left, his health was tested, but even then he decided not to give up. His reward was greater than his suffering. I say unto you; do not give up for Christ does redeem, restore and indeed he replenishes those who have suffered."

The congregation was moved and Samarah felt it. Something within her told her to look towards her right and her heart nearly dropped to the floor. Langa was playing with Mthokozisi on his lap with Phume, Vee, Vusi and their children next to him. Mrs. Dladla was nowhere to be seen. She felt pain within her heart, but chose not to let it get to her. He must have noticed her and realized that he saw her because shortly after her realisation, she felt a tiny hand pull her dress. When she looked down, it was Mthokozisi. He smiled at her and placed himself on her lap. He was only 4 years old and the friendliest and most well-mannered child she had ever known. He was very fond of her, so she didn't mind. She tried by all means not to face Langa's way and she could feel his eyes piercing her. When she looked towards his direction, he waved at her with the biggest smile. The nerve. She didn't wave back and continued to listen to the pastor. Once church was done, she

walked out with Mthokozisi beside her. Once they were out, she just wanted to get away.

Samarah: “Mtho, go back to your father. I am sure he is waiting for you.”

Mthokozisi: (shaking head) “No, I want to go with you. He will find us at home.”

Samarah: “I am not coming home with you today.”

Mthokozisi begged her and started crying. She picked him up and tried to calm him down. She could hear his voice behind her.

Langa: “He really loves you, you know.”

She turned around and got annoyed by looking at him. She handed the child to him, though Mthokozisi was reluctant to let go of her.

Samarah: "Here, make sure he gets home safely."

Langa: "I thought you're coming to have Sunday lunch with us as always."

Samarah: "Not today."

Langa: "Are you still mad at me?"

Samarah: "Bathong (goodness). You are not serious."

Langa: "If you come eat with us I'll be able to explain."

Samarah: "You had the entire weekend to explain."

She walked away but he pulled her hand gently.

Langa: “Come on, Sammy. Please. Look at Mtho, he really wants you there. Are you going to do that to my son? Our son?”

Mthokozisi jumped back on her chest while Langa was reeling in that moment. He had her right where he wanted her.

Samarah: “I’ll see you at the house.”

Mthokozisi: “Mami, can you please buy me an ice-cream before we go home?”

Samarah: “I’ll buy you one after you eat.”

Mthokozisi: (shaking head) “Aunty is cooking and I know she will take forever.”

She chuckled and let him be. She ignored Langa’s requests of wanting to drive with her back home. She took a deliberate detour to the mall to buy him his favourite Sunday from KFC. She sat with him right there while he ate it. He of course

wanted a meal, but she opted to buy it for him later as he would have been full by lunch time. Langa started calling continuously until she put her phone on silent. Once Mtho was done eating his ice cream, he thanked her and they drove back to the house. Langa looked quite upset and rushed to her the moment she parked her car.

Langa: “And then? Why did you avoid my calls?”

Samarah: “Oh, I wasn’t aware that I needed to answer your calls while you ignore mine for days on end.”

Langa: “Hmm, I’m sorry about that. Like I said, I have an explanation for that.”

Samarah: “I bet you do.”

She walked ahead leaving him to scratch his head. She greeted everyone – even those who never wanted her around. She saw an unfamiliar Lexus with no number plate and concluded that it

was the car Langa gifted himself with her money. She found Mrs. Dladla on the porch sipping a Castle light. She hugged her.

Mrs. Dladla: (smiling) "My daughter. How are you?"

Samarah: "I've had better days, Ma. How are you?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I am in very good spirits today. I dreamt of my husband."

Samarah: "Is that why you're having a drink at midday?"

Mrs. Dladla: (laughing) "Yes, that is exactly why. Life is too short, man. Sit down."

Samarah: "I thought I'd help out with the food."

Mrs. Dladla: "No, they can do that. You are not married yet, don't spoil this idiot of mine."

Langa: “Kodwa (But) Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Go and set the table and leave us to talk of our business.”

Langa left unwillingly, while Mrs. Dladla had a good chat with Samarah.

Mrs. Dladla: “How are things between you and that one?”

Samarah: “Ah, I don’t really know.”

Mrs. Dladla: “I hope I didn’t get him into trouble by telling you that he wasn’t home for a few days.”

Samarah: “No, Ma. I was going to worry myself had you not told me. Besides, he has been avoiding my calls ever since so you are not at fault at all.”

Mrs. Dladla: (frowning) “He did what?! Haibo (Goodness)! Did he say why?”

Samarah: (shrugging) “No, I only saw him today at church. That was the first itme he spoke to me since Thursday.”

Mrs. Dladla: “This is giving me high blood pressure. Langa is such an idiot. Are you even sure you want to marry him?”

Samarah: “Well, I am starting to doubt that I am indeed ready, Ma. I feel like I am making a mistake sometimes.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Well, usually your gut is right. Follow your gut.”

Samarah knew how Mrs. Dladla felt about the entire situation, but ever since her accident she hid her true feelings from her as to not trigger any unwanted feelings. The food came and they blessed it. They started eating and Langa had to be himself.

Langa: “So, I am letting everyone know that the wedding date is set and Samarah and I have already paid for everything.”

Samarah was shocked but tried to act calmly.

Vee: "Don't you mean she paid for it all?"

Langa: "Uthini wena (what did you just say)? Weh (hey) Vusi, khuza umuntu wakho (talk to your woman)."

Vusi: "Vee nawe (you though). Stop it."

She shrugged her shoulders.

Phume: "When is the wedding?"

Langa: "This coming Saturday. Right here in Orlando. We are going to have the wedding of the season."

Zanele: "What I don't understand is why you have set a wedding date when you go AWOL for days. Was he with you,

Sammy? Because we haven't seen him until he got back this morning."

She was a shit stirrer til the very end. Samarah looked down in shame and hurt.

Langa: "This is why your marriage didn't even last five years, Zanele. Should I remind you why your own husband brought you back here and said we could keep the lobola money?"

Zanele: "Kodwa nawe (but you), do you have to be personal, Langa?"

Langa: "I will be when you get up in my business. You are younger than me, so don't mess with my marriage. If you must know since you are all sticking your nose in my business, I was on a business trip. I secured a big deal and as of now, you are looking at the owner of Dladla Industries, my very own construction company."

Phume: "Oh, wow, Buthi (brother), congratulations."

Langa: “Yes, ngiyabonga (thank you). I wanted to tell you, Sammy as a surprise since I had to conclude the deal with a few investors back in Durban. I had to drive to and fro and it just took so much time. By the time I went back to the hotel I had booked, I was dead tired. I wasn’t avoiding anyone – I was just tired from securing a big deal that will set both my wife and I and all of you for life. So, the next time you all think of talking shit about me – think of all I do for you.”

Vee: “Well, you tend to act like you are the only hard worker in this family.”

Langa: “You act like you are the only woman in this family. Samarah is about to be my wife and I would really appreciate it if you all treated her with respect. She has done nothing to wrong any of you and if I ever hear her complain about you – you will get to know me.”

Buhle: “No one is ill-treating her. I just can’t understand what she has that Ntombi doesn’t.”

Langa: “She has my heart and I would really appreciate it if you stopped mentioning that girl’s name in this house. She chose to leave me and Mthokozisi. Don’t you dare make my wife feel like trash because of that girl – ever.”

He was defending her on end, making her feel as if she was making the right choice by marrying him. He was dead serious and calling everyone to order.

Langa: “If any of you choose to throw shade at her and create drama, I won’t hesitate to remove you from the wedding list. You won’t be welcome to our wedding nor in our lives. I hope I made myself clear.”

Vee: “Crystal.”

It was a big moment for her, considering how some of his sisters were treating him along with Vee. Mrs. Dladla was nowhere near impressed. She was older and wiser than any of them at that table and she could see a trick from a mile away. She continued to sip on her beer and eat her food. After

everyone was done eating, she offered to wash the dishes, but Mrs. Dladla stopped her yet again.

Mrs. Dladla: “Stop spoiling him. You won’t lift a finger until he pays your lobola and we give you a name. Siyezwana (are we clear)?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, Ma.”

Langa: “Sam, can I speak to you, please?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Go

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he would like to have a word with you.”

Samarah: “I’ll be right back.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Alright.”

Langa took Samarah's hand in his and though she was reluctant, he refused to let go.

Langa: "Let's take a walk, shall we?"

They walked out of the yard and into the street. He last did that years ago with her.

Langa: "You know, I don't know if you remember all this, but when we first met I told you that I'd make you my wife. I told you that I want you to be the happiest woman on the planet. You deserve the world, Samarah. You are one of a kind and I want to prove that to you. I don't care what people say or think about our relationship, but what matters is that you and I are together as one. I know, you probably felt like shit this weekend, but I swear to you, I didn't do it purposefully."

They walked all the way to the nearby park and sat on one of the benches.

Langa: “When I couldn’t afford to study further for my engineering degree, it broke me to the point of no return. No one wants to be a taxi driver for life, but you came along and proved to me that I am worthy of love. I am sorry for everything I did to you. It was never my intention to spend so much money, worst of all money that didn’t even belong to me.”

He took out his phone and handed it to her.

Samarah: “What’s this?”

Langa: “That is my new business. On Page 3 you will see all my investors and how much I have in my account already. All I ever wanted was to prove to you that I too can make a living that will give you the soft life you deserve, Samarah. I just want to get married to you, love you and take care of you.”

Samarah: “Wow, well, I had no idea. You didn’t tell me and I get that – you wanted to surprise me. All I am asking of you is that you just be transparent with me. You could have texted

me at least and not leave me to my own conclusion about your whereabouts.”

Langa: “I promise you, I won’t let that happen ever again. If you want to cancel the wedding, I’d totally understand although they won’t refund us our full amount.”

Samarah: “No, we can go ahead with the wedding, just don’t do that again – please.”

And there she was, hook, line and sinker.

Langa: (smiling) “Thank you so much for understanding, my baby. I promise you everything will work out and my efforts will prove to be fruitful.”

She nodded and he kissed her.

Langa: “I love you.”

Samarah: "I love you too."

After one lengthy talk about the future, it seemed very bright and they went back to his house together. She drove back home although he didn't want her to leave. She was slowly getting back into the pattern of praying again. A few days later, she was finalizing the last minute details of her wedding. It was exactly three days before the wedding. She went for her dress fitting for a dress he chose for her of course. He roped in one of the best designers in Fourways, Sandra Clarke and briefed her of Samarah's body type, size and structure. He had chosen a big A-line wedding dress for her. It was stylish, but big. She took Lydia along with her.

Lydia: "He chose that for you?"

Samarah: "Yeah, do you like it?"

Lydia: "Do you want my honest truth?"

Samarah: "Yes."

Lydia: (shaking head) “No, it doesn’t accentuate your figure. It just isn’t you, you know.”

Samarah: “Well, I don’t really like it either, but he chose it for me.”

Lydia: “So? Does that mean you shouldn’t have opportunity to change?”

Samarah: “No, of course not.”

Lydia: “You know, Aaron knew exactly who you were and what suited you. He wouldn’t have let you feel small in any way, shape or form.”

Samarah: “Lydia, come on. Don’t do that, please. I am marrying Langa. I would appreciate you being a lot more supportive of my relationship.”

Lydia: (sigh) “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

Sandra: “I have the perfect dress in mind for you. Hold on a second, I’ll go get it.”

She saw that they were not agreeing on anything and she wanted a happy bride – despite the husband’s requests. Sandra came back with the most elegant mermaid fit and flare gown she had ever seen.

Sandra: “The colour is Ivory and has a lot of embroidered lace motifs and crosshatching over tulle.”

It had chic lace straps with a sweetheart neckline and a scoop back. Samarah was so taken aback by the dress. It was just breath taking.

Lydia: “Well, what are you waiting for? Go fit it.”

She was hesitant due to her weight, but once she saw herself in it, she was instantly in love.

Sandra: "Do you like it?"

Lydia: "Like? Sandra, honey, this is the one."

Samarah: "Wow, I have never seen myself look so beautiful."

Lydia: "Trust me, you have looked way more gorgeous in a wedding dress, believe me."

Samarah: "I love this one. Can I take this one?"

Sandra: "It is your wedding, honey, so it is all systems go."

Samarah: "Oh, won't he be mad that I changed my dress? I mean he put all the effort in getting me that one."

Lydia: "Honey, this is your wedding. If you don't like something how can you possibly wear it for your own wedding?"

Samarah: "You're right. I hope he likes it."

Lydia: "Either way, it is your wedding – you need to like it. Screw what everyone else thinks."

Samarah was happy in that dress but Lydia could see that she was in some sort of trance caused by Langa. She couldn't understand it. She was so caught up with Langa that it looked as if she feared him. They went to oversee the rest of the wedding even though there was not much to oversee since Langa chose everything. All that was needed was the wedding day. He had chosen a glamorous wedding décor; with everything glamorous from lavish draping lights to stylish glass chairs and tables and an 8 tier cake. That was just too much for Samarah.

Lydia: "Do you like all this?"

Samarah: "Honestly speaking – no."

Lydia: “Why did he choose everything for you?”

Samarah: (shrugging) “He said he wanted to surprise me.”

Lydia: “Okay then. You can change what you don’t like. It is your wedding after all, you know.”

She chose a romantic setting instead with soft vibes and romantic colours. She even chose a simple yet elegant three tier cake. Although the budget was already paid for, she settled to have gifts made for the guests instead to cover the remaining costs. She felt good about herself for the mere fact that she could make such a big decision on her own. Little did she know that she was being held captive – mentally. Once she was done, she rushed back to Langa’s house excitedly with hopes that she would let him know about the changes she made for their upcoming wedding. Intuition is something most of us disregard on most days. On that particular day, hers was speaking to her. She just had one weird feeling before she drove into the yard. She felt uneasy as if something awful was about to happen. Once she parked her car, Vee rushed towards her surprisingly happy to see her. She didn’t even give her a chance to absorb what was happening before her as she

persistently knocked on the passenger window begging Samarah to walk out of the car.

Vee: (excitedly) “Hey, skweeza (sister-in-law).”

Samarah: (frowning) “Hi, Vee. You look rather excited today.”

She took out the wedding brochure she had left at the back seat.

Vee: “Oh, come on. I know you and I hardly get along but every family has those dynamics, right?”

Samarah: (confused) “Uh, yes.”

Vee was walking with Samarah and intentionally forcing her towards Langa’s room.

Samarah: “I was hoping to go see Ma first.”

Vee: “Oh, she is sleeping. She is not feeling so well today. What you can do is go see your husband.”

Samarah: “Oh, okay. I know the way, you know.”

Vee: “Yes, it is just that I am so excited you will finally be joining the family, you know – officially. I just can’t wait.”

Once they reached the door, Vee forcefully hugged Samarah but she could tell she wasn’t being very genuine.

Vee: (fake smile) “I will see you later. Go on, now. Your husband is dying to see you.”

That smile sent chills down Samarah’s spine. Upon knocking twice before opening the door, she was met with a rather horrific sight.

Samarah: “Langa...”

The moment she said that, Ntombi came right out of the shower with a towel wrapped around her wet body.

Ntombi: “Oh, I am done now.”

Once Ntombi realized that Samarah was standing right there and there were now three people in the room, she couldn't help but take advantage of the situation. She intentionally let the towel fall down to the floor.

Langa: (shocked) Sammy, baby, it is not what you think. I can explain.”

The famous words of a man caught with his pants down. He had his jeans on and nothing else.

Ntombi: (chuckling) “Fancy what you see, hun? Oh, don't look so sad. I mean, I was just saying goodbye to him since he chose you now. It is just a goodbye fuck – nothing else.”

Samarah felt her body becoming overwhelmed with shock and heat all at the same time. She could feel herself about to shiver.

Langa: “Baby, please. I can really explain.”

Ntombi: “Oh, are you going to listen to his lies now, babe? I mean look around you. The room is one big mess. You know how he likes it, don’t you?”

Samarah let the brochure drop to the floor once the tears fell down her cheeks. She stormed out of there with Langa running after her.

Langa: (shouting) “Samarah, please! Can we talk about this?”

Vee was laughing all the way while watching the show with a beer in her hand under the shelter outside. Samarah rushed to her car with her shaking hands. She could barely see what was before her with the irrepressible sobbing fogging her eyes. She

managed to get into her car, but just before she could lock it, he opened her door.

Langa: "Samarah, please. Let's talk."

Samarah: (crying) "Let go of my door, Langa."

Langa: "Samarah, please. Just give me a few minutes."

Samarah: "Let go of my door before I scream."

Langa: "I just want to explain – "

Samarah: (shouting) "I said let go!"

He could see the rage seething through her entire face and let go of her car door. He could not stand a scene at all. She pulled the door forcefully and drove away. The adrenaline rush was slowly coming to an end when she was driving away. She could feel her heart beating too fast and once she nearly

crashed into another car upon driving past a red light, she stopped alongside the road and burst into overpowering tears. That one intense conversation she had with herself in that car gave her a huge migraine. The signs were there – or were they? She began questioning herself; her sense of self-worth and her entire existence. Seeing Ntombi naked like that with a body far more perfect than her according to her anyways, brought even more tears to her eyes. Her phone started ringing uncontrollably and it was calls from Langa.

She ignored them and switched her phone off. The weather started changing oddly and it became cloudy out of nowhere. She had no idea that ancestors were trying to speak to her. That was a big sign shown to her that day with hopes that she would walk away from that useless man she wanted so badly to call her husband, but sadly even the most intelligent people are easily manipulated. Once a manipulator, a narcissist and abuser realize your weak point – they stop at nothing to abuse their power over you until they are completely satisfied with breaking you.

"If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name," says the LORD Almighty, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings."

Samarah sobbed for a while until she found some strength and drove to her parents' house. She had nowhere else to go since Lydia didn't live in Johannesburg anymore. She could barely utter a word when Beatrice found her in tears at the kitchen door.

Beatrice: (shocked) "Richard! Ngwana shu wa lla (our child is crying)!"

Richard wheeled himself as fast as he could to the kitchen and found Beatrice trying to comfort Samarah.

Richard: "What is it? What happened?"

Beatrice: "Sit, I will get you some warm water with sugar."

Richard: "What happened?"

Samarah: (sobbing) "I... It's... Langa..."

Richard: "What did he do? Did he hurt you?!"

Samarah: "I..."

She could barely speak and Beatrice handed her the glass of water.

Beatrice: "Here, drink this. It should calm you down."

She drank all of that water in a matter of seconds. Once she was able to calm down, she started speaking.

Samarah: "I went to his house to show him the changes I made for our wedding. I mean, I don't understand, Ma. Our wedding is in a few days. I found Ntombi right there – naked."

She started sobbing all over again leaving Richard fuelled with rage.

Beatrice: “Oh, honey. Perhaps you didn’t see what you think you saw.”

Richard: “Are you fucking kidding me, Beatrice? Really?”

Beatrice: “What? I am just saying that perhaps we should get his story too before we conclude what happened. I mean, for all we know Ntombi could have tried to seduce him.”

Richard: (shaking head) “Unbelievable. You of all people – as her mother should know better. You are not one to say such stupid things to my daughter.”

Beatrice: “I am just trying to help, Richard. Would you rather she let go of everything she spent on this wedding?! I mean what will people say?”

Richard: "I don't care what people say or think! I should have never allowed him to continue with this entire charade. My daughter was perfectly happy with Aaron and what did I do? I deliberately was dead set against their relationship. Now, God is punishing me. My child, you are suffering because of me and my deeds. Let go of this bastard. You deserve someone better; someone on your league."

Beatrice: "I am just saying that no relationship is perfect. You and I have both had our fair share of problems, Papa. You know that."

Richard: (shouting) "Beatrice! Tlogela go lahletsa ngwana (stop misleading this child), man! I should have done this a very long time ago. In fact, let me go get my phone and call that bastard."

While Richard went to the lounge to get his phone, Beatrice was singing a different tune with Samarah.

Beatrice: "I am honestly just saying, Sammy. Give him a chance to explain. Surely some things are not as they seem."

Samarah: (shaking head) “My mind is telling me to let go.”

Beatrice: “What does your heart tell you? His family is supposed to come and pay lobola for you in two days’ time. Don’t disappoint them like that. Marriage is hard enough as is. You won’t find another man like Aaron, believe me. Langa is as good as it gets for you – I am just saying, my baby.”

Beatrice was the classic example of a toxic parent. When Richard came back he was clicking his tongue in annoyance.

Richard: “That bastard is not answering my calls. That is probably why his father died of disappointment. He will never amount to anything in life and wants to drag my daughter along with him! I’ll be damned if I lose another daughter!”

Samarah: “My head hurts. I should go home.”

Beatrice: “Nonsense, go sleep in your room. We will be right here when you wake up. I will make you some soup.”

Samarah nodded and went to her bedroom while Richard was fuming with Beatrice.

Richard: “What is with you?”

Beatrice: “I don’t understand what you mean.”

Richard: “I know that she is not your daughter but do you have to be like this? Why are you intentionally luring her into the lion’s den? You hated Aaron with as much passion as I did but now you intentionally want her to marry Langa.”

Beatrice: “Wow, Richard. I mean I always knew that this day would come but now you have gone too far. I have loved Samarah from the moment I laid eye son her and now after all these years that I have swallowed your shit you throw that in my face?! I might not have any biological children but I

consider her mine. You dare not speak to me like that ever again! Are we clear?!”

Richard: (sigh) “I am sorry, I didn’t mean it like that.”

Beatrice: “You did – you very well did. You cannot throw that in my face when I have taken care of you both. Sure I have my demons, but you cannot do that to me. It hurts.”

She cried crocodile tears obviously.

Richard: “I just wanted to know why you are so keen on her marrying Langa, that’s all.”

Beatrice: “You know what? I cannot deal with you when you’re like this. I can’t even speak to you.”

She left him all alone in the kitchen and went to take a short walk outside. She decided to do what she did best and call Langa.

Langa: "Beatrice. What's up?"

Beatrice: "Don't you 'what's up' me. What the fuck is your problem, Langa? Is not enough that you came back into her life? What rubbish are you busy with now with Ntombi?"

Langa: "Calm down. Nothing happened, okay? She was just here and Samarah happened to find her taking a shower."

Beatrice: "I am not stupid, okay? She wants nothing to do with you. She is at my house as we speak and wants nothing to do with your name."

Langa: "Calm down. I will get her to speak to me."

Beatrice: "You don't get it, do you? Richard is beyond upset with you and Samarah is done. I have tried but she is done."

Langa: "She can't resist me. She never has been able to."

Beatrice: “Oh, really now? We both know that she loves Aaron and will never love anyone like that ever again. What do you think will happen once she regains her memory?”

Langa: “That is why I have mechanisms in place to ensure that she never does. My plan is almost in full motion. Just give me time. I will be right there soon to speak to her.”

Beatrice: “You will only make things worse.”

Langa: “I will be there. You just make sure I get to speak to her.”

Before Beatrice could even speak further he hung up on her. Beatrice was left with increasing frustration as she had to hold her end of the bargain or lose everything. She went back into the house and pretended to be angry at Richard. She made her so called famous soup as promised and went about her business, while Richard was sobbing internally and thinking of his deeds. Nothing he was experiencing was equivalent to

the pain lying ahead for him. After about an hour, the gate intercom rang.

Beatrice: "Who is it?"

Langa: "It's me, Langa."

Richard could hear all the way from the lounge and wheeled himself to the kitchen.

Richard: "Let him in."

Beatrice hesitantly opened the gate and Langa drove in and parked confidently. He walked out of the car smelling fresh as ever dressed in a proper suit. He knocked two times and let himself in. He was already showing signs of cockiness and disrespect – nothing Aaron ever had in his personality.

Langa: "Sanibonani (Good day)."

Beatrice: "Hello."

Richard: "What do you want?"

Langa: "I have come to speak to my wife."

Richard: "You have no right to call her that, my boy. As far as we are concerned she is only your fiancée – you haven't paid lobola as of yet."

Langa: "I think you seem to be getting old, Mr. Moloji. I have paid lobola for your daughter – even though it is only half. That gives me enough right to at least try and sort things out with her."

Richard: (angrily) "You dare come to my house and make demands like that?! You think because I am disabled you can do as you please in here?!"

Langa: “No, forgive me if I came across as condescending, Baba (father), but surely you should at least award me the opportunity to explain myself.”

Richard: “It is bad enough you have wormed your way into her life again and now you want to make her the laughing stock of the community by sleeping with your baby mama? Look, she wants nothing to do with you and quite frankly – neither do we. So, it is best you leave.”

Beatrice: “I think you should perhaps give her some time to recover from this ordeal, Langa. She will call you when she is ready.”

Langa: “Please, just let me talk to her.”

Richard: “Are you deaf?! I should have gotten rid of you when I had the chance. You are no good for her. Aaron was 100 times more of a man than you will ever be.”

Langa felt so hurt by Richard's words that he became angered. Those words only fuelled him to keep trying.

Langa: "Okay, fine. I understand you are still angry. I will see you guys on Friday when we come for the final round of negotiations."

Richard: "You must be senile. There won't be any wedding."

Langa: "Good day. I shall see you two soon."

Richard was bewildered but Langa was not having it. He intentionally began stalking her all over again knowing that she had night shift that evening. He parked nearby the house and waited for her to leave. Indeed, just after six pm she left the house and drove straight to work. She was unaware that he was following her all the way to work. She parked her car and didn't realize that he was just behind her. He didn't even get a parking spot, and just parked his car in the way.

Langa: "Samarah."

Samarah: (frightened) “Oh, my goodness! You gave me such a fright! What are you even doing here? Have you been following me?”

Langa: “No, I just want to talk to you – please.”

Samarah: “I told you – there is nothing to talk about. Now, leave. You are causing a scene at my work place.”

Langa: “Oh, so these people and your job is more important to you than me? Than us? Than our wedding?!”

He was starting to speak louder, causing great concern.

Samarah: “You are causing a scene. Leave, please.”

Langa: “No, I just want to talk to my wife!”

Luckily for her, Ntate Tau had just gotten out of his car.

Ntate Tau: “Is everything alright here, Samarah.”

Samarah: (embarrassed) “Yes, Ntate, he was just leaving.”

Langa looked at Samarah hoping that she would say she was just joking, but she was dead serious. He didn’t take rejection very well.

Ntate Tau: (firmly) “You heard her, son. It is best you leave.”

Langa: (angrily) “Fine, I will see you when you knock off.”

He got into his car and sped off.

Ntate Tau: “Is everything alright?”

Samarah: “Yes, Ntate, everything is fine. Thank you. I shall see you later.”

She hurried away from him filled with embarrassment. It was bad enough that Prof. Bester was back at work. She was no longer an intern though she was a resident, which meant that she would be working with Prof. Bester quite a lot. She found her right in the lift.

Samarah: “Good evening, Prof.”

Prof. Bester: “Evening, Dr. Mosue. Is everything alright?”

Samarah: “Yes, everything is fine.”

Prof. Bester: (nodding) “You know, one thing I have learnt from my horrid marriage with my ex is that a person who loves you shouldn’t make you cry.”

Samarah: (frowning) “I’m sorry?”

Prof. Bester: "I was just saying. Enjoy your evening."

She got out and left Samarah wondering if it was that obvious. She went about her business though she struggled to focus. She didn't even have the heart to brief Lydia on what happened. She was too embarrassed. Langa started love bombing her almost immediately after leaving the hospital. First he started posting all kinds of pictures of the two of them on his WhatsApp statuses with all sorts of messages directed to her. Then he sent her countless messages and Bible verses. Just when she thought she had seen it all, he got her a bunch of red roses

chocolates and an Uber eats meal from McDonalds delivered right at her workplace. She felt nauseated just by thinking of it all. He apologized numerous times on WhatsApp to the point where she switched her phone off. She threw the flowers in a bin and gave away the food and chocolates. When it was time for her to rest and eat, she had ordered her own food and was in deep thought in the cafeteria. It was a little peaceful since the hospital was not that busy that evening. Ntate Tau came and sat next to her.

Ntate Tau: "Is this seat taken?"

Samarah: "For you it could never be. Please, have a seat."

Ntate Tau: "Thank you. Is everything alright?"

Samarah: "I would be lying if I said yes."

Ntate Tau: "Is it your boyfriend?"

Samarah: (nodding) "I feel so stupid, really."

Ntate Tau: "How so?"

She explained everything that happened even though he already knew.

Ntate Tau: "Hmm, so what do you think happened?"

Samarah: “Honestly, I don’t know what to think, you know. But if nothing happened then why was she at his place showering in the first place?”

Ntate Tau: (nodding) “Well, my advice to you is that no one can make any decision for you. At the end of the day, what you do is ultimately up to you. No one can force you to do anything – not even him.”

Samarah: “That is really not helping, Ntate.”

Ntate Tau: “You have a habit of running away from pain; from the past and it will catch up with you – eventually. All I can tell you is that if being around Langa brings you more misery rather than happiness – then you need to decide if you would like to spend the rest of your life like that. Your heart’s desires lie within your prayers. What you once lost will eventually come back to you – sooner than you think.”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Ntate Tau: “That is all I am allowed to tell you. Your grandmother and mother-in-law cannot reach you until you dig deep within yourself. You need to start remembering what Rachel taught you and all else will follow.”

Samarah: “Ntate your riddles – “

Ntate Tau: “Dig deep and remember what she taught you. I have to go back to work. I do hope you feel a lot better tomorrow. Goodbye.”

He left her amused with wonder. The following morning she went straight to the drive through to get something to eat before heading home. Once she was at her house, she didn't even get the time to get into the bath tub as the gate intercom rang.

Samarah: (annoyed) “Yoh (wow)! Ke mang goseng so (who could it be at this time of the morning)? Yes?”

Ntombi: “H.. Hi, it's Ntombi. Please open.”

She sounded really rattled.

Samarah: "I'm sorry but how did you even know where I live?"

Ntombi: "Please open, I will tell you everything."

Samarah hesitantly opened the gate for her. She walked in while Samarah was anxiously waiting in the kitchen. Once she heard three stern knocks, she opened. She was startled by what she saw. Ntombi was wearing a scarf that intentionally hid her entire neck and sunglasses with a headwrap. It was winter time, yes, but she was one who enjoyed showing off her skin.

Ntombi: "Hi, thanks for opening up for me."

She didn't even take off her sunglasses, but a faint bruise could be seen underneath them.

Samarah: “Hi, sit please. May I get you anything to drink?”

Ntombi: (shaking head) “No, thank you. I won’t take long.”

Samarah: “Okay. Why are you here?”

Ntombi: “I came to apologize. For what happened yesterday. The entire thing was my fault. I should not have come onto Langa like that. You see, I have been jealous of you from day one. I never liked you – even back in the day. I hated the fact that he chose you over me; moreover that you are far bigger than me, you know. I mean, I couldn’t understand why he chose you. At first, I thought it was for money but now when I realized just how much he loved you – I became increasingly envious of you. My heart belongs to him, but I know that his belongs with you. I will never win him over. I tried doing what I did yesterday and it backfired. I thought he could be mine again and marry me instead but it didn’t work. For that I am really sorry.”

It sounded like a perfectly well rehearsed speech. She looked beyond frightened, though.

Samarah: “Why should I believe you, Ntombi? I mean, I hardly ever come in contact with you but we both know you don’t like me. Why should I believe you? I know what I saw.”

Ntombi: “Give him a chance to explain and you can decide what to do with the information. I have said my piece. I hope you make the right choice.”

She stood up.

Samarah: “What happened to your face? You look as if you want to hide a few bruises.”

Ntombi: “Nothing. My boyfriend beat me up when he realized what I tried to do with Langa. It’s nothing major. Just sort out your relationship and I won’t bother you ever again.”

Samarah: “What about Mthokozisi?”

Ntombi: "You two are far better parents than I will ever be. He is better off with you two."

She said that last part with achy tears flowing down her cheeks and a breaking voice. She walked out without saying goodbye, leaving Samarah conflicted. While she was battling her own thoughts, Ntombi walked about 5 minutes away from Samarah's house and got into Langa's car. He was parked two robots away.

Langa: "Did you say everything I told you to say? Did you stick to the plan?"

Ntombi: "Yes."

Langa: "Did she buy it?"

Ntombi: "I don't know."

Langa: "The entire point was that you be convincing enough for her to take me back."

Ntombi: “If she loves you as you say she does then she will. Had you not beaten me up like this then I would have been a lot more convincing.”

Langa: (angrily) “You didn’t tell her that I did that to you, did you?!”

Ntombi: “So you can do it to me again? Of course not. She asked, though but I didn’t tell her.”

Langa: “Good. I am sorry. I didn’t mean to beat you up so badly but you asked for it. You just had to go and perform. You should not have done that.”

Ntombi: “Well, had you chosen me I wouldn’t even be in this position. How do I watch you play happy family with another woman? Am I not worthy of your love, Langa? That is my son.”

Langa: “You are worthy, Ntombi. Just give me a chance. I told you – I am meant to have two wives. I always have been.”

Ntombi: (shaking head) “She will get to be your first wife. Why must I resort to being second best?”

Langa: “I paid lobola for you first – remember? Patience is a virtue, baby. My plans are all falling into place. I am just missing the final piece of the puzzle.”

Ntombi: “You’d better keep your promise or else it will end badly for you.”

Langa: “I owe my success to you, baby. I promise.”

As he was sweet talking Ntombi in the car, his phone rang and it was Samarah.

Langa: (excitedly) “It’s her. Be quiet now.”

Ntombi couldn’t help but feel a pang of jealousy.

Langa: "Baby."

Samarah: "Hi, can you come to my house?"

Langa: "Sure, I am in the neighbourhood. I'll be there in five."

Samarah: "Okay."

He hung up and dug into his wallet.

Ntombi: "Aren't you supposed to take me home?"

Langa: "She called me and wants to see me. Here, take a cab. Use some of it to go see a doctor for those bruises and stop by the pharmacy and buy a morning after pill."

Ntombi: (heartbroken) "Seriously, Langa?"

Langa: “Ntombi! Can you stop with your whining? I have to get going. You knew what you were getting yourself into the moment you opened your legs for me again. I don’t want any more children – at least not from you. Now, go.”

She slowly got out of the car hoping that it was all a dream, but Langa didn’t care at all. He just wanted to do what he had to do. Once she closed the door he sped off not even worrying if she found a taxi home or not. Once he arrived at Samarah’s house, he found her already waiting in the kitchen. He stormed in excitedly and was about to hug her, but she stepped back.

Langa: “Oh, sorry. I suppose you are still mad at me.”

Samarah: “What exactly happened yesterday?”

Langa: “Exactly what Ntombi told you.”

Samarah: (frowning) “How do you know she told me anything?”

Langa: "Uh, she called and told me. She told me how remorseful she is and how she never meant to ruin our relationship. I swear, baby, I love you more than anything. Marrying you is the best thing that I will be doing. You are the only one for me, Samarah. Why would I ruin it all and risk losing you for Ntombi? She has no ambition and no goals. My heart belongs to you and only you."

Samarah: "Do you really mean that?"

Langa: "With my whole heart. I swear on my father's life."

Samarah: "I swear, Langa. If you are lying to me and I find out it will be over for good."

Langa: "I swear, I am not lying to you, babe. I love you too much."

Samarah: "I don't ever want to see a woman at your place ever again."

Langa: "Done. I promise you."

Samarah: "Okay then."

Langa: "Does this mean that the wedding is still on?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

He was so excited that he spun her around in his arms and kissed her.

Samarah: "Okay, okay. I need to take a nap. I have night shift."

Langa: "Okay, I will see you later then. I can take you to work."

Samarah: "Rather not. I can take myself."

Langa: "Okay then. I will speak to you later over the phone to discuss the final touch ups of our wedding."

Samarah: “About that. I hope you don’t mind that I made a few changes. You should have seen the brochure by now.”

Langa: “Oh that one? It is perfectly fine, my love. I should not have chosen anything without consulting you first. It is your wedding too and believe me when I say that I am completely happy with your choices.”

Samarah: “Thank you. I will see you later.”

He left and hid the truth from her. He wasn’t completely happy with the things she chose so again he went behind her back and ordered the original cake for the wedding – the glamorous one he wanted. He didn’t want to make too many changes and ruin her day as she would have noticed. She went on to have a pleasant night at work, although her intuition was still telling her that something was off. She tried to ignore it by focusing on work itself. The following morning after she knocked off, she felt as if she had seen someone who looked just like her – from a distance though. Sister Joy was speaking to someone – a fellow doctor. She was about 10m away. Sister Joy waved at her and quickly rushed towards her.

Sister Joy: "Oh, hey you. Long time no see."

Samarah: "Hi, Sister Joy. I have been so busy nowadays. Sorry about that."

Sister Joy: "I understand. Planning a wedding is really no joke."

Samarah: "Who was that you were talking to?"

Sister Joy: "Oh, that's Dr. White. That is the doctor I keep telling you about. You look just like her. If I didn't know her, I'd say she was your mother."

Samarah: "Huh, doesn't she have any kids?"

Sister Joy: "She has been through hell and back. Her story is quite sad, really. People go through so much. Perhaps you will meet her one day. She always keeps to herself. I will make a

note to introduce you to her one day when I am with her again.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Sure. I will see you soon. I have my final dress fitting today.”

Sister Joy: “Okay, and Samarah?”

Samarah: “Yes?”

Sister Joy: “Proverbs 3 chapter 5 verse 6 says; “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

Samarah: “I hear you, Sister Joy. Goodbye for now.”

She had no idea Sister Joy was trying to warn her and encourage her to pray. In complete oblivion, she remained happy once again and delved into the thought of being Mrs. Dladla. She was starting to hide things from Lydia, and was not praying as much as she used to. Her judgment was clouded, with so much misfortune on the way yet the key to her happiness lay right under her nose. All she had to do was tap into the word of God to unleash it.

“Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.”

After her final dress fittings, Lydia decided to host a surprise Bachelorette party for Samarah along with her cousins since Samarah had no other friends. Sister Joy was there as well, along with Phume. She didn't invite Vee nor Langa's other sisters for obvious reasons. She had called her to join her for lunch at a hotel only to find them all dressed in lingerie. Sister Joy pulled out all the stops and didn't mind wearing a two piece underwear at all.

Lydia: “Surprise!”

Samarah: “Oh, honey! What is all this?”

Lydia: “This is my appreciation to you! We are celebrating the last time you are a free woman!”

They all laughed.

Samarah: "I was expecting lunch, babe, but this is just amazing. Thank you. When did you even arrive?"

Sister Joy: "Hey! Enough with all the questions. It is time to have some fun, now."

Lydia: "Oh, yes! First go get changed into this!"

She handed her a shiny gift bag. She went into the bedroom to change and her eyes nearly popped out. Lydia knew her too well because she walked in and found her still contemplating to wear it.

Lydia: "Alright why aren't you dressed yet? We are waiting on you."

Samarah: "You know how I feel about my body."

Lydia: “Girl, a year ago you had embraced your entire body. Own it. You are a goddess – a queen. You cannot possibly hide it from the world forever. One day you will look wrinkly and all and you will miss my words.”

Samarah: “I don’t know.”

Lydia: “You only live once, right? And in your case let us hope that this is the last time you get married.”

Samarah: “Okay, I will try.”

Lydia: “That’s the spirit, baby!”

She got dressed and looked better than expected, though she wasn’t very comfortable for a while. Once she got out and Lydia introduced her, everyone was really happy to see her break out of her shell again.

Lydia: “Ladies and ladies! I present to you – our bride to be, our queen Samarah!”

They cheered her on and made her feel a lot more special than she did when she walked in there. They had a drink and toasted to her happiness. Though Lydia was not entirely happy much like Phume who felt that she did deserve better, they chose to put all those feelings aside and celebrate her and her choices. Gifts were exchanged and games were played. Drinks were flowing and so was the food and the sex advice.

Sister Joy: "I would honestly recommend this tip; have sex as much as you can because when that feeling dies down you are in trouble. It is good for the blood flow and for the soul. You won't ever see anyone who gets regular sex shout at people at work unnecessarily."

They all laughed.

Samarah: "But you don't have a husband."

Sister Joy: "Who said you need one to climax?"

They all laughed once again.

Lydia: “Hey, now! We have a child in our midst. Phume is not ready to hear of such things.”

Phume: “I do have a boyfriend, you know, Sis’ Lydia.”

Samarah: “Don’t let Langa hear you say that.”

Phume: “I won’t tell if you won’t.”

They all laughed yet again.

Samarah: “I need the bathroom. I’ll be right back really quickly.”

Lydia: “Don’t take too long, now.”

She took her phone with her and once she was in the bathroom she was met with countless missed calls and messages from Langa. She felt a little uneasy by that. When she was about to text him back, he called her.

Samarah: "Hey."

Langa: (angrily) "Where have you been?! I've been calling you!"

Samarah: "I am with Lydia and all my friends at a hotel having my Bachelorette party."

Langa: "Friends?! You don't have friends!"

She was about to explain when he hung up and video called her.

Samarah: "Hi."

Langa: (frowning) "What the fuck are you wearing?!"

Samarah: "Oh, I am wearing lingerie. Do you like it?"

Langa: (fuming) "Which hotel are you at?"

She told him.

Langa: "I'll be there in a minute."

She was about to explain when he hung up. She walked out of that bathroom a different person.

Lydia: "What's up?"

Samarah: "Oh, nothing. Let's continue where we left off, shall we?"

She tried to fake the smile but Lydia saw right through her. They continued playing a few more games, but Samarah's continuous checking on her phone alerted Lydia.

Lydia: "Can I talk to you for a second?"

Samarah: "Sure."

They went to the balcony.

Lydia: "Is everything okay?"

Samarah: "Of course, why wouldn't it be?"

Lydia: "You look edgy. You came out of the bathroom a completely different person."

Samarah: "I am just tired."

Lydia: “You do know that there is absolutely no reason to lie to me, right?”

Samarah: (nodding) “I’d never lie to you. You know that.”

Lydia nodded with great concern brewing in her mind. Samarah saw Langa’s car driving in from the balcony.

Samarah: “Langa’s here. I’ll be right back.”

Lydia: “But this is your bachelorette party. Why is he here?”

Samarah: (shrugging) “He is here to see me. I mean he misses me, that’s all.”

Lydia: “Okay then. We will be right here once you come back.”

She nodded and put on one of the Hotel robes and headed out before he could even call her. She hastily walked towards the lift and he called.

Langa: "I'm outside."

Samarah: "I am coming."

While she was making her way downstairs, Lydia felt uneasy about the entire situation and called Sister Joy aside.

Lydia: "Sister Joy, I trust you and I know you would never lie to me."

Sister Joy: "That's correct."

Lydia: "Have you noticed anything strange with Samarah's behaviour?"

Sister Joy: "Strange in what sense?"

Lydia: "I don't know almost as if she is hiding something with regards to her relationship."

Sister Joy: (sigh) "I thought as her best friend she would be open to you, but he has been behaving really strange as of late."

Lydia: "What do you mean?"

Sister Joy: "A few days ago he came to the hospital as if he was following her early in the morning. He was bewildered and shouted at her begging her to speak to him. Ntate Tau was there, and I can only imagine what he could have done had he not been there. After that things seemed to get better amongst them. She never told me what happened, though."

Lydia: "Do you mean he could be abusive?"

Sister Joy: "I have never seen him lay a hand on her but he does seem like he can be a bit abusive."

Lydia downed the remainder of her champagne and got dressed in her robe.

Lydia: "I'll be right back."

That intense conversation between her and Sister Joy alarmed her so much that she felt her stomach turn. She hurried downstairs to check on her friend. Meanwhile Samarah had just joined Langa in the car. He looked like the devil himself.

Samarah: "Hi."

Langa: "You told me you were meeting Lydia for lunch and now I find you at some hotel?"

Samarah: "She surprised me with a Bachelorette party. I am with Phume and Sister Joy along with her cousins if you don't believe me."

Langa: "Why are you dressed like some whore?!"

Samarah: (shocked) "Excuse me?"

Langa: "Ungizwe kahle (you heard me well)! I am not planning on marrying a whore, Samarah and if this is what you and Lydia and that bitchy nurse Joy get up to then we are going to have a problem!"

He was shouting at the top of his lungs scaring Samarah.

Samarah: "Langa, since when do you speak to me like that?"

Langa: "Weh (hey) Samarah! Since when do you answer back when I reprimand you?!"

He got so mad that he nearly grabbed her throat. Had it not been for Lydia who arrived just in time and knocked on his window, who knows what he could have done?

Lydia: "Hey wena (you)! Bula mo (open here)!"

Once he noticed how angry she was he opened the door and walked out.

Langa: "Oh, Lydia. Hi."

Lydia: "Why the fuck are you speaking to her like that?! A night before your wedding?"

Langa: "It's not what you think."

Lydia: "Samarah, get out of the car."

Langa: "Wait, I can just explain."

Lydia: "I dare you to touch me and I will scream at the top of my lungs!"

Samarah hastily got out and she walked back to the hotel with her. While in the lift Samarah burst into tears.

Lydia: “What did he do? Did he hurt you? Are you okay?”

Samarah: (crying) “He didn’t touch me. He has never hit me.”

Lydia: “You don’t have to protect him like this, you know. This is how abuse starts. He might not have hit you before but what I just witnessed – Sam, it can’t be done. I literally saw him about to put his filthy hands on you! You can’t marry this guy.”

Samarah: “He is a good guy, Lydia. He was just upset.”

Lydia: “Over what exactly?”

Samarah: “He thought I was lying about my whereabouts.”

Lydia: “Not even Collin does that and I know for a fact that Aaron would have never have done that to you. Girl, you know

better – deep down you know that. He shouldn't treat you like that."

Samarah: "Can we chill out here for a minute before we go back in? I don't want them to see me this upset."

Lydia: "Sure."

They stayed outside the hotel room and stood at the balcony as Lydia tried to speak some sense into her.

Lydia: "Why didn't you tell me?"

Samarah: "Tell you what?"

Lydia: "What happened between you two just two days ago?"

Samarah: (uneasy) "Nothing."

Lydia: “Look, I don’t expect you to tell me every single thing that happens in your relationship like you used to when you were with Aaron, but I do expect you to keep me in the loop every now and then. Why should you suffer and be abused?”

Samarah: “I am not being abused, okay? We just had a small misunderstanding and we sorted it out.”

Lydia: “Did that so-called little misunderstanding give him the right to stalk and follow you to work and cause a scene?”

Samarah: (wide-eyed) “Who told you that?”

Lydia: “It doesn’t matter. What matters is that I feel you are making a really big mistake. I mean, for all we know this guy could really be bad news. I can feel it in my gut. I know, the more I tell you not to go ahead with the wedding is the more I push you towards the idea – it is like that in most cases. Collin and I were party animals and at one point I wasn’t even sure if I wanted to marry him, but we matured and grew together. We grew because of what you taught me.”

Samarah: "Which is?"

Lydia: "Faith and prayer. You taught me to never stop praying and to always have faith in God and God's plan for me. I know it is not very nice of me to compare, but I have to. I feel that you really rushed into this whole thing with Langa despite my warnings. I don't know why because you wanted nothing to do with him years ago, but I won't judge you on that. All I can say is that something with this entire setup doesn't seem right. You cannot possibly change so much despite losing your memory. The person you are with contributes to your aura and way of life. When you were with Aaron you were the prayer warrior I have always known. You two prayed because he encouraged you to pray – he prayed with you and for you; all day, every day. What on earth does Langa do for you and with you? It seems to me as if he stresses you out more than anything. You look as if you are unhappy – it even shows in your face, Samarah. I am not saying that I am better than you – I am nowhere near that, but you should consider my warnings. If I didn't know any better, I'd say that he put a spell on you or something which is why you need to keep praying. Never stop praying and never stop believing. Matthew 21 verse 22 says; "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." Mark 9:29 And he

said to them. All I ask is that you never forget who God is and what He has pulled you through. If Langa truly loved you – he would have taken his time to ensure that you were really over the horrible ordeal you went through last year. When last did you even attend your therapy sessions? You didn't even remember your husband and childrens' death anniversary. Your parents are not even doing the most right now to support you and with me being so far away and you keeping things from me, I worry about you. I know you are going to crash and burn. I know it."

Samarah: "I appreciate your concern as my best friend, Lydia I really do. I am fine, you can trust me. Langa has been stressed out for a minute. Please, don't tell anyone about this."

Lydia: (sigh) "I tried, though. I cannot ditch you on your most important journey. I will be there every step of the way, but just so you know that I will call bullshit what it is."

Samarah: "I know that and I love you for that."

Lydia: (nodding) “Okay, but should you have any negative feelings or doubts about this entire thing please do let me know. I don’t mind cancelling a R600k wedding.”

They both laughed. Lydia’s heart hadn’t been that heavy in a very long time. Once they headed back, the ladies were glad that they were back. Lydia was drinking quite a bit but wasn’t even getting drunk. The entire situation with Samarah was just getting to her to a point that she was even insomniac that evening. All the other ladies went to bed, while she stayed up thinking about the entire situation. She even prayed and hoped that God would intervene, but sadly, it was one of those “God helps those who help themselves” situations. Upon lying on the couch she found herself dozing off amidst the early hours of the morning. She had a puzzling dream which she didn’t even forget when she woke up. The first thing she did was wake Samarah up that morning. The weather was odd and cloudy as if it rain was going to pour heavily.

Lydia: “Sam, wake up.”

Samarah: “What is it? It is truly too early to get up, right?”

Lydia: “Well, we have to travel back to your parents’ house to get ready for the negotiations and everything.”

Samarah: “Well, we can still sleep for a while.”

Lydia: “Wake up I had a very weird dream. I have to tell you about it.”

Samarah: “Eish (oh), okay then. What is it?”

Lydia: “I know you don’t remember Rachel, but she came to me – in my dreams.”

Samarah: “Okay...”

Lydia: (teary) “She was dressed so beautifully, Sam. She was wearing the white outfit we buried her in.”

Samarah: “Why are you crying?”

Lydia: "Because... she was crying. She looked sad and asked me to give you a message."

Samarah: "What message?"

Lydia: "She asked me to tell you to hold on a little longer, for your happy ending is not complete yet. I don't know what it meant, but it feels like it has something to do with Aaron or maybe a prospective husband. This could be a sign, you know."

Samarah: "A sign of what?"

Lydia: "That you truly shouldn't marry Langa."

Samarah: (sigh) "You are starting again, aren't you?"

Lydia: "It is not a gimmick or anything. I just thought I'd let you know. I am going to shower. Be ready by the time I come back, please."

Lydia looked really puzzled. The dream really got to her so much that she wasn't herself that entire day. Once everyone was done getting ready for the day, they packed their bags and got ready to leave. The onset of chaos was on the brink of eruption. As Samarah went to her car, the car wouldn't start all of a sudden – along with Lydia's car and Sister Joy's car.

Samarah: "Oh, no. My car won't start. Is there something wrong with this place?"

Sister Joy: "Mine won't start either."

Lydia: "Same here. Remember my dream?"

Samarah: (frowning) "Not now, Lydia, please."

Lydia: "I'm just saying."

Sister Joy: “We are running late already. Let us call an Uber or something.”

Samarah: “Hang on, let me call Langa. He will sort something out. I can’t believe I am going to be late for my own wedding.”

She took out her phone and her battery was dead. Lydia decided to keep mum about the situation and help out as much as much as she could to avoid looking like the jealous best friend.

Lydia: “Here, use my phone.”

It took half an hour to finally get hold of Langa.

Langa: “Hey, what’s up?”

Samarah: “Hey, I’ve been trying to get hold of you for the past half an hour.”

Langa: "Sorry, we're busy with the wedding preps. Is everything okay there?"

Not once did he apologize for what he had done the previous night which was a clear indication that he saw no wrongdoing in his actions.

Samarah: "Uh, I don't really know. All three of our cars won't start."

Langa: (surprised) "Are you sure?"

Samarah: "Yes, we've been out here for the past half an hour and we are going to be late. My battery is off too hence I am calling you with Lydia's phone."

Langa: "Okay, I will send Vusi to come fetch you ladies. The taxi is big enough to fit all of you."

Samarah: "Thanks."

Langa: "Call me once he is there."

He hung up while they waited. Vusi indeed took yet another hour. It felt as if he was intentionally dragging his feet since he was also with Vee. Why she was there only God knew. He looked displeased as usual.

Samarah: "Hi, Vusi. Sorry to do this to you, but our cars won't start."

Vusi: "Sure, let's go."

Samarah: "Hi, Aviwe."

Vee: "Sho (sure)."

They all greeted and got into the taxi. He drove off in minimal speed, which felt like torture. With every moment Langa

called, Samarah became frustrated. Vusi was not a slow driver, but on that particular day he chose to drive at a mere 40 km/h.

Samarah: "I'm sorry, but can't we drive a little faster?"

Vee: "Haibo (Goodness)! You of all people want to tell my man what to do?! You must be mad, ke sana (dear)! We did you a favour, you know. Be grateful."

Lydia was deeply annoyed but she kept quiet throughout and so did Samarah. Once they arrived Beatrice was angry of course while her sister Annah was shouting at everyone else in the yard. The yard looked chaotic to put it lightly.

Annah: (shouting) "I don't care what you do or how you do it! Kereyang pudi yeo (find that goat)!"

Samarah: (frowning) "What is happening?"

Beatrice: (shouting) "It is bad enough that you are late and weren't here for the morning ritual, Samarah! The sun is

supposed to be out already! You look like a mess and now you are late!”

Samarah: “I’m sorry. We had car troubles.”

Beatrice: “All of you?”

Samarah: “Yes, all of us. What is happening?”

Beatrice: “The goat we were supposed to get slaughtered went missing out of nowhere.”

Yet another sign and Lydia still kept mum.

Annah: (shouting) “Beatrice weh (My goodness)! Get those people inside the house! We have a lot to do!”

Beatrice: “Get inside the house and get dressed. Stay in your bedroom. You are not allowed to go out. You know the procedure.”

She couldn't even remember her lobola day with Aaron. They headed into the house as told and it was noisier than ever. Everyone was moving and it felt like it wasn't as smooth as it needed be. The weather was changing rapidly with thunderstorms on the way. After getting dressed and doing their make-up, Beatrice came rushing into the bedroom and told them that the Dladla's were outside the gate.

Beatrice: "Ba ga Dladla ba fihlile (The Dladla's are here). You know the rules. Don't go out until we tell you to."

They all agreed and stayed in there. Beatrice rushed alongside Annah to the gate, while Richard was inside the house. He was in no mood for that wedding and if it were really up to him, he would have refused that the proceedings continue. Langa's family from KZN were there for the proceedings. His mother woke up feeling worse than most days, so she chose to stay home and help prepare for the wedding where she could.

Uncle 1: "Sanibonani ba ka Moloji (Greetings the Moloji family). We are here to be of your acquaintance regarding your

daughter. We have seen great potential in her and we would like to claim her.”

Annah went to take the gifts and money they offered as “Vula mlomo” and opened the gate for them. They greeted one another as per custom and walked into the house. Richard was already waiting to drop a bomb on them, not knowing that more drama was set to occur. They greeted Richard who didn’t even greet back.

Uncle 2: “Haibo (Goodness), weh (hey) Moloji. Why are you acting as if you don’t know us, Ndoda (man)?”

Richard: “I don’t know why you are here when you all know what your son did to my daughter.”

Uncle 1: “We are not here for that. As far as we are concerned, we came because you agreed to the marriage. We already paid dowry for her, so we are just finishing off today.”

Richard: “Well, since the recent developments, I feel that some changes need to be made. I have decided to increase the lobola price from R50 000 to R150 000.”

The uncles exclaimed.

Uncle 2: “Uyahlanya (you’re insane)! You cannot do that. The price was already set last time and as far as we’re concerned, we only came here to pay the remaining balance of the initial amount agreed upon.”

Richard: “Well, things change. That is what you get for your son being a lying cheater with abusive tendencies. Lest we forget that my daughter has no children while your son has a son.”

Uncle 1: “Uyakohlwa ukuthi (you seem to forget that) she was pregnant with another man’s children!”

The quarrel started just like that with Beatrice trying to get them to understand each other. Annah stormed in with some disturbing news.

Annah: "I'm sorry to disturb, but I am afraid we have some other guests outside."

Richard: "Tell them to wait!"

Annah: "I'm afraid I can't do that."

Richard: "Who are they?"

Annah: "The Mosue family."

– “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The entire day was filled with nothing but negativity from the moment everyone woke up. They say that the environment one grows up in plays a huge part in one's existence. It can either break you or make you. Richard and Beatrice made it a point to be the worst parents that ever lived to a certain point along with Thandi, her grandmother. They never invested in prayer and so, the house was not covered by the blood of the lamb. Samarah found her way into Jesus' heart and she began praying and having faith. The moment she lost all will and power to do that, all became lost and her soul became a wanderer.

Richard: “What do you mean? What do they want?”

Aaron's great Uncle Malome walked in looking rather pissed.

Malome: “You are not one to ask me that, Richard Moloji! Especially not now!”

One could feel the house shake as he spoke.

Richard: “We are busy with my daughter’s negotiations in case you haven’t noticed. You cannot just barge in here.”

Malome looked a tad bit older than he was a year before and was walking with a cane.

Malome: “You mean our daughter – the Mosue daughter. In case you have forgotten, Richard, your daughter is still married to my nephew Aaron.”

Richard: “Who is dead.”

Malome: (chuckling) “You never brought her do to the necessary customs. We never got her cleansed, so technically

she belongs to us. She is still ours. You never contacted me to inform me that she was ill after the accident. She lost her memory and you never bothered to inform me about it?"

Richard: "As far as I am concerned, what once tied us together is no longer. Aaron is dead."

Malome: "Hmm, only you would say that. You are playing with fire, Richard. This wedding cannot continue."

Uncle 1: (shouting) "Uyanya ke manje (you are talking shit now)! We have already paid lobola for her!"

Malome: "Nothing good will come out of this marriage should you continue with it. You are bringing nothing but pain and heartache upon her. She will be blessed with nothing good. She is still someone's wife."

Richard: "As I have said, Aaron is gone."

Malome: “I don’t have much time left on this earth, Richard, but what I can tell you is that you will live to regret this day. You have refused to heed my call. I promise you, as of today, you have brought nothing but turmoil upon your daughter’s life. The Dladla ancestors will not accept her – Langa is not meant to marry her. He will only bring shame unto her. You will be cursed for allowing her to continue with this shamble of a marriage. Imagine that. Where on earth have you seem a man marrying another man’s wife?”

Beatrice: “I think it is best you leave, Malome. You have had your say.”

Malome: “Hmm and you – your deeds will be exposed. The Mosue ancestors do not play. You have angered so many. You have messed with pure blood – unborn blood.”

Beatrice felt a cold shiver down her spine as Malome said that. With that being said, he looked at them one last time before walking away.

Malome: “God have mercy on you all.”

He walked out and headed to his car while they continued to be stubborn. Samarah could not hear much as she was upstairs, but Lydia was eavesdropping as usual and informing them on the bits and pieces she could hear. She knew deep within her heart that it was just bad news. After Malome left, Beatrice suddenly felt stomach cramps and had a runny tummy so Annah had to take over in getting the men to agree. Ricahrd wouldn't budge and that caused a huge delay in the negotiations. They called Langa who didn't care about the price. He stalled and managed to get the money. The uncles had to drive out to the bank and back and pay R150 000 in cash to Richard. He was cutting his nose to spite his face.

Richard: "Finally, I can see that you are serious about my daughter. In that case – Annah! You may call her out."

The Uncles had nothing left to say as they were left with pure annoyance. Once Samarah was called out, Langa was already at the gate awaiting his new bride. They took her with them along with her entourage to do all the necessary customs at the Dladla household. She and Langa were next to one another in one of the cars. She was covered in a blanket over her head

with just enough space left for her to see. She was dressed in Zulu attire though the weather didn't seem to agree. Langa kept whispering sweet nothings in her ears. Once they arrived, nearly the entire community was outside waiting on them. They were hooting and ululating as they welcomed them. They serenaded them with the usual wedding songs as they walked in. Samarah and Langa were immediately taken to the back of the house where the rituals were about to take place. Mrs. Dladla came out of the house, as frail as she looked and felt.

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) "This can't be right. Niyenzani (what are you doing)?"

Uncle 1: "Ask Richard. He delayed us."

Mrs. Dladla: "You know very well that these rituals are done early in the morning. Look at the weather – what you are doing is not allowed."

Uncle 1: "Awuthule (Keep quiet). We know what we are doing. We will just apologize to the ancestors."

She shook her head and went back into the house. The uncles started the procedure. The moment they took out the snuff with traditional beer and started speaking, thunder was rumbling so hard one could barely hear him. He continued speaking and asking the Dladla ancestors to welcome their new bride. Lightning struck right before Langa and Samarah out of nowhere with no sign of heavy rain as yet. It caused people to be shocked and scared as the bride and groom were rushed into the house. Samarah became frightened by everything. She was left in Mrs. Dladla's bedroom with Lydia by her side.

Lydia: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "I think so."

Lydia nodded without saying anything further.

Mrs. Dladla: "Perhaps people should just eat and go home. The weather looks too dangerous for a party, don't you think?"

Samarah: (nodding) "I think you are right, Ma."

Langa had other plans. He refused and ordered everyone to change into their wedding attire. Of course, the community was more than happy to get free food and booze and did not complain one bit about the weather. The moment Langa and Samarah walked out of the house in their wedding attire, heavy rain came down pouring. She wanted to retreat but he refused. It was just an awful day; the rain was making it impossible for them to enjoy their proceedings. The thunder and lightning was too much and it was just a mess. By the time the wedding was over, half of Samarah's wedding dress was covered in mud. Langa was having the time of his life taking pictures as much as he could, while Samarah did not enjoy her day at all. She retreated to his room earlier than expected with Lydia right beside her.

Lydia: "Are you sure you are okay?"

Samarah: "Yes, I am sure."

Lydia: "Don't you want me to take you to your house? I mean people will literally be walking in and out of here and it will be impossible for you to sleep."

Samarah: "I will be fine, I mean it is my wedding night, right?"

Lydia: "Yeah of which your husband was supposed to book you a hotel room or something."

Samarah: "I will be okay. You don't have to stay around."

Lydia: "Okay, but please, do call me if you don't feel okay."

Samarah: "I will. Thank you even though today was nothing short of a disaster."

Lydia: "It happens. Don't worry about it. I love you

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okay?"

Samarah: "I love you too, Lydia. Thank you once again for everything."

Lydia hesitantly left Samarah to her own thoughts and feelings. Langa's room felt cold without any love or affection. It was her wedding night and not much could be celebrated on her behalf. She changed into her pajamas and tried to rest. Her thoughts were weighing heavily on her so much that it was hard to sleep. It took her about three hours to finally dose off while she got into bed around 9pm. She heard the door open and it was around midnight. She was too tired to hear all the commotion outside. Langa was reeking of booze and cigarette smoke and he knew very well she hated the smell of cigarettes. Not even Aaron was such a heavy smoker. He got into bed and started touching her but she was not feeling it.

Samarah: "Langa... I am exhausted."

Langa: "Njani (how) on our wedding day?"

Samarah: "I've had a really long day. Can't we just sleep?"

Langa: (angrily) “You were dressed in lingerie looking the way you looked last night for your friends but now that it is I your husband you can’t even put in any effort for me?”

Samarah: “It’s not like that. I’m just really exhausted. Haven’t you noticed what a bad day it has been?”

Langa: “I paid so much money for you, Samarah. Appreciate me for a change.”

Samarah: “Excuse me?”

Langa: “Ungizwile (you heard me). I am going to take a shower. When I get back I expect to find you naked.”

He was taking no for an answer. It seemed as if Langa was a totally different creature speaking to her. At that point, she might have realized what a pathetic mistake she had made by marrying him. With each minute that went by while he was in the shower she was filled with so much conflicting feelings. She

felt as if a part of her was slowly dying. Once he was done he didn't even wipe himself dry. He got on top of her and kissed her. Her unresponsive body stiffened, but he didn't care. He had his way with her though her body was just refusing. She wasn't even wet yet he managed to penetrate her and satisfy himself. He moaned and breathed heavily on her with his sweat falling on her skin. She felt disgusted by the entire situation and prayed that it would end quickly as usual. He usually lasted no longer than 5 minutes, but that night he made it a point to have sex with her until his body couldn't. With every rest she appreciated, he only managed to rest for thirty minutes and began all over again. His body was tormenting hers which felt like pain was being inflicted instead of love. It was from that evening onwards that she developed negative feelings towards intercourse. Nothing mattered anymore that evening. She was afraid to even cry. With every kiss and compliment he gave her, her heart tore immensely. When he finally dozed off, she could barely sleep. She immediately went to take a shower for as long as she could to try and wipe off the remainder of his afflictions. Revulsion and detestation were slowly breeding within her heart; not only towards him but towards herself as well. She was starting to loathe herself for her own choices. "This can't be love, can it?" she thought to herself. Once again her intuition was speaking volumes but at that time of the morning even the sanest person would think

they were just overthinking. The following morning came and Langa sprung yet another surprise on her. She was already up to avoid him trying to sleep with her yet again. She had just finished getting dressed with hopes that she would go back to her house.

Langa: “Good morning, Ma Dladla.”

Samarah: “Good morning.”

Langa: “Why are you up so early? I was hoping to spend some quality time with you in bed.”

Samarah: “Oh, I just couldn’t sleep any more. Besides, what will your mother think of me now? I can’t laze around.”

Langa: “My sisters are in the house. Besides, you are my wife – not hers. You will have plenty of time to do that in KZN.”

Samarah: (surprised) “What are you talking about?”

Langa: “Oh, I forgot to tell you. You will have to go live with my father’s family back in KZN for a week. It is customary.”

Samarah: “But you didn’t tell me all that.”

Langa: “Well, now you know. What’s the big deal anyway? You knew when you agreed to marry me that this would happen. I’m a traditional man.”

Samarah: “I took leave to focus on my studies. I have assignments due this week.”

Langa: (frowning) “Which studies?”

Samarah: “I am doing my honours. I can’t afford to miss out.”

Langa: (angrily) “No wife of mine will put her work and studies before me. Cancel that rubbish. You are a Dladla now – act like it. You leave at 1pm.”

Samarah: "Where will you be?"

Langa: "I am staying behind here. I have some business to take care of."

Samarah: "So you expect me to go there alone?"

Langa: "Who else did you expect to go with? You are supposed to prove your worth. It won't be that hard. You can already cook and clean. You are a smart girl. You will win them over in no time."

He was unapologetic about everything. Samarah had to blink a few times to ensure that she wasn't dreaming. She was so anxious that the onset of her migraines and anxiety began. She felt constriction within her chest and her breathing started changing. She went outside to get some air and avoided attention by all means. She had no idea what happened the previous night when she was sleeping, but a lot of drama unfolded. She was doing her breathing exercises when Mrs. Dladla found her pancing outside.

Mrs. Dladla: "Are you alright?"

Samarah: (anxiously) "Oh, Ma. I didn't see you there. Yes, I am fine."

Mrs. Dladla: "You don't look to well. Come sit with me for a second."

She dragged her gently to the gazebo that was permanently stationed outside.

Mrs. Dladla: "Talk to me. I can see you look a bit off."

Samarah: (sigh) "It's nothing, really Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: "You know, when I first got married, my husband's family was such a pain. I was so young and they made it a point to show me I was not fit to be their bride though he had nothing. I had no support whatsoever from my mother-in-law

up until later in life. I don't want the same thing for you. I know, I was dead set against this marriage but you are already in it. I don't hate you at all – I just hate the way my son is. Let me be there for you while I still can."

Samarah felt touched by Mrs. Dladla's words and tears erupted from within her eyes.

Mrs. Dladla: "What is it?"

Samarah: "He wants me to go to KZN. He says I will stay there for a week. Are such things still done in this day and age, Ma? I can't do that."

Mrs. Dladla was fuelled with raged.

Mrs. Dladla: (angrily) "He did what?! He can't be serious."

Samarah: "I can't go there alone, Ma. I can't go to a place where I know no one all by myself."

Mrs. Dladla: “I will sort this out. This boy has gone too far now!”

She couldn't contain her rage and started shouting.

Mrs. Dladla: “Weh (Hey) Langa! Woza lana (come here)!”

Langa walked out of his room and approached his mother confidently.

Langa: “Yebo (Yes), Ma?”

Mrs. Dladla: “What is this shit I am hearing of?!”

Langa: “Ukhuluma ngani (What are you talking about)?”

Mrs. Dladla: “You have decided to take your wife to KZN?! Are you mad?!”

Langa: "Ma, you did it too."

Mrs. Dladla: "Langa, do you want to kill me?! Do you really want me to leave this earth?!"

Langa: "Ma, I don't understand why you are so dramatic."

Mrs. Dladla: "I don't know what went wrong with you. I honestly don't. You killed your father. And now, you want to kill me too."

Langa: "Ma, it is no big deal. She is just going to learn how to take care of me, that's all."

Mrs. Dladla: "And when are you going to learn how to take care of her? You know what? What is the point of me asking that because it is deemed useless. Phumeza! Weh Phumeza!"

Phume: "Ma?"

Mrs. Dladla: “Pack me a few things in my bag. I am leaving for Kwazulu Natal today.”

Phume: “But you are in no state to travel.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Then I’d rather die knowing I was the only one who fought to protect my daughter-in-law. She has chosen to marry my useless son, so I cannot leave her to fend for herself.”

Langa: “Kodwa (But) Ma – “

Mrs. Dladla: “Do not speak to me until you have regained your sense. You are dead to me until further notice. Samarah, go pack your bags, my child. I will be leaving with you. Should anyone want to kill you – they will have to get through me first.”

At that point Samarah found comfort knowing that at least one person had her back at all costs from the Dladla family, but even so, not even Mrs. Dladla could fight all the enemies alone. The entire world was against Samarah all because she chose to marry the wrong person, while still belonging to her husband, Aaron.

“Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

Samarah packed her bags as told and waited for her transportation. Langa only felt bad about his choices once his mother told him shit. While she waited with Mrs. Dladla who was patiently indulging in some Castle light under the gazebo with Samarah by her side, she could feel the anxiety growing. Mrs. Dladla didn't want Samarah to leave her side while Langa was trying to get her attention by walking in and out of his room and up and down the yard. Mrs. Dladla meant every word she said and she wanted nothing to do with her son until further notice. His little stunt trying to prove that he was a man backfired – badly. They all knew that Mrs. Dladla drinking before midday meant she was pissed beyond and ready for war.

Mrs. Dladla: “Aren't you going to have a drink while we wait?”

Samarah: “Oh, no, I am okay, Ma. Thank you.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Trust me, you are going to need it. Baba’s sisters are worse than Lucifer himself. The only good person there is Gogo, who is hanging onto dear life. For what, I don’t even know because her husband has been dead for over 40 years now. She too hasn’t been able to control those rats she calls children. Have a drink – even if it is just one. You are going to need it.”

Samarah: “I am really okay, Ma – “

She didn’t even get to finish her sentence.

Mrs. Dladla: “Phumeza! Bring us one Savanna!”

Phume did as told. Mrs. Dladla opened it for Samarah and handed it to her.

Mrs. Dladla: “Drink up.”

She was afraid to take no for an answer and drank up as told. Thankfully she was nearly done with the drink when the

two uncles who were negotiating her lobola drove into the yard. They walked out confidently – Zulu style. They had that audacity shining right through them as they walkd in.

Uncle 1: “Sanibonani bafazi (Good day women).”

Mrs. Dladla: “Weh (hey) Sibongiseni. We are very much aware that we are women. You don’t need to remind us every time you greet, you know.”

Uncle 2: “Hawu, hawu, hawu (no, no, no), Nomcebo! Uzama ukwenza umalokazana wethu isidakwa (Are you trying to turn our daughter in law into a drunkard)?! Ufuna afane nawe nje (do you want her to be like you)?!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Weh (Hey) Bekhi. Angeke ngizwe ngawe (I won’t be told by you what to do)! Umuzi wami lo (this is my house)!”

Uncle 1: “This is our brother’s house.”

Mrs. Dladla: “And whom was he married to? Ning’jwaela kabi (you are full of rubbish)! Lalelani (listen here), you have come to take my daughter in law with you but you have failed to keep your wives in tact. So, let us not waste any time. Our bags are already ready in my kitchen.”

Uncle 2: “Yima (wait a minute), where are you going?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Do you think that I would let her go alone with you two? When you both failed to follow procedures – proper procedures yesterday? Her entire wedding day became ruined because animameli (you don’t listen). You wouldn’t dare listen to a woman, right?”

Uncle 1: “Weh (hey) Bekhi, uthini kanti lo (what is she even saying)?”

Mrs. Dladla: “You can try and ignore me all you like, but fact remains that you are stuck with me for a week.”

Uncle 2: “Uphi uLanga (Where is Langa)? He must come speak sense into his mother.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You are wasting our time indeed. Drop us off at the airport. We shall meet you guys in KZN.”

Uncle 1: “Ushokanjani (what do you mean)? We are driving there.”

Mrs. Dladla: “What you mean is that the both of you are driving there. My daughter-in-law is not going to have swollen legs and feet when she can afford flights. We have already booked our flights and bickering here with you two is making us late. Now, let us go.”

Uncle 2: “Langa! Weh (hey) Langa!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Sheshisa wena (hurry up, will you)? We will be late for our flight.”

Mrs. Dladla got up and put herself in the car leaving Phume so amused and Samarah was even afraid to burst into laughter. Before she left, she ordered Phume to bring her the last remaining bottle of her Castle Lite. She didn't even say goodbye to Langa and when he approached the vehicle, she vehemently blocked him from speaking to both her and Samarah.

Langa: "Sam, can I speak to you?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Hayi (no), Man! Unefone angisho (you have a phone, don't you)? You can video call her. Asihambeni nina (let's go)!"

She slammed the door in his face leaving him guilt-ridden but she wasn't bothered. The moment they drove out, Samarah's phone started ringing.

Mrs. Dladla: "Don't you dare answer that phone. In fact, switch it off. It is high time I taught you how to deal with a difficult idiot – including these two."

Samarah switched her phone off as told and the fun had just begun. Mrs. Dladla made it a point to become a pain in the butt for the Dladla brothers. They knew her very well and she would not keep quiet. After drinking her last bottle of beer, she started demanding toilet stops and stops at the garage. She bought unnecessary snacks and things just to annoy the brothers. Once they got to the airport, the brothers thought she was joking, but she was dead serious.

Mrs. Dladla: "Alright ke (then). We shall see you two in KZN. Greet your wives for me and tell Gogo I will bring her something nice."

They were both defeated and had nothing further to say. Once the brothers left, Samarah had to ask.

Samarah: "So, Ma, vele we are flying to KZN?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Yebo (yes), did you think I was playing?"

Samarah: "But we didn't book any flights."

Mrs. Dladla: "I got Phume to book two tickets for us while we were drinking outside."

Samarah: "Oh, Ma, I cannot possibly ask you to do that."

Mrs. Dladla: "It's fine, I have some money saved up. When everyone thought I was dying, they kept sending me money. And now that I am still alive, I am making it a point to spend it. Let's go, you are wasting time."

Samarah: "At least let me reimburse you."

Mrs. Dladla: "This is my wedding gift to you. I'd like to join my husband in the spirit world knowing that you are well taken care of and that I have indeed taught you something. It is high time you grew a thick skin. Zulu men and women from the rurals can be little assholes."

Samarah: (laughing) "But Ma..."

Mrs. Dladla: "Grow a thick skin. It will help you in the long run."

They laughed as they got onto the plane. Samarah thought they would land and get a cab immediately to the Dladla household in KZN, but Mrs. Dladla had other plans. Once they landed at the airport, she surprised her.

Mrs. Dladla: "You know how these fancy taxis work, right?"

Samarah: "Do you mean Ubers?"

Mrs. Dladla: (nodding) "Yes. Get us one to this place."

She showed her a picture of a nearby lodge and spa.

Samarah: "Do you want me to book you in there?"

Mrs. Dladla: "No, I want you to book the both of us in there. We will see those fools on Tuesday."

They both laughed while Samarah did as told. They booked into the lodge and Mrs. Dladla wasted no time. It was as if she had everything premeditated. She got undressed and wore a bathing suit.

Mrs. Dladla: “What are you waiting for?”

Samarah: “I didn’t know we were going to have some fun.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Look in your bag – dig deep and you’ll find a spanking new bathing suit. It is in your favourite colour. I’ll be waiting for you in the Jacuzzi.”

She nodded as she left. She checked her bag and indeed there was a brand new two piece purple swimsuit awaiting her. It was stunning and stylish and in her size. She put it on and it fit her precisely. She herself was amazed as to how good she looked in it. She walked out with a robe on and the swimsuit underneath. Mrs. Dladla was peacefully enjoying a glass of champagne in the Jacuzzi.

Mrs. Dladla: "Oh, you finally made it."

Samarah: "Yes..."

Mrs. Dladla: "Manje (And now)? Why are you dressed as if you are going to bed?"

Samarah: (shrugging) "I don't know... I am about to get in."

Mrs. Dladla: "Tell me something; do you not like the way you look?"

Samarah: "Well, I –"

Mrs. Dladla: "Get in here and grab yourself a glass before we continue."

She nodded and took off the robe. Mrs. Dladla decided to chant her clan names and praise her.

Mrs. Dladla: “Yesses, man! Look at you! You are the true definition of a goddess, a beautiful woman!”

Samarah blushed as she took a glass of champagne.

Mrs. Dladla: “A toast, to the most wonderful girl I have ever met. You remind me a lot of myself in my younger days, Samarah. How I wish you could see the beauty that lies within you.”

Samarah: “I suppose.”

Mrs. Dladla: “You know, when I got married, my husband was just as cocky as Langa was. He thought he would control me and turn me into a housewife. I was lenient on him – too lenient perhaps. I did everything for him, washed his laundry, cooked for him – I ensured that he didn’t need to lift a finger once he got back from driving taxis all day. His family thought

that I was no good and I let them be. I chose to be quiet for a while until one day he pissed me off. I found him in his taxi chatting to another girl while I had a three month old Vusi back at home. I ensured that him including his entire family knew my worth. From that day onwards, he respected me. He knew that he was nothing without me. I may have been a homemaker, but that didn't mean I was useless. I raised his children for him and he needed to protect and provide for me. His sisters and brothers were very rude towards me but after I put them all in their place, they respected me so much to the point they feared me. My point is, Samarah, you have money, class, beauty and brains. You have everything they all lack, literally. They will stoop to the lowest to try and break you and demean you. You should not let them. By all means, you have to ensure that you drive them mad and against each other to the point where they respect and fear you. Money controls the world, but the love of money is the root of all evil. They will have a lot more respect for you once they realize that they are small peas in your pod. Show them the lioness you are – I might not always be there, but prove to them that you won't be bullied. You owe me the best week of my life. Let's do this, shall we?"

Samarah found so much joy in Mrs. Dladla's hype and they toasted to it. They drank to it and after a few hours, they went to the spa and got a full body massage. Once they were done the champagne had gotten them so relaxed and the life lessons were flowing. It was the best time she had had with her mother-in-law. They had a very good time together and not once did she answer her husband's phone calls. By dinner time, Langa finally decided to swallow his pride and call his mother on her phone and she answered reluctantly.

Mrs. Dladla: "Ja."

Langa: "Sawubona (hello), Ma."

Mrs. Dladla: "Yebo (yes)."

Langa: "Unjani (How are you)?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Ngiyaphila (I'm well)."

Langa: “Ngicela ukukhuluma no Samarah (May I please speak to Samarah)?”

Mrs. Dladla: “Who said I am with her?”

Langa: “Well, uh, uMalume told me.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Oh, is that so? So, you see it fit to look for your wife on my phone?”

By then Mrs. Dladla decided to put him on speaker for Samarah to hear the entire conversation.

Langa: “Ngiyaxolisa (I’m very sorry), Ma.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Uxoliselani (What are you apologizing for)?”

Langa: (sigh) “I shouldn’t have spoken to you the way I did. I was way out of line. Forgive me.”

Mrs. Dladla: "Hmm, alright."

Langa: "May I speak to her please?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I wish you could, but she is sleeping. The wedding day and journey has taken its toll on her."

Langa: "Where are you guys?"

Mrs. Dladla: "We're safe."

Langa: "Kodwa (But), Ma..."

Mrs. Dladla: "You can hear me, can't you? I am alive and breathing and it means that if I am breathing and well then so is she. What more do you want?"

Langa: "I just wanted to make sure that you guys are okay."

Mrs. Dladla: "I just confirmed it for you."

Langa: "Okay, please tell her to switch her phone on and call me when she gets the chance."

Mrs. Dladla: "I will. Bye."

She hung up while Samarah couldn't help but burst into uncontrollable tears.

Samarah: "Did you have to, Ma?"

Mrs. Dladla: "Yes, I did have to. He needs to learn his place. If you don't put him in his place, he will walk all over you. Never allow a man to do that. He has no authority to do anything like that – he doesn't own you. He will recover from this and speak to you when you feel ready."

They continued to have a great weekend. They proceeded to enjoy the Monday as well and only went to the Dladla household on Tuesday afternoon when they checked out. She really did enjoy her treat from Mrs. Dladla. Once they arrived, Mrs. Dladla ensured that she wasn't made to lift a single finger.

Mrs. Dladla: "Sanibonani (Greetings)! Come and help us with our bags, please."

Bekhi's wife Thandi and Sibongiseni's wife Samkelo were awaiting their arrival. Gogo lived there with all of them including the only remaining Dladla sister Emma.

Thandi: "You sure took your time to get here."

Mrs. Dladla: "We made it, didn't we? We are not forced to be here though."

Samke: "You mean you are not forced to be here. Samarah has to be here – by fire, by force."

Mrs. Dladla: “You are very funny. I will pretend you were just joking as you said that. Uphi uGogo (Where is Gogo)?”

Samke: “She is at the back as usual.”

Mrs. Dladla: “Come, Samarah.”

Thandi: “Who do you think must carry all these bags?”

Mrs. Dladla: “We are guests, use your brains.”

Mrs. Dladla grabbed Samarah by the hand and walked towards the end of the yard. They found Gogo sitting there as usual.

Mrs. Dladla: “Sawubona Gogo (Greetings granny).”

Gogo: (excitedly) “Nomcebo, my daughter! Come here! Let me take a good look at you!”

She hugged her and inspected her face as always.

Gogo: "Hmm, I see your dream is almost coming true. Your husband is patiently awaiting you on the other side. It is only up to you to let go now. Nothing is stopping you anymore."

Mrs. Dladla: "I cannot wait for that. I have brought a special someone to see you."

Gogo: "Let me see you. Come closer."

Samarah walked closer to Gogo while she inspected her face. She had a habit of doing that to everyone she saw. She looked at her face and frowned.

Gogo: "Hmm, your husband isn't very pleased that you are here. His heart is aching."

Samarah: "Oh, yes. Langa is not very happy with me right now."

Gogo: (shaking head) "I'm not talking about Langa. I am talking about your rightful husband. He is in a very dark place, but he will find his way back to you."

Samarah: "I don't follow."

Gogo: "Yes, you won't follow. Go back to the ways your mother-in-law taught you. You will find what truly belongs to you and everything shall be unlocked. You are wasting your time here. Rather make my daughters and those bloody daughters-in-law suffer for what it is worth, huh?"

Samarah: (chuckling) "Uh, okay."

Gogo: "Nomcebo, what did you bring me?"

Mrs. Dladla: "I have brought you your favourite. I'll go get it."

Gogo: “No, let me go with you. These useless children of mine enjoy having me right behind the house all day, every day. Let’s take a walk and go sit under that tree over there.”

They went with Gogo to sit under the tree which used to be her favourite. She would watch cars and people pass by. Sometimes people would visit her because she had an eye that could see beyond the world we live in. She was good at interpreting dreams and palm reading, though she never did it for a fee. Her children were never happy with that, so they chose to hide her from everyone, more especially when others claimed she was a witch. They sat together and Mrs. Dladla gave her her favourite drink – Gordon’s dry Gin. She would mix it a little with sprite and ice. The daughters in law were envious, while her sons were beyond angry. They wanted Samarah to feel what their wives felt when they first got married – all at the hands of their in-laws back in the day, but Gogo had other plans along with Mrs. Dladla. It was quite obvious what their plan was, but no one expected what was about to occur. While the three of them were enjoying themselves, Ntombi walked into the yard with a luggage bag dressed in the family’s traditional attire. She was dressed like a newlywed “Makoti” (bride), much like Samarah. She seemed so confident which meant that it was all part of the plan.

Ntombi: (clearing throat) "Sanibonani (Greetings)."

Mrs. Dladla: "Ntombi, ufunani lana (what are you doing here)?"

Ntombi: "Oh, Ma. I didn't expect you here. I came to visit my in-laws."

Mrs. Dladla: (frowning) "In-laws? Who brought you here?"

Ntombi: "I came on my own. Langa said – "

Mrs. Dladla: (interrupting) "Langa told you that you could come here? Were you married by us, Ntombi?"

Ntombi: "Ma, if you remember correctly lobola was also paid to my family. Langa paid lobola for me way before he even did for her."

Gogo: (laughing) “Nomcebo, your son is still going to show us flames. Hey, wena Ntombazana (you girly). Langa paid lobola for you, you say. Were his parents and elders present? Were you introduced to his ancestors? Were you given a name by us?”

Ntombi: “No, Ma, kodwa (but) – “

Gogo: “Please go back home before you embarrass yourself even further. You and that grandson of mine keep messing with this girl’s fate. Tell him I said that your plan is going to fail – badly. If you the two of you continue with what I know you are planning – then you are both going to lose your most precious possession and blood will be spilled. You have a good memory, so be sure to tell him each and every word.”

Her face hardened while her pupils dilated as she said that. Ntombi could see that Gogo was not one to mess with. She took her bag hastily and rushed out of the gate.

Gogo: (clicking tongue) “uLanga is going to make me mad.”

They continued having a blast and ever since the day they arrived, Gogo wanted Samarah to do absolutely nothing. Samarah was allowed to sleep in until whenever she felt like it and she wasn't allowed to cook. She also was told not to answer any of her husband's calls – ordered by her mother in law and Gogo and she ended up having peace of mind. By Wednesday morning, they thought that they had finally gotten her right where they wanted her. She had just finished taking a bath and Gogo and Mrs. Dladla had gone out to check on Gogo's vegetable garden. Samke knocked on her bedroom door sternly and didn't even wait to be allowed in. She found Samarah dressing up. She was still in her underwear and quickly covered herself.

Samarah: "Hao (goodness), Sis' Samke. I am still getting dressed."

Samke: "Oh, that is no news to us. We are both women, aren't we? What is that you have that I don't? Apart from it all being bigger than mine?"

As if Samke was a size 28.

Samarah: "What can I do for you?"

Samke: "Get ready. We have to start cooking for the men. They will be coming over with their friends so we need all the extra pair of hands we can get. Free loafing is over, you have to work now."

She left her like that and banged the door on her way out. Samarah was once again left frustrated as she was then alone. It was time for her to prove that she was not going to be a pushover. Mrs. Dladla did say that she was not going to be there always to fight her battles for her. She decided to call Lydia while she was getting dressed.

Lydia: "Hey, babe."

Samarah: "Hey, how is it going?"

Lydia: "Ag, nothing much. Just work, what about you?"

Samarah: “Yoh (wow), you are not going to believe this. One of the sisters in law just came here and told me that I need to help them cook. Apparently their husbands’ friends are coming with their friends and we need to cook up a storm.”

Lydia: (chuckling) “Your in-laws are full of drama. That can never be me, hey. Collin told his elders from the onset that I was not about to do any of that Kotiza stuff. I mean, you have money, baby girl – use it to your advantage.”

Samarah: “What do you mean?”

Lydia: “Order food – lots of it. Don’t even forget booze. Taxi drivers go crazy over booze. They will love you. Black people worship the one who has money – use it to your advantage.”

Samarah: “Langa won’t like it – “

Lydia: “What is that you want? If I remember correctly it wasn’t your choice to even be there. So? Do you – for once.”

It was at that moment Lydia activated something within Samarah. She used what she had to her advantage and she became loved as expected. When the sisters were cooking, food she had ordered was delivered with a truckload of alcohol of different kinds. It was as if they were celebrating something no one had even heard of. Samarah's name was on everyone's lips and tongues were praising her, much to the sisters' dismay. They too were enjoying the luxury they were receiving that day, but envy cannot be switched off in a heartbeat. She had a week of peace and was not abused as others thought she would have been. While she was enjoying herself that side, her husband was seething with rage. He did not enjoy the fact that Samarah had all that money while he was still struggling. No matter how much he tried or what he did, they would always say that he did it with her money or she gave it to him. He had no idea his comfort was going to come to an end very soon. He tempted fate and tested God; he played with people's lives but failed to follow through. All those he presumed dead were not dead initially and the past was on its way to haunt him.

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Everyone in life knows the saying “you reap what you sow”. Everyone knows what it means, but not many can comprehend and believe in it the same way some believe in Karma. So many women have been told to leave certain men or get out of a relationship. It is far easier said than done. It is easier to tell someone to stop doing something bad while watching across the window, but it does not matter how many times you tell the person how awful it is for them to be in that situation. If they are not ready to leave or stop – they won’t do it. Every action has a reaction; the same way a criminal will be caught and face his or her judgment, every person’s choice has a consequence. Samarah made the choice to get married to Langa; it might not have been what she wanted initially and it might have been aggravated by witchcraft, but at the end of the day she chose to do it. Despite all the warnings and feelings that occurred – she still went ahead and got married. Nothing lasts forever hence most say that God helps those who help themselves. People will ask: “why does God

allow this to happen”? He placed us all in this world and we were all given a choice. What you do with it is entirely up to you.

Samarah went back home the Sunday evening as she had work the following morning. Langa was nowhere to be seen. His sisters were in the house and of course Phume was the only one happy to see her. Mrs. Dladla had a peaceful week with hopes that Samarah would cope after she was gone. Everyone sees their death before it happens, though they never tell. Samarah found Langa’s room in a complete mess, as if he hadn’t been cleaning the entire week. Phume was excited to see her and chose to help her clean up while catching up on her week with the Dladla’s.

Samarah: “If I may ask, what was happening while I was gone? This place is a real mess.”

Phume: “He was drinking every day. I hardly saw him go work this week. I think he was just going through withdrawal symptoms of not having you near him or something.”

Samarah: "Well, he has a funny way of showing it."

Phume: "He did tell me that you were not answering his calls all week. He would play music until the early hours of the morning. Whatever you did to him made him go mad."

Samarah: (surprised) "Was he angry?"

Phume: (nodding) "Yes, but he will get over it. It is not as if you were out and about with people he didn't know."

Samarah grew rather anxious with each minute that went by. She had a feeling he was probably so angry at her that he might try to become violent. She tried to enjoy herself with Phume that day, but it just wasn't the same anymore after she told him how he had been behaving the entire week. After a few hours, she finished cleaning and even cooked. She caught up with her studies and even ate dinner with no sign of him. She must have dozed off after eating. She heard footsteps around midnight. When she switched on the light, she saw Langa.

Samarah: "Hey."

Langa: "Yebo (yes). Switch off that light and go back to sleep. I am going to take a shower."

Samarah: "Okay."

She was about to switch off the light when she noticed something rather unusual on his hands. She could have sworn she saw blood on his hands.

Samarah: "What's that on your hands?"

Langa: "Nothing. Go back to bed."

Samarah switched off the light and did as told. He got into the shower and washed off the blood. He had just committed yet another sin that was about to change his entire life. Once he was done taking a shower, he got into bed and started touching her. She felt her body tense up yet again as she reminded herself of the last sexual encounter they had.

Samarah: “Do we really have to?”

It was as if her question fell on deaf ears because he pretended not to even hear her. He removed her clothing and had his way with her yet again. It felt different than usual – he lasted longer than usual and it was a little more painful than what she was used to. Once he was done, he turned his back towards her and went back to sleep. She got up again and went straight to the bathroom. She wanted to wash off his scent. She couldn't stand it. Once done, she was about to get a towel from the bathroom shelf, when she noticed his bloodied clothes in the basket. She had never seen so much blood on a person's clothes. Her heart started beating faster than usual. Something told her that he was up to no good but he wasn't going to answer her had she asked. She went back to bed and slept. The following morning, she went about her usual routine and went to work. She continued about her day until she had to knock off. He surprised her at work with a bunch of flowers in the parking lot.

Langa: “Hey.”

Samarah: "Oh, hi. I am surprised to see you here. You should have called."

Langa: "Can't I surprise my wife?"

Samarah: "I suppose you can. What did I do to deserve this?"

Langa: "You were just the most amazing wife, that's all."

Samarah should have wondered why he never touched the topic of her not answering his phone calls the entire week she had been gone. His behaviour was very abnormal and that should have been alarming enough for her to become concerned. He was hot and cold.

Samarah: "Oh, well, thank you."

He kissed her.

Langa: "I have another surprise for you."

Samarah: "Okay, what is it?"

Langa: "Well, we have to go to it. Let's take my car, you can come get your car tomorrow when you come back to work."

Samarah: "Oh, okay."

He opened the door for her and she got into his car. He was all smiles and she was asking herself what the surprise was all about. She chose to wait to be surprised and off he went. He drove to Northcliff, a very posh neighbourhood in Johannesburg. He first stopped at a very large building.

Samarah: "What's all this?"

Langa: "Come and you will see."

She got out and he held her hand in his.

Langa: “Meet my newest baby – Dladla Constructions. I told you, baby, I am making moves if you just sit tight and believe in me.”

Samarah: (surprised) “Wow, I mean, I have no idea what to say. Can we afford all this?”

That was the difference between the two of them; while she was speaking of “we” he was speaking of “I” and “Me”.

Langa: “Yes, I can afford it. I told you that you didn’t marry a useless man. I have wanted to give you the world the moment I first saw you wearing that polka dot dress at Pick n Pay. Stick with me, love and I will show you that I meant every word. I know, a lot of people around you have told you how useless I am and that I am just after your money, but look at me now. I am making waves, love. Believe me, I am making waves.”

She was surprised as to how he got his own company so quickly. To top it all off his building was in Northcliff. The rent there was very expensive. They got into the car and he had yet another surprise for her.

Langa: "I have one more surprise to show you."

They drove for about 15 minutes into another neighbourhood nearby. They finally stopped at one enormous mansion which was big enough to feature on a Housewives reality show.

Samarah: "What's all this?"

Langa: "Come."

He took her hand in his and they walked in. Surprisingly, the house was fully furnished and lacked nothing. The décor was quite modern with lots of black colours and purple and a touch of white. There was a big painting of her right in the middle of the staircase.

Samarah: (teary) "Langa, what is all this? Why is my portrait right in the middle of the house?"

Langa: "This right here, my darling wife is our new home. Welcome to our humble abode."

Samarah: "I don't understand. This is just... It's too big."

Langa: "We have 10 bedrooms and 10 bathrooms."

Samarah: "Do we really need so many rooms?"

Langa: "Yes, we will have my entire family staying with us."

That was a bomb she didn't expect. She didn't mind Mrs. Dladla staying with them, but as for the entire family – that was something else.

Samarah: "Oh, I see."

Langa: "You don't have a problem with that, do you?"

That was not even a question – it was more of a statement to coerce her into agreeing.

Samarah: “No, of course not. Family is family, and we are one, right?”

Langa: “Yes, they are a part of my success. I mean, I wouldn’t be who I am without them, you know.”

She still couldn’t understand why they had to live together like that, but she agreed. I mean, he sort of proved to her that he could take care of her.

Samarah: “What about my house?”

Langa: “You could rent it out or even sell it. I am prepared to take care of you for life. I meant every word when I first met you.”

She didn’t pick up how he kept on making reference to the past and not the present. What was his promise to her for their

marriage? Something was off – she could not pinpoint it but something just didn't feel very right. He had done a complete 360 degree change and was no longer the insecure Langa she knew the past few weeks. Could one get such riches overnight?

Samarah: "When are we moving in?"

Langa: "I thought we could celebrate our first night here and then I will ensure that everything gets delivered by tomorrow. My family will get to see the house kusasa (tomorrow)."

Samarah: "Okay."

He had everything planned out for her; it was surprise after surprise.

Langa: "Go upstairs and take a bath. You will find everything you need in our bedroom."

Samarah: "Which one is ours?"

Langa: “The last one on the left.”

She went upstairs and indeed found their bedroom – it was the biggest of them all with an ensuite bathroom of course. The balcony had a Jacuzzi pool big enough to fit them both. Everything looked neatly packed and smelled freshly new. She perused through the drawers and could see that everything was packed for them; he had his own side and she had hers. The walk-in closet was enough to seal the deal. The bedroom looked a little too rustic for her own liking, but she was fine with it. The entire closet was filled with clothes for the both of them – brand new clothes. Had he actually known her, he would have known that she was a simple woman who liked wearing simple things. Yes, she was used to designer clothes back when she was with Aaron, but she enjoyed wearing the simplest outfits. What she saw in that closet was far from simple. Everything was designer wear and most seemed to be custom made. Even the nightwear was designer brands. At least he managed to pick her size right – or so it seemed. She went to the bathroom and took a long, hot bath with lavender bath salts. Her body felt soothed for a change and she felt relaxed. The house felt a little cold for her liking. It was July month and even with indoor heating – the house was not

supposed to feel that cold. Once she was done with her bath she put on one pair of the new pajamas and headed downstairs. She decided she would tell Lydia all about the house the following day. Her nose picked up the amazing aroma of the food Langa was preparing. Gone was the typical Zulu man she had married; he was making something she had never seen him make before. He hardly even cooked for her, that's for sure. He must have been too excited as he was even wearing an apron on top of his outfit.

Samarah: (smiling) "What are you making?"

Langa: (smiling) "I am making us a three course meal. Thank goodness you took your time, otherwise I'd still be cooking."

Samarah: (laughing) "You never cook. What changed?"

Langa: "I did, love. I realized how much of an asshole I have been towards you. I should have treated you better and Lord knows how much your heart is aching over our botched wedding. I know, you have never complained about it, but it

still haunts me. I should never have let you go through that. It just wasn't right."

To make things worse – no pictures were saved for their wedding. The photographer said that the pictures vanished out of nowhere and nothing could be retrieved. So, it was a blessing in disguise that they didn't have pictures saved for their wedding day.

Samarah: "It is okay, really."

Langa: "No, it is not. This is why I want this romantic Paris inspired dinner. For starters; we're having Asparagus, Gorgonzola, Walnut and Mint Bruschetta. For the main course Pasta Putanesca and for dessert Margharita cheesecake with Tequila strawberries."

Samarah: "I am impressed. Did you really make them all by yourself?"

Langa: "For you – absolutely yes."

He pulled her chair for her and poured her a glass of wine. He sat across her and held her one hand.

Langa: "A toast: to the future. May we be blessed with a house full of love, success and lots of children."

Samarah: (smiling) "Cheers."

Langa: "I love you, Samarah Dladla."

Samarah: "I love you too, Langa Dladla."

Langa: "We have to make a plan and get your surname changed. It is high time people stopped calling you Dr. Moeng."

Samarah: "Yes, I will check in with Home Affairs."

Langa: "Good. You are my wife and mine alone."

Ever since that odd night he came back home with blood-stained clothing, things were looking up for him. He started flourishing in ways that surprised everyone around him. That evening, Langa made love to Samarah or so he thought. Her body could not make way to allow her to enjoy whatever he was doing to her and it showed. He was the only one that would climax and actually finish, while she had to think of somewhere else throughout the entire time. She could never bring herself to go on top of him. The following morning, Langa was still the loving man she was with the previous evening. He greeted her with breakfast before she left for work. It made things a lot easier for her, though her husband was hiding one big secret as always. She went about with her day and nothing unusual was picked up and it was just another normal day at the hospital. While she sat down and was about to eat her lunch, her phone rang and a call came through from an unsaved number.

Samarah: "Hello?"

Malome: "Greetings, Samarah. How are you, my child?"

Samarah: "I am well. Who am I speaking to?"

Malome: "It is I, Malome. Your husband Aaron's Great Uncle."

She had no idea what to say.

Samarah: "Oh, hello Malome."

Malome: "I know, your memory is still not jogged and you may not remember me, although I remember you very well. I am not calling you to stress you out, I just wanted to give you a message."

Samarah: "Yes?"

Malome: "Seek what your mother-in-law taught you and the truth shall be revealed. He needs to come back to you before any further damage is done."

Samarah: "I don't follow, Malome."

Malome: “Don’t stop praying – that is the only thing that will reveal to you whom you are dealing with. Seek what she taught you and he will come back to you.”

Samarah: “Seek what? Who will come back to me?”

With that said

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he hung up. Samarah was still speechless and confused and tried calling him back, but the phone rang unanswered. She sat there pondering her mind when Ntate Tau came to her.

Ntate Tau: “Do you have a few minutes?”

Samarah: “Oh, hi, Ntate. Yes, I do. Are you well?”

Ntate Tau: “I should be asking you.”

Samarah: "Oh, I am fine. I can't complain."

Ntate Tau: "Are you sure?"

Samarah: "Yes, I just received a very strange phone call."

Ntate Tau: "Hmm, what do you think about that phone call?"

Samarah: "I don't know. It was just strange."

Ntate Tau: "It is rather unfortunate how badly you are surrounded by evil. It is so much that you sleep with the devil himself."

Samarah: (frowning) "I'm sorry. I don't know what you mean, Ntate. Are you calling my husband the devil?"

Ntate Tau: "No, keep well. I will see you some other time."

Samarah: "Wait."

Ntate Tau stood up and left her hanging right there. Nothing seemed to make sense in her life. She was a little distracted from lunch time up until she knocked off. While she walked to the parking lot, she received a call from her husband.

Samarah: "Hey, I'm just about to leave the hospital."

Langa: "Okay, please come straight home, okay?"

Samarah: "Okay."

Langa: "I love you."

Samarah: "I love you too."

Indeed, she did as told and drove straight home. She was still unfamiliar with the way home, so she needed to use her GPS. Upon arrival, she was stunned to see the entire Dladla

family there – including the family from KZN. Gogo was there as well but she looked rather displeased along with Mrs. Dladla. Zanele and Buhle were enjoying themselves alongside Vee and were drinking everything and anything. Food was galore – it seemed as Langa ordered everything he could think of. Though it was still winter, they had a great time in the lounge with the fireplace on. The moment she walked in, he rushed towards her and gave her one passionate kiss.

Samarah: (blushing) “Langa, not in front of everyone.”

Langa: “Come on, we’re allowed to do that. We’re married after all.”

Samarah: “Greetings everyone.”

Thandi: “Oh, makoti (daughter in law). How nice of you to finally join us.”

Langa: “Awukahle wena (hold your horses), Thandiwe. My wife is a doctor in case you didn’t know.”

Samke: “Hayike (Oh well), it is good now that you have all this money. She won’t have to act like she’s the only one with money any more.”

Langa: “If you came to disrespect my wife in our home, then you have come to the wrong place. You are old enough to know between right and wrong.”

Langa had never stood up for her in front of everyone like that. They were all quite shocked – including her, so much that one could hear a needle drop amongst the sudden silence.

Samke: “Ngiyaxolisa (I am very sorry), Bhuti (brother). I meant no harm.”

Samarah: “Let me go change and I will join you all in a minute.”

Langa: “Okay, don’t take too long, hey.”

She nodded and he kissed her again. She greeted Mrs. Dladla and Gogo on her way to the bedroom.

Samarah: "Gogo, Hi Ma."

Gogo: "My daughter. Go get changed and come back to see me. I want to speak to you really quickly."

She sounded serious. She nodded and rushed to the bedroom. When she came back, Gogo and Mrs. Dladla walked outside with her where no one would be able to hear them. They sat right outside the patio.

Samarah: "Are you sure you want us to be out here in the cold, Gogo?"

Gogo: "I won't take too long. Tell me, how did your husband acquire all this wealth in such a short amount of time?"

Samarah: "I don't know, he said that his investments gave him a really good turnover and he managed to secure everything."

Mrs. Dladla: (shaking head) “Ka ngaka (so much)?! And you believe him?”

Samarah: “I don’t see any reason not to.”

Gogo: (shaking head) “Yoh (wow)! This boy has really gone too far. What did he do with the bloody clothing you saw a few days ago?”

That question raised a serious concern for her.

Samarah: “I don’t know... should I be worried?”

Gogo: (shaking head) “My child, your husband has made a covenant with the devil. He has killed another one of your husband’s blood. He is digging a deep hole for himself and for you as well.”

Samarah: “Gogo, I am so confused. What do you mean?”

Gogo: "I will need you to listen to me very clearly now since well you seem to be under his spell. Nothing I say to you will make sense right now, but if I don't tell you then I will be punished."

Samarah felt as if her head was spinning.

Gogo: "Your husband Langa was ordered by – "

She was interrupted by uninvited guests. Two police officers were right outside the house.

Policeman: "Greetings! Is this Mr. Langa Dladla's house?"

Samarah: "Uh, yes. Is there a problem?"

Policeman: "Ma'am, may we ask you a few questions?"

Samarah: "In regards to what?"

Langa heard unfamiliar voices and walked out of the house. Once he noticed the two officers, he immediately put his arm on Samarah's shoulder.

Langa: "Is there a problem, officers?"

Policeman: "Are you Mr. Dladla?"

Langa: "Yes, I am."

Policeman: "May we come in? We would like to ask you a few questions."

Langa: "Sure, I will open right up for you. Come, let's go inside. Ma, Gogo, you two shouldn't be outside in the cold like this. Who are you gossiping about?"

He chuckled while they both looked displeased. He opened the door for the two police officers and went straight to the kitchen. At that point, Samarah was right next to him with Gogo and Mrs. Dladla seated.

Policeman: "Where were you exactly on Sunday evening around 11pm?"

Langa: "Oh, I was with my wife."

Policeman: "Are you sure?"

Langa: "Yes, you can ask her. She is right here. I was with you, wasn't I, love?"

Samarah felt a cold chill down her spine as she looked at Langa. His eyes were speaking to her. She remembered correctly; she came back home later that day to find a messy house. That was the very same evening that he came back home with blood-stained clothes. Her mind was about to drift off when the policeman repeated his question.

Policeman: "Ma'am. Was he with you on this night?"

Samarah: (nervously) "Yes, yes, he was."

Policeman: "Would you be able to put this in writing on an official statement?"

Samarah: "Yes, I am."

Langa: "See? Is that all now, officers?"

Policeman: "Yes, that is all for now."

Samarah: "May I ask why you are asking us all this?"

Policeman: "Oh, this is in connection with Palesa Moeng, the daughter of Paul Moeng otherwise known as Bra P. Her father

says that she was last seen with your husband in his car, on Sunday around 11pm.”

Samarah: “Oh, I see. Is she okay?”

Policeman: “No, I’m afraid she was found dead this morning.”

Samarah felt a tight knot grip her stomach from the inside. She felt her intestines turn which made her nauseated. Langa greeted the policemen goodbye and carried on with his party, leaving Samarah speechless in the kitchen with Gogo and Mrs. Dlada. Her soul temporarily left her body.

Gogo: “Samarah, can you hear me?”

Mrs. Dladla: “She doesn’t look too good. Maybe you should sit down.”

Their voices felt a bit faint when her stomach responded. She immediately rushed to the sink and vomited right in there.

Gogo: "It's the shock, she will be fine. Let us give her a few moments."

She felt herself becoming a bit dizzy with her entire body shaking. She grabbed a glass and poured herself some water. She gulped it all and sat down for a moment.

Samarah: "Are you saying my husband is a killer?"

Gogo: "Telling you everything right now will make you feel even more scared. Ask him what happened to your husband – your real husband. Ask him why he had to turn on Bra P and kill his daughter – your husband's cousin."

Samarah: "What are you saying, Gogo? That Langa is a killer?"

Gogo: (nodding) "Why do you think this house feels colder than usual? You are sleeping with the devil reincarnate. Be careful. Your life is already compromised. I can only pray that you leave this marriage before he takes away all your luck."

Mrs. Dladla: “My daughter, I cannot leave you alone here, however, I would really like you to choose yourself. I will give you some time to think about it but please, make a decision. Langa is not who you think he is – he is not even someone I can call my son right now. I don’t know who he is any more.”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, I don’t believe it. Langa may be a lot of things, but he loves me. Surely, he does love me. He is no killer.”

Gogo: “If that is the case then why is Aaron not here with you?”

Samarah: “I don’t even remember.”

Gogo: “That’s because he ensured that you don’t. Your memory loss is not exactly a medical issue right now, it is a spiritual issue. Why do you think you have all these thoughts and feelings about him yet you still believe the best in him? Only you can crawl out of this hole by yourself, my child. Let me help you before it is too late.”

It didn't take too long for Langa to hear what they were saying to his wife.

Langa: "And then? What is all this?"

Gogo: "You know exactly what this is."

Langa: "Are you trying to stage some kind of intervention in my own house, Gogo?"

Gogo: "I am giving you a chance to repent and change your ways, Langa. Your father has already turned his back on you. Do not let your mother turn her back on you either. Do not let her die before you change."

Langa: "How dare you?! I invite you to my house to celebrate my wins and you choose to do this to me, Gogo?! And you, Ma! I mean, I have always known that you dislike my wife, but this! How could you actually stoop so low?"

Gogo: “You know what you did, Langa. Tell her the truth. Do you honestly think that Aaron is dead?”

Langa: (angrily) “I think it is time for you to leave!”

Mrs. Dladla: “Langa, are you actually going to speak to your elders like that?”

Langa: “I’d rather protect my wife from you. You never wanted the best for me, Ma – never. Now that I am thriving, you want to bring your evil witchcraft into our lives.”

Samarah: “Langa, don’t.”

Langa: “No, Samarah! It is high time I spoke my peace. You are not going to ruin my life, Ma. I refuse!”

Mrs. Dladla felt her blood pressure rising while Langa was spewing all sorts of insults at her.

Mrs. Dladla: “Are you sure this is how you want our last conversation to end?”

Langa: “I am very sure! As far as I am concerned – you are dead to me!”

Proverbs 18 verse 21 says; “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” Just like that, Mrs. Dladla took her last breath and dropped to the floor.

“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”

The power of the tongue is something really misunderstood by many. So many people in the world are still suffering due to the fact that they were once cursed by a dying elder or a dying wish still remained. Should a person pass and they curse you – it is very difficult to revoke it. Mrs. Dladla dropped dead on that kitchen floor leaving Samarah beyond traumatized. Instead of Langa realizing his ways; he chased Gogo away. He “killed” his parents and he didn’t even realize it.

Langa: (angrily) “Do you see what you have done now, Gogo?! It is time for you to leave!”

Phume came rushing into the kitchen and saw her mother lying lifeless on the floor.

Phume: (hysterically) “What happened?! Why is Ma on the floor?! Ma, wake up! Sam, please help her!”

Samarah was frozen for a few minutes.

Zanele: “Yoh (wow)! I should have known that this girl came with her own drama and evil! My mother is now dead because of you!”

Langa: “No one will speak to my wife like that – not under my roof and especially not for as long as I am alive!”

Gogo: “Bheki, take me home, please.”

Bheki: “Kodwa Gogo (But Gogo), we cannot just leave. Nomcebo is lying on the floor njena (thought).”

They say that money is the root of all evil, when in fact it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. Bheki and Sibongiseni along with their wives didn't want to leave all because of a mere elderly woman dying. “It was her time”, so they thought. Why should fun end due to a funeral? That was the perfect excuse for them to stay behind even longer. Buhle was

crying while Zanele was trying so hard not to throw insults at her sister-in-law. Phume was hysterical and would not leave Mrs. Dladla's sight, while Samarah was traumatized.

Gogo: "Kulungile (It's fine), I will find my way back home."

Samke: "Gogo, you can leave in the morning. It is just not safe for you to leave right now."

Gogo: "I cannot stay here – not tonight."

Samke: "Fine, we will get Bhut'Langa to book you a place for the night."

Gogo agreed and left the kitchen to go wait in the lounge, while Samarah went straight to the bedroom and sat on the bed. She found it hard to process what had just happened. She sat there for a good fifteen minutes at most when Langa opened the door to check on her.

Langa: "Hey, are you okay?"

Samarah: "Did you do it?"

Langa: "Did I do what?"

Samarah: "Did you kill all those people? Aaron, Rachel, Palesa? Did you really do it?"

Langa: (sigh) "Would I really kill people and not tell you? If Aaron was really such a special person to you – why can't you remember him then?"

Samarah: "I don't know. All this is just too much for me to handle all at once."

She found herself crying.

Langa: "Hey, I would not lie to you like that Samarah."

Samarah: “Then why would Gogo and your mother lie? Why would they?”

Langa: “How would I know? They say success befalls the least expected person. Do you think people are happy to see me living large in a 10 bedroom house? Come on, Sammy. I could never do that to you.”

Samarah: (crying) “Why did you speak to them like that? Are you happy that your mother died in our kitchen?”

Langa: “No, I just got so upset and carried away by my emotions. I am sorry you had to witness that. If it consolidates anything – I have never spoken to my mother like that before. I mean, I just hated the fact that they were lying to you like that right under my nose. If I am such a horrible person, then why am I not in prison already? I mean, really now. You are a prayer warrior, Sam. You have always been. Surely you would have seen me do those things, right?”

She was conflicted and had no idea how to respond.

Langa: "Go take a bath, I will sort everything out."

She agreed and went to take a bath. Her soul was not at ease knowing that Mrs. Dladla, the one woman who was always by her side exited the world in such a horrid manner. It didn't make sense to her to even think that Gogo would lie to her. She tried so hard to tap into her mind to try and remember, but the more she did that – the more her head hurt. The migraines were so horrible that even pills couldn't cure them. She finished bathing herself with the entire evening weighing heavily on her. She got in bed and still struggled sleeping. She kept asking herself if she was lying to herself by believing Langa, if Lydia didn't know the entire truth as Gogo was telling her. She chose to give her a call.

Lydia: "Hey, is everything okay?"

Samarah: "Hey, yeah, I am just checkin in on you."

Lydia: "You never call this late, babe. What's up? You sound so down."

Samarah: (crying) "I don't know if I am going insane or not."

Lydia: "Talk to me."

Samarah: "Mrs. Dladla just passed away."

Lydia: "What? Are you sure? What happened?"

Samarah: "She and Langa had an argument and she just collapsed and died right in our kitchen. In our brand new house, Lydia."

Lydia: "I am confused. You guys have a house?"

Samarah: "I was going to surprise you, but I was just waiting for the right time."

Lydia: "Oh, this is a mess. I will be right there early tomorrow morning, okay? Just text me your location."

Samarah: "Thank you, Lydia. I am sorry for bothering you at this time of the night."

Lydia: "It's okay. You are my best friend and that is what I am here for. You'd do the same for me. I will call you tomorrow morning, okay?"

Samarah: "Okay. Bye."

Lydia: "I love you, bye."

They both hung up with Samarah having trouble sleeping. It was bad enough that a death had occurred just a day after moving into their new house. It took her hours to fall asleep with no sign of Langa getting into bed. She assumed he was busy getting the mortuary to take her body. She fell asleep and dreamt of Mrs. Dladla.

Mrs. Dladla: "Samarah, remember my words. I am no longer in the flesh and I am now in spirit. I am not allowed to get close

to you because of what my son has done to you. I love you very much and I hope that you hang onto my teachings. Learn how to pray again – find it in your heart to get the strength to pray again. I will always love you.”

When she woke up she felt as if she was literally right there in the room. She felt a cold breeze across her face but only to find that it was just a dream. Langa was already awake by then. She noticed his side of the bed was creased to show that he did sleep there. She got up and took a shower. She notified the hospital that she had lost her mother-in-law and wouldn't be able to make it for a few days. She chose to stay home and help out with the funeral arrangements. It felt so surreal that her mother in law was no more. When she got up, the entire house was so messy. It seemed as if the rest of the family carried on with their own party while she was asleep. There were beer bottles and plates of half-eaten food left all over the dining table. The floor was dirty and she had to clean up all by herself. It took her about an hour to get everything out the way, and she had to throw away the left over platters as they were just left like that. While she was making herself a cup of coffee, Zanele walked into the kitchen alongside Samke. They both chose not to greet Samarah in her own house – the nerve.

Samarah: "Good morning."

Samke: "Hmm, morning makoti. Aren't you going to make us some breakfast?"

Samarah: "Excuse me?"

Samke: "Hawu (goodness), you heard me. Are you going to expect us to starve to death?"

Samarah: "You have hands, don't you?"

Samke: "Weh (wow)! I can't believe Langa married you. I mean, not only are you fat but you are just lazy and bloody disrespectful."

Samarah: "Well, I really don't have time for this, Samke, because you are not exactly think yourself. Besides, if you really have a problem with whom Langa married – then why don't you find him another wife?"

Samke: “Ntombi was far better than you, you know.”

Samarah: “Then why didn’t he marry her?”

Zanele: “Leave this one, Aunty. She thinks she knows everything.”

Samarah: “I don’t think I know everything. I will not be insulted in my own house – especially not after I cleaned up after you all. Do me a favour and ensure that you clean up after you are done eating. I have things to do like prepare for my mother in law’s funeral.”

Samke: “Kuyafana mos (it is all the same, though). Umbulele nje (you killed her).”

Samarah: “Says the very same person who continued to have a party after she died right on this floor.”

She couldn't even believe that she was talking back at Samke. She was just irritated at the level of disrespect she was displaying towards her. As expected, Lydia arrived early in the morning. She called Samarah to let her know that she was right outside the estate.

Lydia: "I am not even sure if I am at the right place, babe."

Samarah: "Yes, you are. I will give you the code."

She entered the code and made it to the house within a few minutes. Lydia was beyond stunned to see the house. She hugged her immediately after she saw her.

Lydia: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: (nodding) "I think so."

Lydia: "Come, let's go for a walk."

Samarah and Lydia left the rest of the people in the house and went for a walk.

Lydia: “Forgive me if I sound stupid, but where did your man get the money for such a ridiculously expensive house?”

Samarah: (shrugging) “I don’t really know. You should see his company.”

Lydia: (shocked) “He has a company?”

Samarah: “Yep, Dladla constructions.”

Lydia: “Something feels off.”

Samarah: “I know, that is what started the entire fight in the first place.”

Lydia: “What exactly happened?”

Samarah patiently explained everything that happened from the evening Langa came back home with the bloodied clothes to the moment Mrs. Dladla dropped dead. With tears, gasps of shock and laughter in between, it was quite a long two hours.

Lydia: “Wow, man. And here I was thinking you have seen the worst, but it turns out that it has only just begun.”

Samarah: “Tell me about it.”

Lydia: “So, what are you going to do?”

Samarah: “I don’t know. I don’t know what to do.”

Lydia: “Well, I mean they did tell you to pray. I cannot tell you what to do, but you will achieve a lot more clarity if you pray harder and restore your faith all over again. You do have nothing to lose, right?”

Samarah: "I suppose you're right."

Lydia: "Yes, you will be fine. I just need you to believe."

Samarah: "Although Gogo did say something about Aaron being alive or something like that. I swear I heard her say that."

Lydia: (shocked) "Are you sure? I mean, we did bury him."

Samarah: "Can I ask you to take me to his grave? I mean perhaps I will remember everything once I go there."

Lydia: "I have been waiting for this day. I will gladly take you, however we need to tread carefully. I don't think Langa should know that we are digging into the past. I don't trust him."

Samarah: "Your hatred for him aside – do you think he is capable of killing?"

Lydia: “Honestly? I think he is. I mean, why else would you be so into him when you wanted nothing to do with him?”

Samara: “Do you mind telling me what Aaron was like?”

Lydia: “Oh, honey. Where do I even start?”

She spent yet another two hours talking about Aaron. It was rather refreshing for Lydia to see Samarah willing to open up and listen to stories about Aaron and how they were together. She knew that Lydia would never lie to her. All the things she spoke of just made her cry intensely. She was crying because she hated herself for not remembering, and she felt guilty for marrying Langa and completely eliminated the entire idea of Aaron’s existence.

Lydia: “I truly wish you had your ring and necklace that he had bought you. I mean, I don’t get it. You had an accident and suddenly the jewelry was not there. Either way, someone must have stolen it. I truly believe that your memories will come back if you pray and believe.”

Lydia: "Thank you so much, Lydia. I don't know what I would do without you, really."

Samarah: "That is what friends are here for."

Samarah's phone rang and it was Langa.

Samarah: "Hello."

Langa: "Where are you?"

Samarah: "I am right outside. I took a walk with Lydia."

Langa: "Come back. We have a few things to discuss."

Samarah: "Okay, I'll be right there."

She hung up.

Samarah: "It's Langa. He says I should come back home."

Lydia: "Okay, act normal. We will deal with everything else later."

She nodded in agreement and they went back to the house. She found everyone seated with Langa addressing them. The moment she walked in with Lydia he hugged and kissed her.

Langa: "Are you okay?"

Samarah: "Yes, I am."

Langa: "Good, hey, Lydia. Are you well?"

Lydia: "Yes, I am. How are you?"

Langa: "I have had better days. Thank you so much for coming. Your support means a lot to us."

Lydia found it very hard to contain her shock and confusion so she just nodded.

Langa: “I was just briefing everyone about the funeral arrangements. I unfortunately have to be at work because my launch is due very soon. I already had to extend the company launch because of the funeral, but I can’t be here everyday. Which is why you will be in charge of everything – as my wife.”

Samke: (angrily) “Why her because she knows nothing about our culture and way of doing things? She just joined our family just yesterday.”

Langa: “This is why education is important, you know, I mean really. This is my wife and that was my mother. You will all respect her for as long as you can. If I hear her complaining about any of you – I will not hesitate to chase you out of my house. You are doing me no favour by being a burden.”

They all kept quiet.

Vee: "I just have a question."

Langa: "Yes?"

Vee: "Since well she will be busy with the funeral arrangements and all, what about the kids? I mean how will she take care of your son?"

Langa: "What kind of stupid question is that, Aviwe? You are all here, aren't you? I mean show me anyone who cannot take care of a four year old in this house? Anyone?"

No one had the audacity to respond to that.

Langa: "Exactly. I expect you all to work together. Mthokozisi is no bother. You will do as my wife says and respect her. Ensure that the guests who will be coming are covered. You can all cook so make yourselves something to eat and don't expect my wife to do everything for you. Organizing a funeral is not as easy as it looks."

They all kept quiet and swallowed whatever Langa threw at them.

Langa: “Good, if there is nothing else, I need to go back to work. I trust that you have all heard me. Will you be okay?”

Samarah: (nodding) “Yes, I will be.”

Langa: “Okay.”

He kissed her and said his goodbyes. Lydia was still trying to digest what happened.

Lydia: “Alright then, you heard the man.”

Zanele: “Haike (wow) udlisiwe ubuthi (my brother has been fed love potion)!”

Lydia: “I bet this is the same reason your own husband chased you back home, darling. Uyaphapha (you are so forward)!”

Zanele: (angrily) “Excuse me?!”

Phume: “Let it go, Zanele. You always want to cause unnecessary fights.”

Zanele: “Of course you will side with her.”

Phume: “This is not about sides, it is about being respectful and honouring our mother. She didn’t raise you to be the way you are.”

Phume got up and left Zanele’s mouth hanging.

Buhle: “Keep quiet nawe Zanele before you get us chased out of our own brother’s house.”

Lydia: “Go get your bag, we have a lot of things to do.”

Samarah rushed to her bedroom and found Gogo exiting one of the bedrooms.

Gogo: "Thank goodness you're back. Take me with."

Samarah: "Gogo, I thought you left already."

Gogo: "After you went to sleep, I also locked myself into the bedroom. I stayed in there all night."

Samarah: "That's not good. Did you eat?"

Gogo: "Phume brought me something to eat earlier on. I need to leave. I couldn't leave before seeing you. I wanted to ensure that you are okay."

Samarah: "I'm fine. Where should I take you?"

Gogo: “I want to go back home, but I can’t leave without burying Nomcebo. It wouldn’t feel right.”

Samarah: “Can’t you stay here until after the funeral?”

Gogo: “It will be very difficult for me since this house is not protected. You don’t pray and neither does your husband. How do you expect ancestors and God to come through without prayer?”

Samarah: “I hear you, but surely you can do something – please. We need you to be here. These people will drive me insane.”

Gogo: (nodding) “Take me with you. I’ll buy a few things to at least try and protect the house.”

Lydia and Samarah took Gogo with them. They ran errands and had lunch with her. Once they were done eating, she made a simple request.

Gogo: “Ngicela ungithengele iGordons lapho (Please buy me Gordons).”

Lydia: (laughing) “Hao (goodness), Gogo. Isn’t it a little bad for you?”

Gogo: “My darling, everything is bad for me at this point. I am 86 years old. What more can harm me?”

They all laughed.

Samarah: “Sure, is that all you want?”

Gogo: (nodding) “Yes, with lots of Sprite. Buy me enough to keep me going until the funeral. It is about to be a bumpy ride.”

Samarah nodded and went into the bottle store to get some for her. She was left with Lydia in the mean time.

Lydia: “So

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you can see the future, Gogo?”

Gogo: (nodding) “Yes, take advantage of the situation while you still can.”

Lydia laughed.

Gogo: “Come closer.”

Lydia did as instructed and Gogo inspected her face as usual. She didn’t have the huge frown on her face she had when she first met Samarah, instead – she had a wide smile.

Gogo: “Hmm, the future looks promising.”

Lydia: “Is that it?”

Gogo: "Don't worry, you will have children – when the time is right."

Lydia: (excitedly) "Really? Oh, thank goodness! I was starting to think I am barren."

Gogo: (shaking head) "No, you just have a very low lying uterus which makes it difficult for you to conceive. Your husband is very supportive and loves you to death. You will have children – when the time is right. Three of them to be exact."

Lydia: "Oh, this is the best news ever. I have been so worried."

Gogo: "Your future is clear – it is your friend you need to worry about."

Lydia: "What do you mean?"

Gogo: "A very dark cloud is hovering over her. For as long as she is around that pest called Langa, nothing good will come out of this relationship."

Lydia: “What can I do?”

Gogo: “Get her to vomit what he has fed her and get her to start praying – even if it is a simple Our Father will be enough. It doesn’t mean that once she starts praying she will be released from his spell – no. Remember redemption goes with faith. She has a very long road ahead of her, but everything she needs is just at the tip of her finger. All will be well – I believe so.”

Lydia: (nodding) “She did say you mentioned something about Aaron being alive?”

Gogo: (shaking head) “Wait and see for yourself. There are too many eyes and ears. That slipped out because I was angry at Langa. I wasn’t supposed to say anything.”

Lydia: (surprised) “So he is still alive?”

Gogo: “Like I said, watch and see. That is all I am going to say.”

And just like that Gogo ended that conversation. Samarah came out of the bottle store with a few bottles of the Gin Gogo had requested.

Samarah: "Here, I hope they will be enough for you."

Gogo: "It will be, my darling. It depends on how much drama awaits us."

Samarah: "What do you mean? Is there more?"

Gogo: "Just wait until we get home. Are you two sure you won't need anything to drink?"

Lydia: "Should we?"

Gogo: "Believe me – you are going to need it."

They drove away and once they arrived home, the house looked fuller than it was a few hours prior. There were quite a few people Samarah had never even seen before. Phume came rushing to the door once Samarah, Lydia and Gogo walked in.

Phume: "Oh, thank goodness you're back."

Samarah: "What's wrong?"

Phume: "The house is just so full. Apparently Ma's family is here along with a few other relatives from the Dladla family. We even have some very unexpected guests."

Samarah: "Who?"

Phume: "Ntombi is also here with her mother."

Samarah: "Who allowed her in here?"

Phume: "Who do you think? Vee and Zanele."

Samarah knew that it was about to be a very long haul.

Gogo: "I told you you would need a drink. Let me go sit down."

Gogo found a place for herself to sit a little further away from the adults. She was near the children and started sipping on her gin. Meanwhile everyone's eyes were on Samarah once she walked into the full living room and noticed Ntombi and her mother.

Samarah: "Greetings everyone."

Ntombi's mom: "Oh, she is finally here. Welcome back, lady of the house. I see you haven't changed one bit from the last time I saw you – still fuller than most."

Samarah: "Well, I can't say it is a pleasure to see you either. Why are you here, if I may ask?"

Ntombi's mother: "We have come to pay our respects to Mthokozisi's grandmother. Surely you understand, don't you?"

Samarah: "I see. When are you leaving?"

Ntombi: "Actually, we were thinking of sleeping over. I mean, that is if it is okay with you."

Samarah: "You should have run it by me first."

Vee: "Oh, haike (wow). See what I mean? I told you – we live under rules and regulations now."

Ntombi: "Yes, well, I was in so much shock when I heard the news, I didn't think you'd mind. Besides, my son is heartbroken that his grandmother is gone. He surely needs me more than ever before – since well I am his mother."

Ntombi's mother: "Mthokozisi! Woza lana (come here)!"

Mthokozisi came running toward his grandmother.

Ntombi's mother: "You must be so happy to see uGogo (your granny), aren't you? Don't you worry, your mother is here to comfort you."

Ntombi: "Yes, I am indeed."

She pulled Mthokozisi closer to her, but he pulled away.

Mthokozisi: "No, that's my mother."

He pointed at Samarah, making Ntombi more envious than she was before. He pulled himself out of his grandmother's grip and went back to play, while Ntombi's heart was aching.

Samarah: "I will speak to Langa and hear what he says. The house is quite full now."

Buhle: “Oh, come on. There are like 10 bedrooms in this house. He wouldn’t mind.”

Samarah: “Well, it is my house too.”

Ntombi: “Oh, well, then. I guess I had better start cooking.”

Bekhi: “Now that is how a real woman acts – women belong in the kitchen.”

Lydia: “Excuse you? Cook in whose house?”

Ntombi: “Bakithi (goodness), it was just a suggestion.”

Lydia: “No, it was more of a statement.”

Samarah: “No, you’re a guest here, Ntombi. If anything, Samke and Thandi should cook. They are the daughters in law here. Buhle and Zanele and Vee can assist as well. That should be enough hands.”

Zanele: "Oh? Are you instructing us now?"

Samarah: "No, but as the people who invited everyone else here without my consent, it is only fair that you ensure they are well fed. Unless if you are not happy about being in my house? I can gladly let Langa know that you are not coping."

Vee: "That won't be necessary. We will do our best."

Lydia: "No, I think you will just mess up the kitchen and few things will go missing. We'll order some food instead, what do you think, Sam?"

Samarah: "Yes, I think it is an excellent idea."

Sibongiseni: "Haibo (No)! I am not going to eat any fancy food! Ngifuna iphalishi ne nyama (I want pap and meat)."

Samarah: “Kodwa Bhuti (But brother), you were fine with the food and drinks just last night. In fact, you ate most of it. I can let Langa know that you were unhappy with everything that he did last night.”

Sibongiseni: “Oh, hayi, hayi (no, no), that is not what I meant at all, Nkosazana (daughter). Whatever you decide upon is fine.”

Samarah remembered Mrs. Dladla’s words “you have money, use it to your advantage”. It was a good thing that Lydia was there because she was quite extra. She made Samarah order as much food as she possibly could of all kinds. They were not about to feed disrespectful rurals basic food – no. They ordered proper meat and steak from posh restaurants and Burgers and fries for the kids. The bill was not important – the main goal was to shut people up and put them in their place. What better way to top everything off with booze – a black person’s favourite edible? Once the food came, everyone was stunned to the point where they had nothing further to say to her. She had a few hours of peace because people were fed and they were drinking. Ntombi and her mother were very irritated by everything, more especially when Mthokozisi went to Samarah for everything. The both of them were irritated yet they ate and drank what Samarah bought. So much for principles. Once

everything seemed settled, Langa came back home to find a house that was quite full.

Langa: “Hey, babe. Is everything alright? Why is the house so full?”

Samarah: “Oh, hey. Your sisters invited everyone else to come for the funeral.”

Langa: “But uMa passed on just last night. It wasn’t necessary for them to come and stay here this early in the week.”

Samarah: “That is what I also said, but blame your sisters Zanele and Buhle.”

Langa: “I will have a word with them.”

Samarah: “No, please don’t. It will seem as if I am snitching on them. Let them be.”

Langa: (nodding) “They didn’t bother you, did they?”

Samarah: “No, I just ordered food for everyone else and something to drink.”

Langa: (shaking head) “Stop that next time. These people should be here to help us mourn – not make us broke. They should cook next time.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Of course.”

While they were catching up on the day’s happenings, Ntombi deliberately walked into the kitchen.

Ntombi: “Oh, I am sorry. I didn’t mean to disturb.”

Langa: (frowning) “And then wena (you)? Who invited you here?”

Ntombi: “Hawu (goodness), Langa. I came here to support you.”

Langa: “Did I ask you for your support?”

Ntombi: “But – “

Samarah: “It’s okay, Langa. Let her be.”

Langa: “What you are doing is disrespectful. You shouldn’t even be in my house.”

Samarah: “It is really okay. Don’t make a big issue out of it.”

Langa: “One mistake and you are gone. Let my wife complain about you just once, I am telling you.”

He clicked his tongue and walked away.”

Ntombi: (angrily) “Don’t think I don’t see right through you, hippo.”

Samarah: (frowning) “Excuse me?”

Ntombi: “We both know that you don’t belong here. I am the rightful wife – first wife that is. He only married you out of convenience.”

Samarah: “Bathong (goodness) Ntombi. That is not the song you were singing when you begged me to take him back.”

Ntombi: “Who do you think beat me up like that? My invisible boyfriend? Open your fucking eyes. We fucked that evening – we fucked really long. I mean we both know that you could never bring your fat ass to get on top of him.”

Samarah was so shocked she became dumbstruck and wide-eyed.

Ntombi: “Oh, you thought he wouldn’t tell me? The power of pillow talk is amazing, babe. He only married you because I allowed him. I cannot wait to see him get rid of you.”

Samarah felt so enraged within herself that her sense left her body for a few seconds. A loud and hard slap landed on Ntombi’s face and she fell down and screamed out of disbelief. No one knew she had it in her – not even Samarah herself. Lydia was the first person to jump into the kitchen thinking something had happened to Samarah.

Lydia: “What happened?”

Samarah looked Ntombi right in the eye and could feel herself shaking. She walked right upstairs and banged the bedroom door as loud as she could. She was pancing up and down trying to regulate her breathing. “Could I have been that stupid” she thought to herself. Her trembling came with threatening tears and uncontrollable breathing. The more the words replayed in her mind, the more constricted her breathing felt. Langa must have heard her when he walked out of the shower.

Langa: "What's wrong?"

Samarah: (angrily) "Did you sleep with Ntombi that night?"

Langa: (shocked) "What are you talking about?"

Samarah: "Did you fuck her?!"

Langa: "Samarah, calm down. This is not good for you."

Samarah: "You made a fool of me, Langa! You are not even going to deny it. You beat her up and got her to beg me to take you back?! What kind of bullshit is that?!"

Langa: "Calm down."

Samarah: "Don't tell me to calm down!"

He smacked her so hard that she too fell onto the floor. In pure disbelief, she held her burning cheek and looked at him. Langa realized what he had done and tried to act quickly.

Langa: "I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. Please, let me help you up."

Samarah: "Don't come near me."

Langa: "I'm sorry. Look, I did sleep with her, but I chose you, didn't I? It was a moment of weakness. It meant nothing."

Samarah: (teary) "How could you? Really, how could you? You even told her about our sex life? Really?"

Langa: "No, I never did that."

Samarah: "Then how does she know that I never get on top?! How does she know all that?!"

Things were so intense, everyone could hear the screams coming from the bedroom. Lydia was knocking on the door.

Lydia: (knocking) "Sam, are you alright?"

Samarah: (breathing heavily) "I'm fine. I'll be right down."

Lydia: "Alright then."

Langa: "I swear, it was only that time. It meant nothing. Please, let me help you up."

Samarah: "Don't touch me."

Langa: "I will deal with her. She has no business ruining my marriage. She is just jealous that I didn't marry her as the mother of my child. I told you that I am willing to prove to you just how much I love you. I am sorry you had to find out this way, but it was only that one time. Just believe me."

He got dressed and got out of the bedroom while she was left sobbing uncontrollably on that bedroom floor. She could hear a lot of commotion from downstairs, but she still didn't get up. Lydia tried to knock on her door up to no avail. She let her be. Samarah felt the onset of yet another migraine. Everything in her life felt like a mess. She did something she hadn't done in a very long time. She knelt down and prayed.

Samarah: (crying) "Father God, I bow down before you. I come before you as your child. I know, I haven't been very loyal to you. I haven't been praying which is why I most probably deserve everything that is coming to me. I deserve all the pain and confusion I am experiencing, lord. I should not have relied on my own intuition, I should have asked you for assistance. The truth is, I didn't know where to start. I don't want it to seem like I pray whenever I am in trouble, but I ask you to please save me from whatever I am drowning in. I do not know what to do – I feel like there is no direction in my life. I feel like I am constantly making one stupid mistake after the other, but I do know that you are a merciful God. You don't give up on any one. Psalm 86 verse 5 says; "For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you." For I know that you are not angry at me, Lord. I know you are just and forgiving and your mercy overrides every

bad thing I may have done. Lamentations 3 verse 22-23 says; “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” You are a faithful God, you are a loving God, so as said in Romans 5 verse 8; “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Your love remains unchanged, Lord. I ask You to instill that love within me; show me where I lack so I can fix myself and be the person You want me to be. I am lost, Father; I do not believe that what I am going through is real love, but I trust that You will get me out of this situation. I pray in Jesus mighty name. Amen.”

She had no idea where she found the strength to pray like that, but she did. She could feel something within her moving and she felt a little better afterwards. The migraine was still there, so she chose to lie down.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Ever since that evening Samarah’s life was slowly changing though she had no idea. She started praying each and every night and from the following morning after that prayer, she felt a lot better and her mind felt clearer. That evening after she dozed off, Langa walked in right after midnight. She could not remember hearing anything such as noise from the time he went out the room. When he got into bed, she startled and woke up.

Langa: “I didn’t mean to startle you.”

Samarah: “Did you only come back now?”

Langa: “Yes, I had to teach a few people a lesson. Lydia asked me to check on you.”

Samarah: “I will see her tomorrow morning.”

Langa: "Okay. I love you, Sammy."

Samarah kept quiet and continued to sleep. It of course felt like he was being stabbed by a sharp and foreign object, but he assumed that life would be better the following morning. He should never have slapped her, but he did. Who knew if he was going to do it again? She woke up feeling refreshed and no sign of headache. She was still on leave and assumed that she had to deal with her annoying in laws all over again. She woke up to a note left with some breakfast in bed and a bank card next to it. "Enjoy your breakfast and book yourself into a spa today. Take Lydia with. Xoxo Langa." She felt repulsed just by looking at that food and chose to go shower instead. She then remembered Lydia must have been very worried about her the entire night. Once she was done getting dressed, she was startled when she walked out of her bedroom and the entire house looked emptier than it was the previous day. She walked down the stairs and only heard the kids running around with very few adult voices. As soon as she made it down, she found Phume, Gogo and Lydia enjoying themselves over a cup of coffee.

Lydia: "Oh, hey. You owe me a spa day for all the sleep I lost over you last night."

Samarah: "Oh, I am very sorry about that. I just dozed off after the entire ordeal. I feel so embarrassed."

Phume: "There is absolutely no need to feel embarrassed. I would have slapped her too. She is very disrespectful."

Gogo: "I agree no (with) Phume. She deserved more than that little slap you gave her."

Samarah: "Hmm, have you guys eaten? I can make us something to eat. Where is everyone else?"

Phume: "Oh, your husband decided to chase them away. They are all crammed in our old house back home. He told them they should stay there until they get back to their senses. They won't come back until they learn to respect you."

Samarah: (shocked) "He did that?"

Phume: (nodding) “Yep, as for Ntombi and his mother, he told them not to set foot here – not even at the funeral if they know what is good for them.”

Lydia: “He gave her a good beating too. It was a bit unnecessary, but because it’s her she deserved it.”

Gogo: “Well, even if he did that, he still remains useless. Forgive my transparency, Samarah. It is very hard for me to pretend.”

Samarah: “It is okay, Gogo.”

Phume: “We already had something to eat. You should head on out, Gogo and I will watch the kids.”

Samarah: “Where to?”

Phume: “Bhuti (brother) told me he booked you into a spa.”

Langa was on a roll to hide what he had done to her. He deliberately did all that to avoid her telling someone what he had done to her. Thankfully she didn't swell up because Lydia was going to have a serious fit.

Samarah: "Oh, he told you that?"

Phume: "Yes. Now, Go before they give your slot to someone else."

Lydia: "I won't say no to that. We do have a lot of catching up to do."

Samarah: "Okay then. I'll go get my bag."

She left the breakfast right there along with the card and note. She didn't have the time to clean it all up. She took Lydia and left. While in the car, Lydia could not wait to ask her.

Lydia: "Do you want to tell me what really happened last night?"

Samarah: "It's nothing, really."

Lydia: "You really have become such an expert at hiding things."

Samarah: "It's not like that."

Lydia: "It's okay. No pressure. You don't have to tell me everything. Just make sure you are okay."

Samarah: (nodding) "I did pray last night, though."

Lydia: "That's good news. How do you feel?"

Samarah: "I feel a bit lighter. Which is why I want you to take me to the graveyard if you are still up for it."

Lydia: "Say no more. Turn here."

Samarah did as told and they decided to book into a later time slot at the spa. Lydia took her to the graveyard and Samarah stopped for a while. It was hard for her to feel any emotion as she could not remember them at all. What triggered her to cry was the grave right next to Aaron and Rachel's.

Samarah: (crying) "Are those my babies?"

Lydia: (teary) "Yes, they are."

Samarah: "How can I possibly not remember that?"

Lydia: "It was a traumatic experience and besides, you heard what Gogo said. There are evil factors at play here. It is obvious that Langa did something to you."

Samarah: (crying) "Could he have been that cruel to make me forget about my own children, Lydia?"

Lydia: "People can be cruel to get what they really want – even if it means stripping you of everything."

Samarah: "I don't get it, I really don't."

Lydia: "Life is full of evil; we fight spiritual battles every day. Which is why prayer remains important. We all don't know when we're going to die, but I think it is important to remain faithful and hope that when we do die, we don't end up in the wrong hands; that we go back straight to God."

Samarah: "Do you think he is alive?"

Lydia: "I have hope that he is, I mean Gogo would not lie to you, would she?"

Samarah: "Do you think I am stupid for marrying Langa? It was obviously a big mistake. I don't think I actually love him."

Lydia: “You are not stupid. You might have made a stupid mistake – yes, but you are far from stupid. Just work on yourself and leave him. Nothing is stopping you.”

Samarah: (nodding) “You are right. I really wish I could remember.”

Lydia: “You will remember and when you do – you will have more peaceful nights. I can promise you that.”

They stayed there for a while and Samarah spoke to them all. She couldn't remember them, but speaking to them meant something. They went to the spa together and enjoyed their quality time. Once she went back to the house, Langa was still not back home. He worked until about 10pm almost every night. He claimed he was still busy with the launch, but one would never know. Little did she know that her prayers that week saved her from a lot. They started opening up an opportunity for redemption on her part. While she was praying, she was driving the devil away. Gogo's herbs and remedies helped with the process. She bathed in them each chance she got and ensured that she didn't sleep with Langa. He became further detached from her, but his true

colours were yet to be shown. The funeral came and it was a success. Langa chose to have the wedding back in Orlando, which was on the same day as Palesa's funeral. Apparently Malome also passed on the day he called Samarah so he was also buried on the same day as they were family. Bra P caused a scene by telling everyone at Mrs. Dladla's funeral how Langa killed his daughter, but of course, everyone thought he was mad. No one took note of him since he was drunk and he was taken back to his house. Ntombi played far from Samarah on the day of the funeral and everyone who always had an opinion kept quiet. It was a dignified and peaceful funeral. Lydia went back to her house in Pretoria, Gogo went back home with hopes that Samarah would follow through with everything. After all was said and done, only Phume, Mthokozisi along with Langa and Samarah went back to their house in Northcliffe. Samarah thought it was the perfect opportunity to finally stand up to Lang and tell her what she had planned.

They were both quietly getting undressed when she sat down on the bed and came out with it.

Samarah: "I can't do this anymore."

Langa: "You can't do what any more?"

Samarah: "This. This marriage. I can't be with you any more."

Langa: "What are you saying? Are you saying you want a divorce?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes. That is exactly what I am saying."

Langa kept quiet for a while.

Samarah: "Did you hear what I said?"

Langa: "Yes, I heard you. Are you sure that is what you want?"

Samarah: "Yes, it is."

Langa: "Okay."

Just like that he ended the conversation. Samara didn't think that he had any tricks up his sleeve. That should have been an indication to her that he was not someone to mess with. He changed into his sleepwear and got into the bed. She knelt down and started praying.

Samarah: "Dear God, I humble myself before you – "

She didn't get to finish when he interrupted her.

Langa: "Switch off the light and pray in peace if you are going to pray. I don't want you to disturb my sleep."

She switched off the light and still prayed in silence. She didn't get to finish her prayer when she felt a hard kick on her stomach. She thought perhaps it was a dream and tried to switch on the light, but the kicks kept coming. She kept screaming and begging for mercy

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but he wouldn't stop. He kicked her everywhere he could for a good ten minutes. Once he was done, he switched on the light and she could see the monster he had become.

Langa: (breathing heavily) "I want you to take a good look at me and remember this night. You are not going to leave me – I dare you to even try and you won't see the light of day. Do I look like someone who wants to be left? I did you a favour, Samarah – a really big one. Who wants to marry a widow who lost two children? You are not anything special; the only thing that makes you special is the fact that you are a little educated, but that's about it. I gave you the world, I loved you when Aaron left you. I dare you to try and leave me and you will see what will happen. I have worked too damn hard for you to just up and leave me."

She was beyond afraid. He got back into bed.

Langa: "Switch off that damn light it is hurting my eyes."

Just like that, her nightmare began. She was in an abusive relationship with the monster she married. She couldn't hold

back her tears and the pain she was feeling was unbearable. Her nose was bleeding and she felt warm fluid coming out between her legs. She switched off the light and rushed to the bathroom. He had kicked her so hard that she got her period. She tried to take a shower to alleviate the pain, but it was just too much. Once she got dressed she got into the bed and flinched when he roughly pulled her near him and cuddled with her. She didn't sleep a wink that night. The following morning, he woke up as if nothing had happened.

Langa: "Good morning. Wake up, you'll be late for work."

Samarah got up swiftly in order to avoid another beating. She could barely move the way she was used to.

Langa: "Did you sleep well?"

She just nodded.

Langa: “Here, take these pills before you leave. They should help the pain subside. Hide those bruises on your face, you’ll make people gossip about me.”

Once again they were back to “me”. It was no longer about “us” or “we”. She went about her business and tried her level best to get cleaned up. The pain was almost unbearable and he stood there and waited for her to take the pills. Once she was done, he kissed her goodbye.

Langa: “I’ll see you later. A designer will be coming to take your measurements tonight for the Company launch. Be sure to be on your best behaviour.”

With that said, he left. She had no words and felt as if all eyes were on her. She drove to work and once she parked her car, she treaded with caution. She didn’t want anyone to speculate. She used proper make up that day to hide the few bruises on her face. She found Sister Joy at her usual spot.

Sister Joy: “Good morning, love.”

Samarah: (faint smile) "Morning, Sister Joy."

Sister Joy: "Are you well? You look a little off."

Samarah: "I'm just tired, that's all."

Sister Joy: "Hmm, are you sure?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

Sister Joy: "Oh, alright then. Here are your files. It is about to be a busy day."

Samarah: "Thank you."

Sister Joy: "See you at lunch?"

Samarah: "Sure."

She walked away without trying to raise any suspicion of injury. She tried to avoid everyone as much as possible that day and remained in the lab. It was only during lunch when Sister Joy came knocking on the lab door that she decided to walk out. She walked as slowly as possible. They sat down and she was a lot more quiet than usual.

Sister Joy: “Are you still grieving your mother in law? I mean, I get it. She was such a good person and she adored you.”

Samarah: “Oh, yes. I am still in total disbelief, you know. Her absence is something I am yet to grow fond of.”

Sister Joy: (nodding) “Hmm, but I get the feeling that something else is bothering you. I don’t want to pressurise you into telling me – no pressure. I just want you to know that I am available should you need anyone to talk to – about anything.”

Samarah: “I really appreciate that, Sister Joy.”

Sister Joy: (nodding) "Alright then. Carry on eating before you go back to work."

She finished off her lunch in silence and went back to work. She was swamped until it was finally time to go home. She dreaded each minute before knock off time and thought of making a detour. The moment the watch struck at 7pm, she received a call from Langa.

Samarah: (nervously) "Hello."

Langa: "That is no way to greet your husband. I suppose you knocked off already?"

Samarah: "Yes..."

Langa: "Good. The designer is waiting for you at home. Don't be late."

Samarah: "Aren't you going to be home?"

Langa: "I'm on my way there. I will meet you there."

He hung up and she drove straight home. Indeed, the designer was already in the house waiting for her with Langa. Once she walked in, he smiled casually and hugged her.

Langa: "How was your day?"

Samarah: (faint smile) "Good."

Langa: "That's what I like to hear. This is Massime. She will be making your dress for the launch."

Massime: "It is very nice to meet you, Mrs. Dladla."

Samarah: "Likewise."

Langa: "Please, be gentle with her, Massime. She is a little on the meaty side, but I am sure it is nothing you can't fix, right?"

Did he really have to say that?

Massime: "I hae worked with women of all sizes. She will look great."

Langa: "Good, I will be right in my study if you need me."

He kissed her on her cheek and left.

Massime: "Well, I will have to take your measurements and then you can decide on a colour and design for your dress."

Samarah: "Okay. Do I have to take off my clothes?"

Massime: "It makes it a lot easier, but you can just take off your coat."

She was a little worried about her bruises being visible and Massime asking a lot of questions she wouldn't have been able to answer. She took off her coat, and still had a long sleeve shirt on underneath.

Massime "You know what? I am having trouble taking exact measurements. It seems as if you might have to take off your clothing after all. You can remain in your underwear of course."

Samarah: "I don't think it is a good idea. I mean, I know my size, you can just choose a design for me. I will be fine with anything you choose."

Massime: "Oh, honey. This is a big event. Your husband strictly instructed me to ensure that everything looks perfect. I don't want any imperfections on your gown."

Samarah: "Seriously, it is fine. Just get me a mermaid dress and make it sleeveless."

Massime: (frowning) "Are you hiding something?"

Samarah: "No, I am just not comfortable with showing people my body."

Massime: "You know, if you need any help, just let me know."

Samarah was hesitant. She was a mere stranger who seemed to have been testing her.

Samarah: "No, I don't know what you mean."

Massime: "I mean, if Mr. Dladla is doing something to you that you don't like, you can tell me."

Why would she even suggest that without seeing her bruises?

Samarah: "I am perfectly happy with my husband. Mermaid style is fine in purple. It is my favourite colour. If that will be all, I'd like to take a bath please."

Massime: "Okay. You may leave."

She rushed upstairs and got into the bath tub. She had a soothing time in the tub and just as she was about to get into her pajamas, Langa stormed into the bedroom.

Langa: "Massime is coming to take your measurements. I told you that I need everything to be perfect."

Samarah: "But... my bruises..."

Langa: "She knows. Don't keep her waiting. The launch is in two days."

She has never felt so humiliated in her entire life. Another woman was about to see what Langa had done to her body. She felt ashamed, embarrassed and completely

disoriented from her own self. With every inch that Massime was looking at using that measuring tape, she could not help but let the tears fall down.

Massime: “You know, men like Langa are hard to find. He has money and treats you well. You don’t need to keep making him angry to this point, you know. Just be grateful that he loves you.”

She couldn’t help but let the tears fall and suffer in silence. She didn’t respond to Massime, but just waited for her to finish measuring her.

Massime: “I’m all done. You can use excema ointment on those bruises. They’ll heal faster than you know.”

Massime greeted her goodbye and she couldn’t wait to get into her pajamas. She cried alone in bed while he was still in that study of his. How did things turn so badly so quickly?

“As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.”

That evening was one of many agonising nights for Samarah. She started withdrawing socially and only interacted during lunch or work functions. She spoke to Lydia regularly, but couldn't disclose what she was going through. She felt trapped as if she were living in a box. The only good thing was that Langa rarely wanted to have sex with her and came home late on most nights. She thought it was the perfect time to start planning an escape. She started memorizing his routine; he left home at 6am on most days and got back around 10pm the earliest, at times just after midnight. She had plenty of time to run – or so she thought. Nonetheless, she kept on praying although Langa wanted nothing to do with a prayerful woman. It doesn't really matter how you pray; God can and will always hear you. The launch evening finally arrived and as usual, his family was invited. They were still banned from the house until they sorted themselves out. They all were dressed to kill in designer clothes while Langa put on his usual facade in front of the cameras. Samarah was nervous about being seen in the media next to him. She was the plus size wife of an abusive millionaire business man. She felt anything but

confident. Little did Langa know that karma was indeed a bitch. For every time he hurt Samarah, her ancestors were keeping tabs. Everyone has to answer for their bad deeds, eventually. They were being driven by their chauffeur for the evening, with Langa sitting next to her.

Langa: "Are you ready?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes."

Langa: "Don't say anything that will mess this up for me. Remember how important this is."

She nodded in agreement. The car stopped and they were let out. She had never been around so many cameras in her life as far as she could remember. The flickering flash lights were so blinding she occasionally had to put her hand before her face. When she realized that Langa was staring at her, she removed it and sucked it up. He put his arm around her waist and smiled for the cameras. They had to stand before his company banner on the red carpet for a good five minutes before moving in the launch hall. He occasionally kissed her

cheek and left her to pose by herself. The journalists could not get enough of him, but they were rather intrigued by her.

Journalist: “Mr. Dladla, sir! Is that your wife? She is such a beaut! We have never seen her. Aren’t you going to introduce her to the world?”

Langa: “Of course, why not?”

He pulled her closer and the cameras got a good look at her. She looked exquisite despite the pain and sadness she was hiding. Her make up was on point and her beautiful dreadlocks were cut into a curly bob hairstyle.

Journalist: “What is her name?”

Langa: “Her name is Samarah Dladla. She is a Radiographer at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital and the queen of my heart. Without her, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

Journalist: "Samarah, that is quite a beautiful name. I can see where your son gets his good looks from."

Langa: "Oh, she is not his biological mother, but she has pretty much raised him."

Langa's lies were on fire.

Journalist: "I see. Is it true that she was married to the deceased Aaron Moeng?"

His facial expression suddenly changed while his grip tightened on her back.

Langa: "No comment."

Journalist: "So, it is true. Is it also true that she used some of her inheritance to build this company for you?"

Suddenly all eyes were on him and his night was getting ruined before it even began.

Langa: “This interview is over. If you want to ask me questions, speak to my PR manager.”

He left them begging for more, but the press had already gotten what they wanted. It didn't take very long for everyone to start googling Samarah. It was surprising because she didn't exist on social media, well, according to her. Langa's energy took a serious dip after that horrid journalist's interrogation. He felt uncomfortable the entire night through and ensured that he was right beside Samarah throughout. He never wanted her to be alone, to avoid her speaking to any press. He didn't want that. Once all the nitty gritty was over, it was time to go home. It didn't take him too long to reveal his true feelings once he was in the car. He removed his tie and sighed in frustration.

Langa: “It was bad enough you looked like a bloody whale but you just had to ruin my night and make everything about you, didn't you?!”

Samarah: (shocked) “I don’t understand, Langa. I didn’t even say a word to anyone.”

Langa: “Yes, well, you just have a habit of loving the attention. Look what they say about you and then read what they said about me!”

He threw his phone at her and she read a few of the headlines he screenshotted. “Mega Mogul married to dead man’s widow”; “Langa Dladla: the man who stole his wife’s inheritance”; Dladla Constructions: Built on a dead man’s money?”

Samarah: “But it’s not true...”

Langa: “Who gives a shit?! Does it look like people know that it isn’t?! I have worked so bloody hard and you just had to go ruin it all for me!”

Samarah had no idea what to say, so she just kept quiet. She wondered why the driver was taking so long to arrive at their

house, seeing as it was only supposed to take 15 minutes to arrive. Instead, they drove for about half an hour and stopped just outside a hotel.

Samarah: "Where are you going?"

Langa: "To have some fun you would never be able to give me. Don't wait up."

He took his phone and shut the door. Samarah didn't even feel bad about him leaving her to go home alone. She felt a sense of relief.

Samarah: "Please take me to my house in Ferndale."

Driver: "I have been strictly instructed to drive you to your house, ma'am."

Samarah: "And I am asking you to take me to my house, unless you are holding me against my will."

The driver agreed and dropped her off at her house. She was relieved and ensured that she wouldn't go back to Northcliff, though her car was still there. Once she walked in, she felt a moment of peace. She looked through all the pictures in the house and spotted some of her alongside Rachel and Aaron. She just wanted to have a moment of peace. She prayed before sleeping and had the most beautiful dream ever. Rachel came to visit her and said nothing. She just smiled, dressed in pure white, with two little girls beside her. She was woken up by her alarm as it was time to go back to work. She was puzzled when she saw over 20 missed calls from Langa. Could she have been that tired? She didn't respond to them and chose to get ready for her day. She still had a spare lab coat at her house, so she was fine. She requested an Uber to work and had a cup of coffee while waiting. Just before she left the house, she received a call from Beatrice.

Samarah: "Hello, Ma."

Beatrice: "Samarah, what is this nonsense I am hearing?! Ga wa robala gae (you didn't sleep at your house)?"

Samarah: (sigh) “Is that what Langa told you? I slept at my own house. Why don’t you ask him why I slept here.”

Beatrice: “Samarah, this is no time for you to act as if you know any better. He is your husband! Which means that you need to submit to him as the head of the house.”

Samarah: “Oh, so I guess he never told you what he did to me, did he? He beat me up so badly I couldn’t even walk properly. How do I submit to a man who does that?”

Beatrice: “He did what?! I mean

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come on. A slap or two doesn’t mean that he abuses you. You just pushed him to the edge.”

Samarah: (angrily) “Pushed him to the edge?! Are you serious, Ma?”

Beatrice: "Okay, do you have any proof?"

Samarah: "Do I need proof?"

Beatrice: "I mean, it would be very difficult for anyone to believe you if you don't have proof, you know."

Samarah: "So you are actually taking his side here."

Beatrice: "I am not taking anyone's side. I am just saying that you will need to listen to your husband and stop aggravating him. Please."

Samarah: "I have to go."

Beatrice: "Sam, wait."

She hung up and locked the door. Her Uber was already waiting for her just outside and she got in. While the car was moving, something told her to look back and as she did, she

noticed a familiar car moving along with the Uber. That was a spine-chilling moment for her. Langa had his driver following her. She was in a lot deeper than she realized. The moment she arrived at work, she received a text message. “Keep ignoring me, it’s fine. Sleep away from home again and we’ll see if you shall see yet another sunrise.” That was a message from Langa. She was looking over her shoulder ever since. She had no idea that fate was slowly working in her favour. She found Sister Joy at the Nurses Bay as always.

Sister Joy: “Good morning, love.”

Samarah: “Good morning, Sister Joy.”

Sister Joy: “Are you well?”

Samarah: “You could say that, what about you?”

Sister Joy: “Let us just say that I can’t get over how gorgeous you looked last night. You are such a natural in front of the camera.”

Samarah: "Oh, no. I don't think so."

Sister Joy: "Well, your thoughts enjoy being roughly mistaken."

Samarah: "Hmm, do I have anything for today?"

Sister Joy: "Only one new file for the day. It is your lucky day, I suppose."

Samarah: "Well, for a change. I will see you later."

Sister Joy: "Are you sure you're alright?"

Samarah: "Yes, why wouldn't I be?"

Sister Joy: "Well, never mind then."

Samarah went ahead with her day. It was a rather relaxed day with her thoughts weighing heavily on her. She had no idea what was in store for her later on. During lunch, Ntate Tau surprised her with a Berry smoothie, something she enjoyed whenever she used to jog with Aaron.

Ntate Tau: “Dumela (greetings). I have brought this for you.”

Samarah: (smiling) “Oh, thank you, Ntate. Forgive me, but I didn’t really get you anything.”

Ntate Tau: “Ska tshwenyega (don’t worry). It is a gift from me.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Kea leboga (thank you).”

Ntate Tau: “Do you mind if I sit?”

Samarah: “I never mind. You should know by now.”

Ntate Tau: “It is still only courtesy to ask, right?”

She nodded in agreement.

Ntate Tau: “Is something weighing heavily on your mind?”

Samarah: “No, not really.”

Ntate Tau: (nodding) “My father always taught me that it is good for one to speak about whatever is bothering you before you explode. It is never a good idea to bottle things up, hence we have therapists now. So many young black people are flooding therapist’s offices because they were taught to keep quiet when growing up and face the music. You don’t always have to be a warrior, you know. It is okay to be fragile.”

Samarah: “I hear you, Ntate.”

Ntate Tau: “Well, anyway, the reason why I came to see you today is because of this.”

He handed her a brochure.

Samarah: "What's this?"

Ntate Tau: "It is a brochure for medical doctors of all kind to study further in the U.S. You get a full scholarship, accommodation – the works. You even get a job offer once you are done studying."

Samarah: "Oh, well. I am not too sure about this, Ntate."

Ntate Tau: "The Samarah I know would have jumped at this opportunity in a heartbeat."

Samarah: (frowning) "You mean I was rather resilient?"

Ntate Tau: "Let us just say that Rachel taught you how to go for what you want."

Samarah: "Rachel. She seems like a good woman."

Ntate Tau: “She was. Why do you think she visits you?”

Samarah: (frowning) “I had a dream about her last night. How do you know that?”

Ntate Tau: “I know many things. She doesn’t visit you in dreams – she visits you in spirit. You just can’t tell most of the time, but she is always around.”

Samarah: “Then why doesn’t she help me remember?”

Ntate Tau: “Once you let go of your fear of facing trauma, you will remember everything – even those memories you suppressed for years.”

Samarah: “Hmm, it just seems so complicated.”

Ntate Tau: “It actually isn’t. Just open your eyes and it will all come to you,”

Samarah: "I see."

Ntate Tau: "Will you at least think about that?"

Samarah: "Yes, I promise you I will. Thank you for the lovely smoothie. I will see you some other time."

Ntate Tau: (nodding) "I'll be around later on should you need my number – just in case you'd like to talk about anything. My door is always open."

Samarah: "Thank you, Ntate. I will take note of that."

Ntate Tau: "Oh, and Samarah, don't stop praying. Your husband will get what's coming to him for hurting you."

Samarah felt a cold shiver down her spine as soon as Ntate Tau said that. "Could he really see everything?" she thought to herself. She walked away with him leaving a big question mark

for her. Meanwhile, it seemed as if his plan had rather failed. He made a quick call as soon as Samarah left.

Ntate Tau: “The plan failed. He won’t let her leave the house – let alone South Africa. It is time for plan B. Time is running out – he is nearly done destroying her.”

As Proverbs 16 verse 18 says; “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Every dog has its day even though it takes quite long for the journey to end.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Samarah knocked off eventually and she completely forgot to go see Ntate Tau before she left. She only remembered once she was in the Uber on her way home. She had big hopes that Langa was not going to be home when she arrived, only to find the least suspecting surprise awaiting her. Phume was not home, but Mthokozisi was watching tv by himself.

Samarah: “Mthokozisi, where is Phume?”

Mthokozisi: “She is not home, Mommy.”

Samarah: “Where is your father?”

Mthokozisi: “In the bedroom with Ntombi.”

He didn't call her Mom at all. She thought that he was seeing things, but children describe things exactly as they are. She walked up towards the bedroom and with every step she took, her heart felt heavier. Something didn't feel right. The moment she opened the door, she got the shock of her life. Ntombi was on her knees on the floor giving Langa a blow job. It was only when she opened the door she heard him moaning in pleasure. Her heart nearly stopped beating while her body froze for a minute. Langa noticed her along with Ntombi, but he was unapologetic about the entire situation.

Langa: "Can't you see we're busy? Close that fucking door on your way out."

Samarah felt sudden chest pains as she closed the door. She stood behind that door and could hear the moaning and screams becoming louder. They were now doing it intentionally so it seemed. She felt a little dizzy at that point. Mthokozisi came running towards her.

Mthokozisi: "Ma, can I get some ice cream?"

Samarah: “Sure. Let’s take a drive to McDonalds. I’ll buy you a Mcflurry.”

The boy was so excited to go with her, but tragedy awaited them. She took her car keys and left with him to try and process the entire situation. She got into her car and drove off. She was a careful driver – even when stressed. She tried not to cry so that Mthokozisi wouldn’t be alarmed. She was hurt; not because he cheated on her – no, but because he was hurting her emotionally and physically yet he was still busy with Ntombi and possibly other women. He didn’t want to let her go; he was holding her captive while abusing her at the same time. She managed to get to McDonalds and Mthokozisi enjoyed his ice cream with her as usual. He was oddly clingy that day and didn’t want to leave her sight. He sat on her lap throughout the entire time he was enjoying his ice cream. She thought that he most probably just wanted to comfort her, but he was in fact sending her a sign.

Mthokozisi: “Mommy, when I get to heaven I will tell your daughters you love them the same way you love me.”

She was quite stunned to hear him say something like that.

Samarah: (shocked) "What are you talking about, Mtho?"

Mthokozisi: "God is calling me home, Mama. I promise to tell them that you love them."

Samarah: "Are you seeing things?"

Mthokozisi: "Every time I sleep they come visit me. Sometimes I play with them. Even now, they are standing right next to you."

Samarah felt herself shivering in disbelief and he held her hand.

Mthokozisi: "Don't worry, there is no need to be scared."

He hugged her for a long while and said nothing. She found herself in tears for what? She didn't even know.

Mthokozisi: "I love you, Mommy."

Samarah: "I love you too, my boy."

She had no idea what to say, so she opted for them to go home. She strapped him in his seat as always and they drove back home. He dozed off on his way home. Just as she was entering her yard, Ntombi came rushing out of the house.

Ntombi: (shouting) "Where is my son?! How dare you take him without my permission?!"

Samarah: (frowning) "I just took him for some ice cream. Besides, since when do I answer to you?"

Langa: "You don't get to speak to her like that. She is Mthokozisi's mother."

She had no idea what was happening. It felt as if her entire life was becoming a movie. Langa had indeed done yet another 360 degree turn. Ntombi clicked her tongue and started

insulting the shocked Samarah. It was only when Ntombi started screaming that she came back to reality.

Ntombi: (screaming) “What did you do to my son?!”

Samarah: “What do you mean? He is just sleeping.”

Ntombi: “Langa! Langa! He is not breathing! My son is not breathing!”

Samarah rushed to the car and looked at him. She touched him and tried to feel a pulse but there was none. Something just didn't feel right at all.

Langa: “What did you do, Samarah?”

Samarah: (teary) “Nothing. I swear I just took him for ice cream.”

Langa: “Well, you're a doctor, aren't you? Save him!”

She had no idea what to do as her body froze while she fell onto the ground weeping. Ntombi and Langa were screaming at her and then at one another. Somewhere in between one of them was shouting at the other to call the ambulance, while the other was saying how she killed their son. It was a nightmare so much so that the neighbours could hear them and the security came running. It didn't take too long for the paramedics to arrive but they declared him dead on arrival. He died of a pulmonary embolism. Samara couldn't understand it, since he was happily clinging onto her. He wasn't sick and he didn't asphyxiate in the car before dying. Then she remembered his words. He was saying goodbye to her before he fell asleep. She was a mess and couldn't cope with all the noise. The security guards had to get her into the house while Ntombi was shouting outside. Langa walked in a few minutes later and found her sitting in the kitchen.

Langa: "What really happened?"

Samarah: "I told you, I took him out for ice cream and he fell asleep on our way back home."

Langa: “Oh, so you decided to kill my son just because you found me fucking another woman?!”

Samarah: “No, I could never do that. I loved Mthokozisi. How could you even think such a thing of me?”

Langa: “You are just evil, you know. Why not have your own? Why did you have to go and kill my son?!”

He was so livid that he tried jumping toward her and grabbing her throat. Fearing for her life, she grabbed her keys and ran out of the house. She got into her car and sped off. She wasn't too sure where to go. She thought if she went to her house, he might have had her followed. She couldn't go to her parents' house either because Beatrice would have most probably told him that she was there the moment he called. She had left her phone in the house, so she couldn't call Lydia and head to Pretoria. There was only one person she could think of who was nearby. She drove as fast as she could and begged the security to call her and let her know that she had arrived and wanted to see her. When she was allowed to go in, the moment Sister Joy opened that door, she buried her head on her chest and cried until she couldn't any more. It took an

entire hour for her to calm down, and Sister Joy let her be. After she was finally calm, she gave her a cup of coffee.

Samarah: "Thank you."

Sister Joy was in total disbelief of everything Samarah shared with her that evening.

Sister Joy: "Do you honestly think that you are safe around that man? I mean, truthfully speaking."

Samarah: "I know I am not, Sister Joy, but where will I run to?"

Sister Joy: "We can get the police involved."

Samarah: "They won't help me with anything. He most probably buys them off."

Sister Joy: "I knew that marrying that man was a horrible idea. He is the devil reincarnate. You have to get out of here,

even if you get a plane ticket or something. I can make a few calls. I refuse to see you surrender to that animal. I wish you had told me earlier.”

Samarah: “I am sorry. I was... ashamed.”

Sister Joy: “I don’t blame you, I really don’t. This is how abusers operate. This is pure narcissistic shit if you ask me. He is insane if he thinks he will get away with this. I know what you’re going through, I really do. Yes, I might never have been abused, but I saw my sister go through it all. It started with the insults and then it escalated to emotional and financial abuse. And then eventually – the beatings. She used to hide it from me – from all of us, until she ended up in hospital with three broken ribs which punctured her left lung, a broken leg and a crushed cheek. She was injured so badly that she had to use a catheter due to a prolapsed bladder. She survived and was on the road to healing until she just couldn’t cope with the way she looked after surgery. He ruined her in ways I cannot even explain and she just couldn’t cope with staring at herself in the mirror.”

Samarah: “Where is she now?”

Sister Joy: “Dead. She committed suicide soon after that, at the age of 25. You are not even 25 yet. What makes you think this man will get tired of you and let you go?”

Samarah: “What happened to him?”

Sister Joy: “He was let go due to lack of evidence. Can you believe that? Despite it all, he really defeated the ends of justice, but I put all my faith in God. I told my sister on the day of her burial to fight beyond the grave. I didn’t care what it took, but I needed her to show him absolute hell.”

Samarah: “Did she receive her justice?”

Sister Joy: (nodding) “He got married to another woman and had two children soon after my sister passed. He got everything; her policies, life insurance and pension since they were not even divorced. My brother and I carried so much hatred within us ever since. Whenever we saw him, all those broken memories of our sister just haunted us all overe

again. But you know what? I serve a living God. Proverbs 6 verse 16 – 19 says;

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies and one who sows discord among brothers”. I remember crying so much and praying all night one time, when I heard the lord speak to me. Exodus 14 verse 14: “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” I recall very well when I heard Him relay those words to me. Psalm 46 verse 10 says; “Be still, and know that I am God”.

She was in tears as she told Samarah her story.

Sister Joy: “I am not trying to preach to you, Samarah, my dear

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but I am trying to show you the power of God. That horrible man started by losing his business; then his wife left him along with the kids. He wasn't going to have it all so easily. Both his children died in a horrific car accident. I remember soon after they died he came to my house out of nowhere, he looked nothing like that man who told us we wouldn't get a cent from

my sister's money. He begged me for forgiveness and said that my sister wouldn't let him sleep. He went mad and eventually died. When I heard the news that his decomposed body was found in a veld nearby his house, I felt so much peace within. I knew that Langa was beating you that very day you came to work with make up on. You looked too sad to be wearing make up."

Samarah: (shocked) "You knew?"

She nodded.

Samarah: "Why didn't you say anything?"

Sister Joy: "I didn't want to pry. Instead, I prayed that you would break loose and tell me so that I can help. If I had asked you, you would have thought that I was nosey. A victim doesn't understand most of the time when people are trying to help. You become captivated by the abuser that you end up feeling as if you can't make a mere decision on your own. Abuse cripples the mind, the way of thinking of the victim and it takes years sometimes to revert all the damage."

Samarah: "I am sorry I never told you, Sister Joy."

Sister Joy: "It is okay. You can sleep here and rest. I will make a few calls."

She thanked her and took a shower before sleeping. It was almost as if whenever she took one step forward, she took two steps back at the same time. During the early hours of the morning, both Sister Joy and Samarah were woken up by loud banging on her door.

Sister Joy: "Who is it?"

Man: "Open up, it's the police ma'am."

Samarah could feel that something was not right. Sister Joy was hesitant to open, but she had nothing to hide, so she did.

Sister Joy: "May I help you?"

The very same two police officers who had come to ask where Langa was on that odd night Palesa died were standing before her again.

Policeman: "We're looking for this lady over here."

He pointed at Samarah.

Sister Joy: "What for?"

Policeman: "Samarah Moeng or is it Dladla, I don't know."

Samarah: "Moeng"

Policeman: "Whatever. You are under arrest for the murder of Mthokozisi Dladla. You have the right to remain silent--"

Sister Joy: "Wait, what?!"

While the one was reading her her rights, the other was handcuffing the distraught Samarah.

Policeman: "Anything you say or do will be held against you in the court of law. You have the right to an attorney, and if you cannot afford one, the state will gladly appoint one to you. Let's go."

Sister Joy: "Go, I will be there soon. Everything will be fine."

Samarah nodded with tears in her eyes. She was shoved vigorously into the back of that cold police van. It felt as if they were intentionally driving roughly because with every bump that occurred, Samarah would shift and bump her head. They were supposed to have been at the police station already, but they seemed to have taken a detour along with her. They picked up a few other criminals including prostitutes on the way. After two entire hours, she finally made it to the police station. By then it was 6am and the sun was already out. She said nothing to anyone and listened to each one of those in the van speak of how the corrupt the police were and all that. They finally took her out of the van and although it was September

month already, her body felt stiff from the awkward position she was in in the van. She was put through the station, and saw a familiar face.

Brandon: "I have been waiting for two entire hours here! My client was taken in around 4am! This is unlawful, just so you don't know."

Policeman: "We're just doing our job. We had to make a few stops. The crime in this country – surely you know."

Brandon: "Are you okay, Samarah?"

Samarah just nodded.

Policeman: "We're taking her in for questioning."

Brandon: "Well it seems as if I am just in time because I am her lawyer."

Policeman: "Good then. Follow us."

They walked through the station with everyone watching her. She saw a few people take out their phones, including fellow police officers as they recorded her. She forgot for a few minutes that she was "famous". They went into one of the interrogation rooms and she sat down on an old, rusty chair, as Brandon sat next to her.

Brandon: "Uncuff her."

One of the policemen did so and they sat down across her. They threw the docket onto the table and started with their business.

Policeman: "Well, well, well. You seem to have one big dilemma on your hands, Mrs. Moeng/Dladla."

Brandon: "Get to the point."

Policeman: "Okay then. You're quite in a rush. Your client here is charged with the murder of her stepson. Apparently after she saw her husband sleeping with the mother of his child, she took the child away without their consent. She came back fine while the child was dead on arrival. Now, you tell me that is not motive enough, Mr. Lawyer."

Brandon: "Mr. White to you."

Policeman: "Whatever, man."

Brandon: "My client has been taking care of that boy for a while now. Her husband's infidelity has nothing to do with this. I don't see why you would arrest her like that all for heresay and speculation."

Policeman: "Well, what we have here is proof; you see ever since her husband married Ntombikayise, the mother of the child she has expressed her own disapproval of the situation."

Samarah: "I'm sorry, did you just say married?"

Policeman: “Yes, your client seems to be a little more deranged than we thought.”

Brandon: “You are not making sense.”

Policeman: “See for yourself.”

While the Policeman handed Brandon the docket, Samarah grew more shocked and weary with each bomb thrown at her.

Policeman: “Ntombi and Langa Dladla were married legally, six months ago – exactly three months before he married your client here, traditionally. This means that your client is in a customary marriage with Mr. Dladla. You will also see her signatures along with theirs on the documents stating that they are all in a customary marriage. You will also see, there are pictures taken of a diary that your client has been keeping where she detailed each and every experience. She has on more than one occasion expressed her disapproval of the entire situation and has even said and I quote “I wish he were dead”. She is also on numerous medications; Prozac, Luvox for

her depressive disorder, Xanax tranquilizers to help her sleep and Paxil for her anxiety disorder. As you will also see we have copies of receipts given to her by her doctor, on more than one occasion. Look carefully at the dates, sir, your client has an addiction to these pills. She is mentally unstable.”

Samarah: (confused) “This can’t be. I never signed any of these documents. This is not even my handwriting. I don’t even own a diary. I am not even on any of these medications, Brandon! You have to believe me. I only take medication for migraines and sleeping tablets occasionally.”

Brandon: “This seems rather fraudulent.”

Policeman: “That is up to the court to decide. If you ask me, you have already lost your case.”

Brandon: “Give my client and I a few minutes.”

Policeman: “As you wish.”

The two policemen walked out while Samarah was in tears.

Samarah: (shaking head) “There must be some kind of mistake, Brandon. I have never done such things. I don’t even understand what is happening. Is this some kind of dream? I don’t get it. Tell me I must be dreaming.”

Brandon: “I need you to calm down, okay. I have to make a few calls. I promise you, I will get you out of here – soon.”

Samarah: “Are you saying I have to sleep here?”

Brandon: “No, you’ll only be here for a few hours. Bail hearings start at 10am. Give me time to make a few calls, please.”

Samarah: “I’m scared, Brandon. I can’t go to prison for something I didn’t do.”

Brandon: “Trust me, I promised your husband that I’d take care of you. Have faith in me. I’ll be back in an hour tops.”

Samarah chose to have faith in Brandon. She had no idea if whatever he was planning was going to work, but she had nothing to lose. She had heard of that surname before at the hospital, but she couldn't really pinpoint it at that time. Her breakthrough was on its way – she just had to believe. The same way God tested a few people in the Bible, He was now testing Samarah. Daniel 3 verse 16 – 18 says; “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, “Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to give you an answer to this question. If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.” It was Samarah's time to be tested. Would she have patience in the Lord?

– “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

2 Chronicles 20:7 – “You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you.”

To say that Samarah was a mess, was a very big understatement. She was trying to replay everything in her mind and was almost starting to believe that she was indeed insane. She was still dressed in Sister Joy’s pajamas and didn’t report to work. She was in a cell amongst other potential criminals. Surely that was a prank, she thought. To make matters worse, the police were having a field day with her being in the cells. They were taking pictures of her while some were deliberately making rounds at the cell to ensure that it was her. Some were even asking for a selfie. They were bragging that a millionaire had killed her son. Some were asking themselves why she agreed to the marriage in the first

place if she knew that she didn't want to be married to him? Richard and Beatrice rushed to the police station the moment they saw her on the news. They begged and bribed the police to see her for a few minutes. When Richard saw his distraught daughter, he was gobsmacked. Something within his heart shook him so badly that he felt as if he was having a heart attack. He wanted to break down right there as his sins all came back rushing in his head.

Beatrice: "Oh, my goodness! Samarah, my darling! What happened? I mean, why did you do it?"

Samarah: "Are you really asking me that question?"

Richard: (teary) "My child. I am so sorry."

Samarah: (shaking head) "It's not your fault, Papa. I married him, I got myself into this mess."

Beatrice: "You can still get out – all you need to do is just apologize. Tell him why you did it."

Samarah: “Are you for real? Are you fucking for real right now?!”

Beatrice: “I’m just saying – “

Richard: “Beatrice, get out and give my daughter and I some time.”

Beatrice: “I just wanted to – “

Richard: “She’s my daughter! Leave!”

Beatrice walked out with her tail between her legs while Richard looked really remorseful for the first time in 24 years.”

Richard: (crying) “My daughter, I am so sorry for everything. I never meant to let you have such a tough life.”

Samarah: “Like I said, Papa. It is not your fault.”

Richard: “Had I not left you to fend for yourself, you wouldn’t have fallen prey to Langa to begin with. You wouldn’t have met him. Had I been there that night, Amarah would have survived. Had I not been greedy, I wouldn’t be in this wheelchair. Had I been an active parent, my mother would have probably still been alive. Had I given you the love and attention you needed, you would have turned out differently. Had I not done what I did to begin with – when you were born, perhaps your mother would still be here with you and Amarah.”

Samarah: “What are you even saying, Papa?”

Richard was sweating and holding his chest. He was moving around in discomfort and toppled over his chair. He fell onto the ground.

Samarah: (screaming) “Papa! Someone please help!”

Policeman: “Well, you sure do have the angel of death hovering over you. It seems as if everyone around you is dying.”

Help was called and Richard was wheeled out of there on a stretcher. Thankfully, he didn’t die otherwise it would have been yet another headline. Samarah felt even more anxious now that her father had collapsed while waiting for Brandon to come back. Indeed, he made it back just after an hour.

Brandon: “Hey, I am sorry I took so long.”

Samarah: “What now? Am I going home?”

Brandon: “Not quite. Wait for the bail hearing. I brought you a fresh set of clothes and something to eat.”

Samarah: “Okay.”

Brandon: “Whatever you do, don’t say anything unless I instruct you to – okay?”

She agreed and was given a chance to change. Once she was done, she sat in the interrogation room and ate the food that Brandon bought for her.

Samarah: "Who called you to come help me?"

Brandon: "Lydia."

Samarah: (nodding) "She must be so tired of my drama."

Brandon: "Not even. She understands. You are very blessed to have a friend like her."

Samarah: (chuckling) "I'm quite a stupid person. My husband has managed to turn the world against me – yet he is the one who beat me to a pulp not so long ago."

Brandon: "You are not stupid at all. Do you perhaps have pictures of that? It's not that I don't believe you, it's just that they could be very crucial for our case."

Samarah: (shaking head) "No, I don't. Sorry."

Brandon: (nodding) "It's alright. I've dealt with such cases before – even worse ones."

Samarah: "Be honest with me here. Am I going to prison?"

Brandon: "Well, the doctor did say that the child died of Pulmonary embolism which is not a crime. It is also not an indication of him being murdered or anything like that. He is our best bet right now, but your husband has bribed quite a few people. They believe that you did all those things – you wrote those things in the journal, although it is not your handwriting it looks like it and will be very difficult to prove wrong."

Samarah: "So, basically you're saying that I am going to prison."

Brandon: “No, I am saying that I have a plan, you just need to do as I say.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Okay.”

She felt weak and hopeless. She hadn't been able to think clearly for a few hours and had forgotten to pray in the process. Although she had faith, she didn't pray from the moment she was held in that police van up until she was in that holding cell. The policemen came to alert them that it was time to go to court. Of course, they put her in the police van, handcuffed to humiliate her. Brandon had to drive in his own car and meet her there. The media and press were all outside the station with cameras loading. She had become a media sensation overnight.

Journalist: “Samarah, is it true that you killed your stepson because you are mentally unstable?”

So that was what they thought of her? Not only did Langa manage to degrade her in all aspects, but he managed to

tarnish her image within a few months. Even people who didn't know her suddenly felt as if they knew her. She was trending all over social media, but with every negative story and situation, there is always something positive that comes out of it. Some former classmates of hers came forward and overruled all judgments made against her. They stated that she wasn't a killer and that something felt off with Langa. Some even came forward to speak of Ntombi being the abusive one and made claims that they wouldn't be surprised if it was found that she had killed her own son to frame Samarah. "Samarah is a millionaire, why on earth would she kill her stepson when she just lost her own children a year ago?" While they were chanting #HandsOffSamarah

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she was on her way to court to conclude her fate. The moment the van stopped in that court yard, the journalists were all over her again. She felt as if her dignity and entire sense of self worth was stripped. She literally felt as if she was going to pass out when she felt as if someone was holding her hand. She felt a warm breeze and someone's hand pulling her toward the court room doors. She smelled a scent that was familiar to her, but she couldn't pin point where she knew it from. She had no strength within her, so this entity was acting on her behalf and giving her the energy she needed to get through that

day. Something happened that even she herself could not describe. The camera lights went from trying to get every possible angle of her, to not flicking at all. The flash lights disappeared; with each button the journalists tried to press to take yet another picture, the cameras stopped working. Their screens went blank and they couldn't see anything further. The noise died down and the questions stopped coming through. The media people looked at her differently; as if they were no longer judging her at that point. When she was taken straight to the dock, she stood there with her lawyer right behind her. Right behind him were Langa and Ntombi dressed to kill. Ntombi didn't look like a grieving mother, but a proud wife to her husband that day. Brandon signalled to Samarah that everything was under control and she needed to relax. She nodded and looked forward. The judge walked in; a middle-aged white woman who looked like she hardly smiled. The handcuffs were removed from Samarah's wrists and she still felt the energy of someone brushing her hand throughout.

Officer: "All rise".

They all stood up and waited to be told to sit down.

Office: "The court calls Case no 1448CV001026."

Judge: "How does the defendant plead?"

She looked behind her and Brandon stood up.

Brandon: "She pleads not guilty, your worship."

Langa's lawyer was a female; who looked as if she was in her thirties. She was a typical lawyer; career hungry, vicious, unmarried and very much undateable.

Judge: "The plaintiff's case may be heard."

Lawyer: "Thank you, my lord. As you will see in Exhibit A, B and C, the defendant is practically in no state to be around any human beings. She is a monster, my lord, who killed an innocent child for vengeful purposes. It was not enough that she suffered the heartache of losing her unborn children, so she

intended on causing that pain on her husband and fellow sister wife as well. Therefore, we propose the no bail motion, my lord.”

Samarah was in disbelief. Langa had fed his lawyer all that information. She looked back at him and he looked anything but remorseful of his actions. He wanted to inflict pain on her and he enjoyed seeing her in pain.

Judge: “The defence may plead its case.”

Brandon: (Clearing throat) “Your worship, although there may be evidence in the Exhibits, they are not enough to prove that my client did indeed commit a heinous crime. As you will see in Exhibit D, a doctor did confirm that the child died of a Pulmonary Embolism, which could be caused by multiple factors. In Exhibit E, you will see that a post-mortem was conducted and the deceased died of natural causes. He had an underlying blood condition which caused a blood clot in his lung and killed him in the process. In most cases, people who die from PE become short of breath, but in this very rare case, the boy died peacefully in his sleep while his stepmother was driving. It should also be known to the court that the biological

mother Ntombikayise Dladla was an absent mother and Samarah Moeng was the mother figure ever since she was engaged to the father. That I know, your worship, is for future debates as we still need to prove that she didn't commit the crime. However, I'd like the court to take a look at all the evidence and overrule that my client did not kill anyone as the child died of natural causes."

The judge took a look at the all the evidence that Brandon presented, while Langa's lawyer wasn't too pleased with it.

Lawyer: "My lord, just to clarify, we as the plaintiffs knew nothing about any post-mortem being conducted."

Judge: (sigh) "That shouldn't be a big deal as you are sure of your case that he was murdered, correct?"

Lawyer: (anxious) "Ye, Yes, my lord. We are sure."

Judge: "Mr. White, your evidence is noted and it shall be considered. However, based on the evidence presented by the

plaintiffs, I don't think your client is stable enough to be around people as yet."

Brandon: "Yes, my lord. She is in a bad state, but that does not mean she is a criminal. Therefore, I propose to the court that she be sent to Denmar Specialist Psychiatric Hospital for mental observation until such a time that a court date will be set."

Lawyer: "My lord, this is ridiculous. We should send a harsh message for future offenders. We cannot send everyone to mental institutions just because they are rich."

Judge: "I get to decide what to do in my court. You may save the theatrics for the future. Mr. White, it is your lucky day. Your motion is granted. I expect a full report of your client weekly until such a time that we shall conclude this in court. Adjourned."

Brandon: "As you wish."

Officer: "All rise."

They all stood up and Brandon showed her thumbs up, while the new Dladla's were very displeased. Brandon walked towards her.

Brandon: "Are you alright?"

Samarah: "I think so. A mental institution, Brandon? You basically just told the court that I am insane."

Brandon: "Just trust me, okay?"

While they were talking, they didn't see Ntombi coming. She came from behind and attacked Samarah.

Ntombi: (angrily) "You will curse the day you were born! Did you really think you could get away with it?! I will make sure that you stay in that looney bin for life!"

Samarah was in tears all over again while she felt the same entity holding her hand again.

Brandon: “Don’t worry about that one. It won’t look good on her part. They are going to lose this case. It won’t make it to court – I’ll make sure of it.”

She felt as if her life was over; she was painted as a murderer when her career had just begun, but she had no idea that there’s no particular forumula for redemption.

Colossians 1 verse 11 says; “May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.”

After all endurance and patience joy follows swiftly.

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– “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”

Brandon took her into his car and they drove off to Pretoria.

Brandon: “Is there anything you might need before I take you to your destination?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “No, thank you.”

Brandon: “What about your clothes?”

Samarah: (shaking head) “I want nothing to do with the clothes that man bought me. My clothes are at my house in Ferndale. If you can get someone to get a few things for me from there.”

Brandon: (nodding) “I’ll do so.”

Samarah: "Thank you. For not letting me to go prison."

Brandon: "It is my pleasure. I promise you, you will not regret going there."

Samarah: "I guess so."

They drove further in silence and she refused everything he offered, until they finally passed by Kauai.

Samarah: "Do you mind stopping there? I really feel like a Berry smoothie."

Brandon: (smiling) "Of course. I will just quickly park here and get it for you."

She nodded in thanks as he went to buy her one. She indulged in it so much it felt as if it was taking her on a trip down memory lane. Once they arrived at Denmar, they had to hand

in their belongings. She didn't even have her cellphone with her, so she had nothing to give in except her jewelry. It wasn't as bad as she expected it to be. All patients were roaming around freely, so it wasn't like a prison or a real mad house as she expected. She filled out the form with all her allergies and contact information. When she got to the next of kin, she stumbled a little bit.

Brandon: "You can put Lydia on there. She said it is okay."

Samarah: (shaking head) "I don't want to bother her. Can I put you on there?"

Brandon: (nodding) "Sure."

She finished filling in her form and they took her to her room. Before she left, she said goodbye to Brandon and thanked him once again for everything. Her room was quite spacious, with a bed and a desk with a few books. There was no TV in her room, but they did have a TV room as one of their priviledges. They were allowed to wear their own clothes as long as they were not restricted with a lot of ropes as some

were considered suicidal. The Nurse told her to get comfortable and that she will be meeting her doctor in a few hours. The view was really serene and enforced peace unto one's mind. She hadn't had time to digest everything that happened to her since Mthokozisi died. It was only when she was staring out the window that she officially broke down in tears. She felt as if her chest was constricted and that her breathing was no longer regulated. With every cry came agonizing pain that she couldn't run from. She was slowly letting go of the hurt, but sinking into actual depression. She cried for a good hour and ended up lying on the bed in complete silence afterwards. She was just staring at the ceiling, reliving every ounce of pain Langa brought onto her. She didn't even hear someone knock on the door a few times before they walked in. The doors didn't have any keys for obvious reasons.

Dr. White: "So, you must be my doppleganger."

When a person is stressed, the brain feels overworked so much that you even see the obvious things staring you in the face. Right before her was the one and only Dr. White that Sister Joy was always telling her about. She extended her hand and took no offence when Samarah didn't want to shake it.

Dr. White: “Hmm, okay. I totally understand. Don’t you worry, I take no offence. May I sit?”

Samarah shrugged.

Dr. White: “I will take that as a yes. I am Dr. White, but you can call me Grace.”

Samarah just nodded. She didn’t sit up at all.

Dr. White: “You must be Samarah, am I right?”

Samarah: (softly) “Yes.”

Dr. White: “That’s a very beautiful name. Do you know what it means?”

Samarah nodded from the bed.

Dr. White: “It means Guardian or protected by God. It is an Arabic name. It’s quite special, you know. I am pretty sure everywhere you go, you turn heads. You have been through quite a lot in life, I presume, but somehow, you just always preserve. The meaning of one’s name is truly something a lot underestimate, you know.”

Samarah felt the Doctor’s warmth filling the room and her heart opening up slowly towards her. Something told her to sit up and look at her properly. She saw the most beautiful, dimpled smile on a woman. Dr. White had the most gorgeous buttermilk skin and not one pimple in sight. She had a robust body, much like her own

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but a lot more shaped. Her bust and curves were just absolutely beautiful. She had dreadlocks just like her and looked magical. Samarah found herself in awe.

Dr. White: (Surprised) “Wow, when Sister Joy told me about you I thought she just assumed we were the same size. Come to think of it, I do see a lot of myself in you. I guess it is true what they say about doppelgangers, huh?”

Samarah was infatuated with this warm doctor who sat before her.

Samarah: "I am sorry, I didn't mean to be so rude when you walked in."

Dr. White: "It's okay, it comes with the job."

Samarah: "Forgive me for asking, but aren't you an oncologist?"

Dr. White: "Yes, I am. I am also a Psychologist. I have two degrees."

Samarah: "Well, you must be smart then."

Dr. White: (chuckling) "You could say so. My mother always used to say that, God bless her soul."

Samarah: "May I ask what race you are?"

Dr. White: "Oh, ke Motswana (I'm Tswana)."

Samarah: (frowning) But your complexion and your surname..."

Dr. White: (laughing) "Oh, I am married to a white man – Brandon's father."

Samarah: "Oh, Brandon, my lawyer?"

Dr. White: "Yes, he insisted that I meet you. He is never wrong about my patients, you know."

Samarah: "He asked you to meet me?"

Dr. White: "Oh, yes, he did."

Samarah: “Okay, do you mind telling me what your name means?”

Dr. White: “Oh, in Latin it means Charm, goodness and generosity, but my mother named me Grace in terms of the Bible meaning the love and mercy freely given by God. I used to hate my name quite a lot growing up, but after what I have been through, I truly appreciate it. It is quite amazing what you realize once you grow up, hey.”

The conversation flowed between them. Something about her told her that it was okay to open up to her. She was God sent, just that both of them had no idea. History was not about to repeat itself, but it was about to be amended.

Jeremiah 29 verse 11 says; “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” What is meant for you shall find its way to you – no matter how long it takes. Blessings cannot be rerouted.

““Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Despite the spitting image Samarah was of Grace, they both couldn't see it. Yes, she was a lot darker because of Richard's complexion, but they looked so strikingly alike even a fool could notice. Grace had no children according to what everyone knew, so no one would have thought that it was her actual daughter. She herself had given up on meeting her daughters ever, so it never dawned on her though seeing her name in the file for the very first time evoked feeling she thought died a very long time ago. The first day went just fine and Samarah had hope after meeting the wonderful Dr. White.

Dr. White: “Well, I am glad I got to know you today.”

Samarah: “Is that what you do on the first day? Just talk?”

Dr. White: “That is what we do on most days, really – talk. I promise you by the time I am done with you, you will feel as good as new.”

Samarah: “Okay.”

Dr. White: “I just have a question; are you a religious person?”

Samarah: “I don’t really call myself anything. I mean, I believe in God. I guess I am a spiritual person.”

Dr. White: “Well, I am also a spiritual person and being so entails that I tap into your soul. You might release a lot of hidden demons and it comes with the territory, but prayer and meditation is a big part of my sessions. I am no prophet or anything like that, I just believe in treating your soul first before you start pouring your soul out. Is that okay with you?”

Samarah: (nodding) “That is perfectly fine with me.”

Dr. White: “Well, alright then. My phone number is with the nurses should you need to speak to me at any time.”

Samarah: “So, I won’t be able to use my phone?”

Dr. White: “You will, but for a limited time every day. We don’t believe in giving you access to your phones much due to the damage social media can do to you.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Agreed. In the mean time, use the journal over there should you feel the need to speak to anyone about anything. It really helps to write. We can talk about your very first chapter in that book tomorrow.”

Samarah: “Thank you so much, Doc. It was nice meeting you.”

Dr. White: “Likewise, Samarah.”

Her smile was just infectious. Samarah had two choices while in there; either feel sorry for herself or pick herself up again and face the world. She was a bit bored, but the quiet time did

her well. She picked up the pen and started writing something. She took an entire hour, when food was ready. They ate together with other patients to encourage social interaction. They were allowed to walk around and play some games while they didn't have any sessions, so that gave her some peace of mind. She was about to proceed to the dining hall when she saw a very familiar face standing by the door.

Samarah: (frowning) "Ntate Tau?"

Ntate Tau: (surprised) "Samarah. We meet again."

Samarah: (laughing) "I am starting to think that you are actually following me."

Ntate Tau: (laughing) "That would be quite an interesting hobby, now wouldn't it? I am just fortunate enough to find jobs wherever you are."

Samarah: "You are quite a funny man, you know."

Ntate Tau: "I aim to please".

Samarah: "So do you live here?"

Ntate Tau: "Yes, I am a live in security guard here."

Samarah: "Okay. It is nice to see you again."

Ntate Tau: "Likewise, I will see you later before bed."

Samarah: "Alright."

She went to the dining hall and found a seat next to one of the women there. Her name was Martha, she was a white woman in her forties who had been through quite a lot in life herself. Her husband cheated on her continuously and left her with three children. She went mad, literally and struggled to grasp reality ever since. She had been in and out of Denmark and living on anti-depressants. She was a lovely lady, just

damaged by a man she once loved wholeheartedly. They had a fruitful conversation about life, though. Samarah realized quickly that she was not the only one who had problems and she had a lot to be grateful for.

After dinner, she met with Ntate Tau again.

Ntate Tau: “I wanted to see you quickly so that we could pray before you go to sleep. That is if it is okay with you.”

Samarah: “Of course. I don’t mind at all.”

He touched her hands for the very first time in a long while and prayed with her, but in actual fact – he was praying for her. Stressful days lay ahead and he needed her to renew her strength in God. She thanked him as she felt a lot lighter afterwards and headed straight to her room. It wasn’t too long when she noticed something unusual on her desk; something that wasn’t there when she left for dinner. There was a mini basket with a beautiful Bible in it, a Berry smoothie with a rose and a note attached to it. “Proverbs 16:9”. It was signature with a little heart – no name. She quickly paged through her

Bible and read the verse; “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” She smelled the rose and indulged in the smoothie. She had no idea who sent it

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but thought of Brandon, or perhaps Ntate Tau or even Dr. White. She had a peaceful night’s sleep. For the very first time in a long while, she dreamt of her twin sister Amarah. It was quite weird since in the dream, she looked exactly like her – just a lot lighter like she was when she was 10 years old. Children do grow older in the spirit world. She was actually looking forward to that day and went to have breakfast. She had no idea what lay ahead for her. After her breakfast, Dr. White arrived and they went straight to her room.

Dr. White: “Greetings, how are you?”

Samarah: “I’m well, thank you. How are you?”

Dr. White: “I am alright, thank you. Slept well?”

Samarah: "Yes, for a change."

Dr. White: "Well, I am glad. We have a lot lying ahead of us. Shall we get started?"

Samarah: "Sure."

They held hands and Dr. White started praying together. Samarah felt rather moved by Dr. White's ability to pray like that. Once they were done, she asked her to sit down and do a few breathing exercises.

Dr. White: "Breathe in, breathe out."

She did as told for about thirty minutes. It seemed useless at first, but it did her body and mind really good.

Dr. White: "Okay, I need you to relax and focus on my voice, okay?"

Samarah nodded.

Dr. White: "I read that you have lost your memory quite a few times. This is due to head trauma. It happens a lot and in most cases, the brain uses this as a way to escape deep-rooted trauma. Your mind has done this for a very long time, which is no very good because it might come back to haunt you one day when you're a lot older. Now, I will try to help you channel your mind into what caused you to forget your initial trauma. We are going to do it step by step. It is important for you to breathe and try to force your mind to see and remember the incident, otherwise you will keep blocking it, okay?"

Samarah: (nervously) "Okay."

Dr. White: "Whenever you feel unsafe, please tell me to stop."

Samarah: (breathing heavily) "Okay."

Dr. White: "Let us start with your family life. How was it growing up?"

Samarah: “Well, I grew up with my father and mother along with my twin sister, but she died when she was ten.”

Dr. White was jotting down notes as Samarah was speaking.

Dr. White: “Are those all the people you grew up with?”

Samarah: (Exhaling deeply) “I grew up with my grandmother. Yes, I remember her.”

Dr. White: “Good, we are getting somewhere. What was it like growing up with your parents?”

Samarah: “Uh, I remember being around my granny a lot since my father was a busy businessman. He was never around.”

Dr. White: “And your mother?”

Samarah took a long pause.

Dr. White: "It's okay, breathe slowly. Try to remember."

Samarah: "I remember her shouting at us a lot. She was so unhappy most of the time. I can't believe I remember that."

Dr. White: "Focus, what else do you remember?"

Samarah: "She was never really happy with anything we did – especially my sister. I was always the quiet one and she was the talkative one. My goodness, that woman could shout."

Dr. White: "What was she shouting about?"

Samarah: "She would shout at us for chores, the moment we got back home. She would never give us a break to interact with her and ask us about our day. It was as if she hated us."

Samarah started tearing up.

Dr. White: "Is it a safe space?"

Samarah: "Yes."

Dr. White: "Good, what else do you remember?"

Samarah: "There was one particular night. My father wasn't home. She fought with my sister, as usual. It was a very intense fight."

Her breathing escalated and she started feeling sweaty.

Dr. White: "We can stop if you want to."

Samarah: "No, I want to see what happened."

Dr. White: "What happened that night?"

She took a very long pause and started crying silently.

Dr. White: "What do you see?"

Samarah paused again for quite a while and started crying. Finally, after 24 years the haunting memory of what really happened to her sister came rushing to her.

Samarah: (Crying aloud) "She killed my sister! She pushed her so hard that she fell onto the ground and hit her head. She was bleeding from her nose! I can't believe it! I remember now! I remember everything! She let me sleep with my sister's corpse the entire night through until she became cold! My own mother killed my sister!"

She wailed so loudly that Dr. White let her be. She never allowed herself to become emotional with each client, but Samarah's case hit her hard. She couldn't understand why she felt so attached to the girl. With each cry she let out, it stung Dr. White deeply that she let out her own tears.

Psalm 139 verse 13 says; "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." A mother's connection and love cannot be faked no matter what.

“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

Dr. White felt so touched that it hit her to the core. Samarah’s pain felt like her own. She watched Samarah pour her heart out on that floor. It was starting to become unbearable to watch her cry, so she decided to stop the session.

Dr. White: “I am going to stop us right there. I think we have had enough pain for the day.”

Samarah nodded and Dr. White prayed for her before she left. She herself couldn’t understand why her heart felt so heavy after seeing Samarah cry like that. Her entire day felt off until she found herself home. Once she met with her husband Johnathan White, one of South Africa’s prominent businessmen, she felt a little at ease. He was always there for her and her home felt like a safe space always. She found him cooking as usual and she hugged him tightly from behind. She felt she had quite a lot to be grateful for.

Johnathan: “And this? Don’t tell me you missed me this much, Mrs. White.”

Dr. White: “I did, actually. My day was just far from perfect. I sort of wish I never took on this client.”

Johnathan: “Why don’t I pour you a glass of wine and we can talk all about it?”

Dr. White: “Sounds good to me.”

Johnathan poured her a glass of Chardonnay and handed it to her. It went well down her throat and soothed her.

Johnathan: “How was your day? What happened?”

Dr. White: (sigh) “You just won’t believe it. I mean, I told you about Samarah. It’s just that – there’s something about her that just rubs me in a weird way, you know. She just has an effect on me.”

Johnathan: “Love, could it be that because she shares a name with your daughter?”

Dr. White: “Maybe – I don’t know. I mean, ag, let’s forget about it.”

Johnathan: “I don’t want you getting too close to this. It won’t end well for you.”

Dr. White: “I wish I could take her to someone else, but it won’t be right. She is already used to me and feels comfortable with me.”

Johnathan: “Then there is a reason why she is your client – believe in that.”

Dr. White: (nodding) “I hope so. It’s just that, I feel she has endured more pain than anyone else could.”

Johnathan: "You also have been through a lot, but you overcame it."

Dr. White: "My sister doesn't seem to think so."

Johnathan: "Hope will come around. She isn't exactly perfect either."

Dr. White: "Yes, but I am the one who became addicted to alcohol. I am the one who destroyed our relationship."

Johnathan: "Come on, you're too smart to think like that. You were depressed, alone and became addicted. These things happen. You lost your children before you could even touch them. You have been through quite a lot, and she is quite stupid to hold that against you even after all these years. You came out a better person; you are smart and educated and no one should hold your past against you. Use your past to get through to Samarah. Help her understand and deal with her pain the same way you did."

Dr. White: "I don't know what I would do without you."

Johnathan: "That is why you shouldn't even think of that – ever. With you til the very end, remember?"

Dr. White: "Always and forever, babe."

He hugged and kissed her. That was the promise they made to one another on their wedding day; six years prior.

Dr. White: "Either way, Brandon owes me a holiday. He always brings me the most extraordinary cases."

Jonathan: "We shall find out soon why."

While they were catching up on their day, Brandon walked in.

Brandon: "Greetings, family."

Jonathan: "Hi, son. You didn't tell us you're coming."

Brandon: "I love surprising you guys."

Jonathan: "Grace and I were just talking about you."

Brandon: "Gossiping much?"

Jonathan: (chuckling) "She was just telling me that you always bring her the most extraordinary cases – more especially her recent one."

Brandon: "Oh, Samarah?"

Jonathan: "Yes."

Brandon: "I promise you, you won't regret taking her on."

Dr. White: (sigh) "I sincerely hope so."

They enjoyed their dinner together as a family. Samarah on the other hand, was still coming to terms with the recent memories she gained. She couldn't even get out of bed to eat supper, so Ntate Tau organised a little something for her. He knocked a few times before entering. She didn't respond, but he went in anyway. She was grief-stricken, for the first time since her sister died. She was really mourning the loss of her twin now that she finally knew what killed her. She was truly speechless and in so much emotional turmoil.

Ntate Tau: (clearing throat) "Evening, Samarah. How are you feeling today?"

Samarah: (sigh) "Not very well, Ntate. How are you?"

Ntate Tau: "I am doing just fine, thank you. I brought you something to eat."

Samarah: "I am not hungry, but thank you for the offer."

Ntate Tau: “I will leave it here in case you change your mind. Have a good night.”

Just like that, he left her to be alone. She contemplated starving herself, but the familiar aroma of the food awoken her nostrils. Her body responded and forced her to get out of bed. When she approached the food, something in her brain alerted her that she had eaten that before, though she couldn't recall where or when. There was a cute purple picnic basket filled with samp, beans and mogodu. The smell was just divine. Of course, there was a note attached to it with the very same handwriting as the one she got the day before. “Psalm 34:18. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Someone once told me that Life is too short to relive the each day. Let this food be a comforting reminder of the memories you once created with us. Don't ever forget to pray; it will all get better soon.” It was anguishing for her not knowing who was sending those lovely letters, but it was rather reassuring that someone out there was thinking of her. She dug in and the food comforted her soul right there and then. It was real homemade comfort food. She had no idea she was being watched – for her own safety and the reassurance to someone else. Ntate Tau headed straight to his room that evening and received the usual call.

Ntate Tau: “Dumela (hello)

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Aaron.”

Aaron: “Hello, Ntate. How are you?”

Ntate Tau: “I am well, but I am more concerned about you.”

Aaron: “I am getting there. I still can’t walk as yet even though it has been over a year since the accident.”

Ntate Tau: “Your injuries were really bad. You are lucky to even be alive – take it easy.”

Aaron: “I can’t. My wife is suffering while I am confined to a hospital bed.”

Ntate Tau: “I assured you that I am taking good care of her.”

Aaron: "I see she received the gift. She is eating now. Thank you."

Ntate Tau: "It is always a pleasure."

Aaron: "Beatrice is one of many who will reap what they have sown. She has messed up quite enough."

Ntate Tau: "Every dog has its day. Let her wait for hers."

Aaron: "Please check up on Langa for me when you get the chance tomorrow. I received information that he has withdrawn large sums of money from Samarah's bank account."

Ntate Tau: "How much are we talking about here?"

Aaron: "Over R100 000 for now. I see he has connections everywhere – so do I."

Ntate Tau: "I will be on it."

Aaron: "I really appreciate everything you have done for me, Ntate."

Ntate Tau: "It is a pleasure. We shall speak soon."

They hung up while Aaron continued to watch Samarah. He had cameras installed in her room just to put his mind and heart at ease. He felt safer that way knowing that he could see her while he was far away. While he was doing that, Grace had a lovely dream of her own. The following day, she woke up and relayed the dream to her husband in tears. It had been very long since she had a dream like that. She got dressed and headed straight to Samarah. She was in between being a Oncologist at the hospital, and being her therapist every day. At times she couldn't even make it to the hospital, hence she requested for leave. She found Samarah sitting alone in her room, staring at the view outside.

Dr. White: "Knock-knock."

Samarah: "Good morning, Doctor."

Dr. White: "How are you today?"

Samarah: "I am well, thanks. How are you?"

Dr. White: "I am great now that you're a lot better."

Samarah nodded and continued to stare outside the window.

Dr. White: "Do you fancy a walk?"

Samarah nodded and they walked out together. They had a quiet few minutes until Dr. White broke the ice.

Dr. White: "So, how did you sleep?"

Samarah: (sigh) "Okay, I guess."

Dr. White: “You seem a bit down. Do you mind telling me what’s on your mind?”

Samarah: “I just can’t stop thinking about the entire thing. Ever since I remembered what Beatrice did – all the memories of her mistreatment towards me kept flocking. I keep asking myself why she hated me so much, despite the fact that she killed my sister. I mean, I was just a child. All I needed was a mother figure. All she had to do was love me. I keep asking myself if she is even my mother. I mean, Amarah would always argue with her and tell her that she wasn’t our real mother. No real mother could treat children like that.”

She tried extremely hard to keep the tears from falling down.

Dr. White: “Sometimes, mothers deal with their own demons in such a way that they repeat the entire cycle of abuse. It is just a never-ending pattern. Sometimes, they are so toxic that they don’t even understand how wrong they are.”

Samarah: “Well, it really hurts. She killed my sister and continued with life just like that.”

Dr. White: "Yes, well, that is a demon you have to fight. I think you should speak to her. Ask her all the questions you need answers to."

Samarah: (nodding) "I don't know if I will be able to contain my anger towards her, but I suppose you are right."

Dr. White nodded in agreement.

Samarah: "If I may ask, what was your mother like?"

Dr. White: "Oh, my mother? She was the loveliest person in the entire world. My sister and I had the most understanding and encouraging mother ever. She was such a hard worker and kept persevering despite our father walking out on her to be with another woman."

Samarah: "That was tough. Is she deceased?"

Dr. White: "Yes, she passed on after I went through so much hell. She couldn't deal with watching me drown myself into depression. Her body gave up on her when she couldn't take the pain anymore. It took me a long time to heal from that; I blamed myself for her death since my sister blamed me too. Our relationship has never been the same ever since."

Samarah: "I am so sorry to hear that."

Dr. White: "It's okay, really. I never got over it until this morning. I had the most beautiful dream of her. She never visited my dreams ever since she died, so I am still reeling from that."

Samarah: "Do you mind telling me what the dream was about?"

Dr. White: "She was dressed in white and she looked so happy. She kept smiling at me and even held my hand in the dream. We had a fruitful conversation and she told me that the wait is over, that I will get what is due to me."

Samarah: "What do you think that means?"

Dr. White: "I have no idea, but all I know is that it was the best dream I have ever had. It must mean something so I will keep praying about it."

Samarah: "You are a very spiritual woman, hey."

Dr. White: "One day when I get the chance I will tell you all about what I went through. Not many people know about that part of my life. I wasn't always this well kept together person you see in front of you."

Samarah: "I fail to believe that."

Dr. White: "Believe me, when I was your age, I was a real mess. I had lost everything. Had it not been for my husband, I would most probably be dead."

Samarah: "I see you – you are low key inspiring me."

Dr. White: "Is it working?"

Samarah: "A little bit."

Dr. White: "Well, that is better than nothing, now isn't it?"

They both chuckled and she stopped when she came across the canteen.

Dr. White: "Fancy something you like?"

Samarah: "I am just looking at the ice cream. I haven't had any in quite some time."

Dr. White: "Well, how about I buy you ice cream?"

Samarah: "Oh, no. I really wasn't hinting."

Dr. White: “Even if you were, I don’t mind. I mean, I have an addiction to ice ream, hey.”

They chuckled and she bought some ice cream for the both of them. That morning ended up in five hours of non-stop chatting and in a way, Samarah was healing Dr. White as well throughout that conversation. They learnt so much about one another and got to realize how much they actually had in common. Little did they know, they were making up for lost time.

“LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.”

Indeed, Samarah had a very good morning with Dr. White. It was such a good start to her day that she completely forgot about Beatrice and her ill father. She hadn't spoken to any of them ever since he collapsed on that floor right outside her jail cell. There was just so much going on, that she had completely forgotten about the two of them. It was time for her to focus on herself for once in her life. Meanwhile, she had no idea what Langa and Ntombi were up to. Mthokozisi's funeral had finally come yet it seemed as if things were starting to go very wrong on Langa's side. Suddenly, they had changed their tune about Samarah. Her morning was about to get ruined. Dr. White said her goodbyes as she heard that there was a patient who needed her assistance in the oncology ward. Little did she know that it was a blast from a very painful and brief past.

Dr. White: “I have to get going. There is an apparent patient who needs my help at the hospital. I will see you tomorrow.”

Samarah: (nodding) “Thank you for a wonderful morning. I really appreciate it.”

Dr. White wanted to hug her as it felt right, but she just wasn't sure. She didn't want to look as if she was getting too close to her patient. Instead, she held her hand briefly and walked away. As Samarah walked back to the building, she found Lydia impatiently waiting for her. She was actually delighted to see her dear friend. She rushed towards her and gave her a tight hug. The hug lasted for quite some time with tears in between.

Samarah: "I am so glad to see you."

Lydia: "How are you? Are you okay?"

Samarah: "I am okay now that you are here."

Lydia: "Let's sit down."

Samarah: "Let's rather go outside and talk there."

Lydia nodded in agreement and they walked outside hand in hand. They reached one of the benches and sat there. Lydia looked rather worried.

Samarah: "What is it? I am really okay."

Lydia: "Well, a lot has been happening, you know. Sister Joy sends her greetings. She feels awful that she couldn't be here today."

Samarah: "That's alright. I will speak to her soon, I guess."

Lydia: "You really need to get your phone so that we can talk regularly. Life just isn't the same without talking to you daily."

Samarah: "I feel the same way. I have so much to tell you, you know."

Lydia: "What is it?"

Samarah: "I've been having therapy sessions with my new therapist, Dr. White. She is really amazing, and I cannot wait for you to meet her. Well, I have started to remember a few things."

Lydia: "What kind of things?"

Samarah: "Well, I had a flash back of a memory that my brain had buried for years. Even I still can't believe it."

She was about to finish narrating her story, when Beatrice appeared out of nowhere looking quite distraught.

Beatrice: "Oh, Samarah, my love! Thank goodness I am finally allowed to see you!"

She attacked Samarah with a hug much to her annoyance. She couldn't believe the pretense.

Samarah: "Beatrice. What are you doing here?"

Beatrice immediately noticed the sudden hostility she was receiving. She was already used to that treatment from Lydia.

Beatrice: (frowning) “Hao (goodness) Nana, is everything alright? This place seems to be doing more damage than good to you.”

Samarah: “I asked you what you are doing here?”

Beatrice: “I came to see my daughter. What do you mean?”

Samarah: “Are you sure I am even your daughter?”

Beatrice: (shocked) “What do you mean?”

Samarah: “You know exactly what I mean. What happened that night when Amarah died?”

Beatrice nearly dropped to the floor.

Beatrice: (surprised) “What are you talking about?”

Samarah: “You know exactly what I am talking about. What happened to her? What killed my sister?”

Beatrice: “Oh, honey. Those pills they have been pumping you are just not good for you. Anyway, I have come here because your father is in hospital. He has cancer. He needs you. Your husband is ready to drop the charges against you. He is getting the judge ready to release you from this place as we speak.”

Samarah: “If you are not willing to tell me why you killed an innocent 10 year old – then you have no business being here.”

Beatrice and Lydia were both flabbergasted. Beatrice took time to digest the news and thought of a comeback.

Beatrice: “I see you are not in a good space today. Perhaps I should come back another time.”

Samarah: "Perhaps you should not come back at all."

Beatrice got the message loud and clear, although she was hesitant to leave.

Samarah: "Is there anything else?"

Beatrice: "It's just that... I came here rushing with my petrol on reserve."

Samarah: (chuckling) "You have some nerve, woman."

Lydia quickly contained the situation and handed her a R200 note.

Lydia: "Here, now please leave."

Beatrice: "I don't know what they have been telling you in this place, but the Samarah I know would never abandon her father while he is in such a helpless state."

With no response from the irritated Samarah and the gobsmacked Lydia, she left with her tail right in between her legs. Lydia looked at Samarah and blinked a few times to ensure that she wasn't dreaming.

Lydia: "What was that? Am I missing something?"

Samarah took a deep breath and told her everything that occurred. She was in tears as she poured her heart out to her best friend, whom herself was just as emotional.

Lydia: "I can't believe this. I mean

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sure, I have always thought that Beatric was evil, but murder, though? This really explains a lot and why you just can't recall what happened that night. Oh, my friend. I am so sorry."

Samarah: "Not as sorry as I am. I am starting to believe Amarah's version, you know. She would always poke fun at the idea that she wasn't our mother. What if she was right?"

Lydia: “Well, there is only one way to find out – confront your father.”

Samarah: (shaking head) “I don’t think now is the time to speak to him. I am just not in a very good state. All the thoughts that are going through my mind right now are just not the best. Sure, I am saddened that he has cancer, but I have so much I have to deal with. If I go see him now then I will forget all about me.”

Lydia: (smiling) “I am so proud of you. I mean, I was so worried about you being in this place, but now seeing how you are slowly healing brings tears to my eyes. Tears of joy, obviously.”

They both chuckled.

Samarah: “I just want to get better.”

Lydia: “Screw what the world thinks of you out there. You have me and that is all you need – for now.”

Samarah: "What do you mean, now?"

Lydia: "Well, while we wait on your knight in shining armour Aaron to come and get you."

Samarah: (sigh) "If he were really alive as Ntate Tau said he is – why hasn't he come yet?"

Lydia: "Just have faith. Aaron would not just abandon the chance of coming to see you. Something just isn't right about this entire situation – and don't tell me you don't feel it too."

Samarah: "I do, but – "

Lydia: "Then believe. It feels as if it is about to get worse seeing as Langa won't let you go that easily, but that is where you dig deeper into the prayer warrior that I know you as and keep on praying. There is always light at the end of the tunnel."

Samarah: "Always. What would I do without you?"

Lydia: "You wouldn't survive, that's obvious."

They chuckled and hugged one another.

Samarah: "Thank goodness you are here, Lydia. I love you so much."

Lydia: "I love you, babe."

While she was reeling in the joy of having Lydia around, Dr. White's fate was nearby. She was driving to the hospital when Brandon checked in on her.

Dr. White: "Hi, Brandon."

Brandon: "Hey, Doc. Are you well?"

Dr. White: "Always, you?"

Brandon: "I am fine, thanks. How is she doing today?"

Dr. White: "She is a lot better than most days. She is making good progress."

Brandon: "I take it she hasn't seen or heard of the news as of yet."

Dr. White: "What news?"

Brandon: "Langa managed to sway the judge in his favour. As we speak I tried to overrule his decision but he won't budge. He dropped the charges against her in return to only declare her insane and unfit to manage her own finances."

Dr. White: (shocked) "What?! You can't be serious."

Brandon: "I am dead serious."

Dr. White: "Sounds like that judge is biased and bribed."

Brandon: "Exactly my thoughts."

Dr. White: "So, what now?"

Brandon: "I am on my way to the facility as we speak. I have to get her out of there."

Dr. White: "Do you need me to come with? I can turn back."

Brandon: "No, that won't be necessary. I will alert you should I need your assistance."

Dr. White: "Alright. Please do fill me in as soon as you have an update."

Brandon: "I will do that. Bye."

Dr. White said her goodbyes and parked in at the hospital about fifteen minutes after the call. There is what we call intuition or a gut feeling – which is what she was experiencing the entire day. She tried to ignore it, but it became stronger as she entered the lift. It just felt like she was going to see or experience something she didn't want to. She greeted everyone and took the file of the much awaited patient. She didn't bother checking it before walking into the ward. She was looking down the entire time while greeting the patient. Only then she decided to open the file.

Dr. White: “Good day, my name is Dr. Grace White. Let us see what we have here.”

The moment she saw the patient's name in the file, her heart started palpitating abnormally. She froze for a while and stared at the name. She slowly lifted her head and saw the very man who caused her great heartache and torment that lasted for years on end. When he also realized who was standing before him, he nearly collapsed.

Richard: (shocked) “Grace... Is it really you?”

She started trembling with her legs nearly giving in on her. The file dropped to the floor and she nearly fell. One of the nurses rushed to her aid and helped her up.

Nurse: "Doctor! Are you okay?"

She felt her entire head spinning as if she was about to die. Her throat was closing in on her while her chest was feeling overheated. She rushed out of the ward and headed straight to her car. While her body was slowly coming back to life, she could feel the onset of vomit. She opened her car door and vomited right outside the car. She drove way so fast no one could catch up to her.

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

In life, we are all bound to meet people who don't have our best interests at heart. It is not easy for those in the situation to see it even though the signs are always there. Samarah met Langa at a tender age and yes, she most definitely dodged a bullet when she left him and met Aaron, but with Ntombi in the picture, why on earth would she allow Langa to let her go when she could be their meal ticket? Langa had it all; a booming business and millions in the bank. He had every kind of woman falling to his feet soon afterwards, but it all came crashing down after Mthokozisi die

While Grace had to face her own demons she was in a state of shock as expected. She had been couped up in her bedroom and not speaking to anyone. No one was home as yet when she arrived, so she was wallowing in a bereaved state all over again. The trauma and humiliation she had to endure all those years ago had forcibly revisited her. As soon as Lydia left, Samarah was met with a rather unfortunate event. Ntate Tau

was not around as he was sent to make a few pick ups, which was the perfect opportunity for the devil to strike. Upon walking back to her bedroom, she found Ntombi packing a few of her clothes in her bag.

Samarah: (surprised) “Ntombi? What on earth are you doing here? Why are you handling my clothes?”

Ntombi: (smiling) “Oh, Samarah darling. We have come to fetch you.”

She was fake smiling thorough her teeth and gave her a very unwanted hug.

Samarah: “I don’t understand. Who let you in here?”

Ntombi: “The staff did.”

Samarah: “Let go of my things, please.”

Ntombi acted as if she couldn't hear Samarah. She hit a very bad and much hidden nerve when Samarah pushed her away from the bed and nearly knocked Ntombi over.

Ntombi: (shocked) "Bakithi (goodness)! Samarah! I was only trying to help!"

She shouted those words loud enough for everyone around to hear, leaving Samarah confused. Langa stormed in and found Ntombi leaning towards the wall holding her cheek.

Langa: "What is it? What happened?"

Ntombi: (hysterically) "She slapped me! She slapped me for trying to help her pack!"

Samarah: (confused) "I did no such thing."

Ntombi: (crying) "Do you see how much of a liar she is? She is not stable lo muntu (this person), Langa. How dare she treat her sister wife like this?"

Samarah was very confused while the Supervisor and Langa seemed to believe Ntombi.

Samarah: “What on earth are you even talking about?! I found you going through my things without my knowledge! Now you accuse me of slapping you?! Can you please tell these people to leave?”

Supervisor: “I am afraid I cannot do that, Samarah. He is your husband and is legally allowed to take you away.”

Samarah: (Frowning: “Take me away? Where to?”

Supervisor: “Well, he has agreed to get you top of the range care within the comfort of your own house. After what you did to his son and now his first wife, it seems as if you really do need help. I thought you were healing, but I suppose I was wrong.”

Samarah felt a really tight knot in her stomach.

Samarah: “There must be some kind of mistake! Please, let them go! I want to speak to my lawyer.”

Supervisor: “I am sure you will be in good hands. Don’t argue. It takes a really long while to get over denial, you know.”

It was just really odd; Ntate Tau was nowhere to be seen and was sent for pick ups on that particular day. The Supervisor did not even explain things to her before hand nor to Dr. White.

Samarah: “No! I demand to speak to my Doctor.”

Supervisor: “I am afraid your husband has the final say here. I wish you all well.”

With that said, the Supervisor left the room while Langa thanked him. Samarah was confused and very much anxious. Langa dragged her out of there screaming with a few staff members who had to restrain her. One of them

accompanied the three of them to Langa's house, much to Samarah's wonder. She was really starting to irritate Langa, when he asked the staff member to give her something to "shut up". She was given a very strong tranquilizing injection and was fast asleep before they left the facility. Ntate Tau and Brandon missed them just by an inch.

Brandon: (breathing heavily) "Ntate Tau, were you perhaps here when they took her away?"

Ntate Tau: (shaking head) "No, I was told to go do a few pick ups. It is very odd since I never get to do them. Something tells me this was all planned out."

Brandon: "I thought you could see the future."

Ntate Tau: "Not everything, my son."

Brandon: "This is fucked up."

Ntate Tau: "I have to tell Aaron."

Brandon: “This will only stress him out.”

Ntate Tau: “We don’t have a choice. He needs to deal with everyone involved and very soon before something worse happens to his wife.”

Brandon: (nodding) “Okay, I will tell him. I will be in touch.”

They said their goodbyes and left. When Samarah was dropped off, there was already another doctor awaiting her – someone who was supposedly going to take care of her and give her much needed intensive therapy sessions according to Langa and Ntombi. They were quite jolly and even had nurses to assist with Samarah.

Langa: “Please take her to her bedroom, will you? She is not well.”

Ntombi: “As you can see, she is going to be very well taken care of. The house is very big and no one will be able to enter

without our knowledge. The staff is fully qualified to take care of someone like her

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plus her bedroom is downstairs. I mean – given her size, we couldn't possibly expect them to carry her all the way down should she not be able to walk out of bed.”

That was Ntombi's biggest mistake – to place Samarah in a bedroom downstairs of the house. The staff member that accompanied them to the house was very pleased to see everything already set up for her. After he inspected everything, he said his goodbyes and was transported back to the facility by one of Langa's drivers.

Langa: “Okay then, bye for now.”

Once he left, their true colours came out.

Ntombi: “Oh, thank God he is finally gone.”

Langa: “I thought he would never leave.”

Ntombi: (chuckling) “I can’t believe it was so easy to pull off that stunt. I mean, I never knew they would eat up the whole sister wife story.”

Langa: “Me neither. Things are a piece of cake if you have money.”

Ntombi: (laughing) “Oh, now we can finally live in perfect peace. Samarah has to pay for killing our son.”

Langa: “I concur. I just have to get her to sign the documents.”

Ntombi: “Do what you always do – forge her signature.”

Langa: (Shaking head) “I wish it were that simple. That bloody white lawyer is her executor. He needs to act in her absence should she be deemed unfit. In the mean time, I can only take what comes and goes in her bank account.”

Ntombi: “Oh, let us celebrate. I’ll be right back.”

She quickly ran to the kitchen and got a bottle of champagne and two glasses for them.

Ntombi: “Cheers, to the good life and making her pay – literally.”

Langa: (laughing) “Cheers.”

While they thought they had everything under control, the major plans to make them suffer and pay for their sins was just beginning. Samarah was officially isolated from everyone; her friends and colleagues were already notified that she wasn’t in her normal state of mind and that she had officially lost it. They had taken away her priviledges of even having a phone. She had no freedom; no voice. She was suffering at the hands of Ntombi and Langa and could not leave the house. She had become a prisoner and everyone was on Langa’s payroll. Brandon could not get hold of her, no matter what he tried and Grace was still reeling in her pain of the past revisiting her so abruptly. When her husband Jonathan came home, he

was surprised to see her depressed in bed and barely saying a word.

Jonathan: (frowning) "My love, is everything okay?"

Dr. White: (crying) "It's him, Jonathan. It is really him."

Jonathan: "What are you talking about, Gracie?"

Grace: "It's really him. Richard. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw him. When I looked at the patient name and realized it was him. He even called me by name."

Jonathan: "Are you sure?"

Grace: "Yes, I am sure. Why would he torture me like this, Jonathan?! After all this time he just decides to emerge as my patient!"

Jonathan: "How do you feel right now?"

Grace: "I am angry, numb, depressed. I don't know how to feel to be exact."

Jonathan: "Take this as God's way of making the past right. All these years you had so many unanswered questions. Now the time has finally come."

Grace: (shaking head) "I can't do it. I can't do it, Jonathan. He has hurt me, he ruined my life completely."

Jonathan: "Take a day or two before you decide what you want to do. Either way, you will have to get back up and face the world – face him. You have to do it."

Grace: "I don't even know if I want to."

Jonathan: "You have to. We have been preparing for this day for years. You will finally get to know why he did what he did and what happened to your children."

Grace: "What if... What if they are no more?"

Jonathan: "Then we will cross that bridge when we get there. Closure is far more important than anything in this world. The time for your healing has finally come, my love. Do not let the Devil get the best of you and rob you of this chance."

Grace: "I suppose you are right."

Jonathan: "I will make you my favourite soup. Stay put."

Grace: "Thank you so much."

Jonathan: "It is my duty."

He kissed her forehead and proceeded to the kitchen. Halfway through his magical healing soup, Brandon stormed in overly frustrated.

Brandon: (sigh) "Hi, dad."

Jonathan: (frowning) "What is wrong?"

Brandon: (deep sigh) "I have had the shittiest day you could ever imagine."

Jonathan: "It seems you everyone around me is having a really awful day. Sit, I am making my famous soup. What happened?"

Brandon: "You won't believe it. Langa managed to get the ruling overruled. Samarah is now declared unfit to be around anyone. The only thing he can't change is me as her executor. That man is robbing her blind and I can't get access to her."

Jonathan: (frowning) "Why didn't you tell me all this when you found out?"

Brandon: "I was still trying to find a way to solve it."

Jonathan: “And Aaron? Where is he?”

Brandon: “In the US. He can’t walk as yet. He has needed extensive therapy to get his body and motor skills up and running again. I don’t even know what to say to him.”

Jonathan stood there for a while in deep silence, thinking.

Brandon: “What are you thinking?”

Jonathan: “I vowed with my life that I’d never go back to being the person I once was, but if this were my wife or yours – I’d kill if need be.”

Brandon: “What are you saying?”

Jonathan: “Ever since you have told us about this Samarah, I have felt so much empathy for her. I don’t know, but I feel like she is in our life for a reason. Therefore, I will help you. I will

get all my channels in motion. Call Braka and get the jet fueled. We're fetching Aaron."

Brandon: "He can't be seen as yet. His life is in danger, Dad."

Jonathan: "If he doesn't save his wife now, then he might never get the chance to. He won't be alone; I will help him with all the channels I have. Tell him to get ready; he is coming home."

With that said, Jonathan put all his plans in motion. It was the final nail in the coffin that Aaron needed to finalized his plans. He was getting close to saving his wife and finally being reunited with her.

– “Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you.”

The following day eventually came and Samarah finally woke up from her tranquilizer. When she awoke, she walked out of her bedroom, only to find herself back in that horrible house again. For a second she thought that she had a horrible dream the night before, but it was all real. Despite everything, Rachel visited her in her dream when she was out of it. She told her repeatedly that vengeance is the Lord’s and that everything will be alright. She was left frustrated since she thought she couldn’t do everything without Dr. White’s help. When she walked towards the kitchen, she found Ntombi in there making herself a cup of coffee. The smug look on her face was enough to make a person vomit.

Ntombi: (smirking) “Well, well, well. Look who’s awake.”

Samarah: “Ntombi, what am I doing here?”

Ntombi: “What on earth do you mean? You are home.”

Samarah: "This is not my home."

Ntombi: "You agreed to it being your home when you chose to marry an already married man."

Samarah: (frowning) "Are you seriously doing this to me? It is against the law to hold someone captive."

Ntombi: "Do you see any bars around? Are you in prison?"

Samarah: (teary) "Please, let me go. I will do anything you want me to do, just let me go."

Ntombi: (shouting) Langa! Langa! Please come down! Your wife has lost it again!"

Langa came rushing down the stairs.

Langa: "What is it?"

Samarah was already in tears, but he wasn't buying into it.

Ntombi: "She says we have imprisoned her and wants to leave.

Langa: (frowning) "What? My, you really have lost it, Sammy. I mean, you killed a child – our child. You are in no state to even be around people."

Samarah: "You know I did no such."

Ntombi: "You know very well you did it. I mean, just because you lost your twins, it doesn't give you the right to kill our son!"

Samarah: "You can't do this to me! I am leaving!"

She was about to leave the kitchen when Langa grabbed her roughly and gave her one hard slap across the face. She was in so much shock that she fell down and landed on the floor.

Langa: “I dare you to speak to my wife like that ever again and you will regret it. You are a Dladla wife – act like it.”

Ntombi: “I am going out for a while. Should I get you something?”

Samarah was left defeated on the floor when they both left her there. She couldn't believe that was her life. Everything felt so surreal. How cruel could one be? Langa was ambitious and kind when he met her, but turned into a real monster. She wasn't allowed to do anything for herself – let alone make food. Her nurses were there to assist her and watch her every move. Even if she wanted to get some fresh air, someone had to be around her. What kind of life was that? She was enslaved by a man who didn't even love her.

Meanwhile Jonathan had all systems go. Aaron was a bit hesitant to agree at first, but once Brandon reassured him that his father could be trusted – he agreed. He was taken straight to Rachel's house without a single person noticing him. He felt really good to be around a familiar environment. The house felt peaceful and he could feel his mother's presence. Ntate

Tau was requested to stay with him for a while so that he could get better spiritually. Physically, he was halfway there. He was still walking in crutches, though. When he arrived, he found Ntate Tau already waiting on him with all the necessary herbs.

Aaron: "Ntate."

Ntate Tau: "Aaron, my son. You look better than I expected."

Aaron: "I wish I felt that way."

Ntate Tau: "We should always be grateful for the gift of life – it is the most underrated and undervalued thing in this world."

Aaron: "After 25 surgeries, I am blessed to be standing before you."

Ntate Tau: (nodding) "Shall we get started?"

Aaron: "Right now? Don't we get to eat something first?"

Ntate Tau: “We can do that later. Your wife’s life is at stake and there is not much time.”

He nodded and agreed. He was cleansed right away from any evil, danger and spirit of accidents. They prayed and meditated for three hours and by the time they were done, they were both famished. Jonathan respected people’s beliefs and he only came after a few hours as requested. When he arrived, he felt a deep sting in his heart when he saw Aaron. He could see that he had been through a lot.

Jonathan: “It is good to finally meet you, Aaron.”

Aaron: “Likewise, sir.”

Jonathan: “Please, call me Jonathan or dad or something. Sir makes me feel so old.”

Aaron: “I will try.”

Jonathan: "Are you settled in alright?"

Aaorn: "Yes, but I can't sleep any longer. I need to get people to pay for what they did to my wife and I."

Jonathan: "Slowly, but surely it shall be done. I have all plans in motion and already there are spies situated at every inch and corner of those who have wronged you. Before I do such always, I make sure that it is what people actually want. I know, you have vowed to the lord that you shall not kill any more, much like me. I know, you want to avenge your pain, but I don't want you to touch anyone's blood under any circumstance whatsoever. Which is why I have people who will do the job for you. Do you really want this?"

Aaron: (nodding) "More than anything."

Jonathan: (nodding) "Okay then. We will start with the root of the problem – Bra P."

Aaron: "What about Langa?"

Jonathan: "I know, he has your wife, but she will be okay. We will save her when the time is right. For now, let us deal with those who have wronged you from the beginning."

Aaron: (nodding) "Okay."

Jonathan: "Good. My doctor is on his way from Brazil. He will get you up and running in no time. Our first mission starts tomorrow night. I shall see you soon."

With that said, Jonathan left. He went straight home to be with his wife, Grace. She was still distraught and the entire scenario of the twins' birth day kept playing in her head all over again. Jonathan found her still in her nightwear.

Jonathan: "My love. It is midday."

Dr. White: "I know."

Jonathan: "The hospital called. They said they couldn't get hold of you all morning."

Dr. White: "Hmm."

Jonathan: "They said it is urgent."

Dr. White: "They want me to save that man. Why should I?"

Jonathan: "That is not the oath you took when you became a doctor."

Dr. White: "What are you saying, Jonathan? Are you on his side?"

Jonathan: "I am on your side, no matter what. But we both know that I will tell you if you are wrong. My point is you should at least do your job because that is what we do. God sent him your way for a reason, Grace. You can't keep hiding forever."

Dr. White: "I'm not hiding."

Jonathan: "Okay then. Get dressed so we can go see him."

Dr. White: (shaking head) "I'm not ready."

Jonathan: "If not now then you will never be ready."

Dr. White: "Please, don't let me do this, Jay. Please."

Jonathan: "I told you; I am with you every step of the way. You do want to find your girls, don't you?"

Grace nodded.

Jonathan: "Then let's go. Let me be there by your side while you face your fears."

Grace nodded and sobbed silently in his chest for a while. Jonathan took a long shower with her and ensured that she felt safe. Ultimately, it took her a very long time to be the person she was at that stage. He was not about to let her slip back into the depression she had. After they got dressed, Jonathan got into the car with his wife and drove straight to the hospital. Grace's heart was racing beyond comparison. With every minute, she felt a lot more anxious. The anxiety wanted to take over her entire body as she felt some vomit pushing up until her throat. Jonathan held her hand tight.

Jonathan: "It's okay. We've been waiting for this moment."

She just nodded anxiously. Once he parked the car in the hospital parking, she felt her entire body vibrate.

Jonathan: "Let me know when you feel ready. I can wait."

Dr. White: "We obviously can't wait here forever, can we?"

Jonathan: “You of all people know very well that psychologists find it a lot more difficult than their patients to process their feelings. It is not easy being you, but I got your back. I won’t leave your side – ever.”

Dr. White: (nodding) “Okay, let’s go.”

They walked out slowly and she felt like she was walking much unhurried; her legs nearly gave in but Jonathan pushed her to keep on walking. He remained reassuring as always. Dr. White inadvertently ignored Sister Joy’s greetings amongst other staff members. They had no idea what she was facing. They finally made it to the ward, which felt like a walk til eternity. She wavered before walking into the ward. Her legs felt unsteady and nearly failed her

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but Jonathan was right beside her and aided her when she felt like she couldn’t any more.

Jonathan: “You’re doing great, love. We’re almost there.”

She felt unsteady and unwavering tears just fell down her cheeks. It was as if her soul wanted to eject her body at that moment. The only thing standing in between her and the truth at that present second, was the door. Jonathan enforced further steps and she stopped yet again.

Dr. White: (nervously) “Stop.”

Jonathan: “Remember what you promised me all those years ago? That no matter what the outcome, you won’t lose yourself. Closure is more important than anything – right?”

She nodded affirmatively and they kept on walking. She was a bit stunned to see his bed empty and for a moment her heart let loose and the anxiety slowly disappeared. She let out a firm sigh.

Jonathan: “Excuse me, Nurse. Where is the patient who was in this bed? He is supposed to be my wife’s patient.”

Nurse: “Oh, he was taken for some scans this morning. He should be back in a few minutes. You can wait if you don’t mind, Dr. White. The Proff tried calling you endlessly.”

Jonathan: “She’s just been having a rough few days. We will wait. Thank you.”

The nurse nodded and proceeded to leave. They looked around and saw the rest of the patients in that ward. They were all male and frail looking. Most of them were diagnosed with early stage cancer if not terminal stages. Grace thought that she had dodged a bullet, but Jonathan was adamant that they should wait for Richard to get back. After about 15 minutes, he was wheeled into the ward in his wheelchair and she helped him out of the chair.

Nurse: “Oh, Dr. White. You are finally here. We have been waiting on you, hey. This case can only be solved by you.”

Grace just nodded nervously while the weak Richard stared at her. Once the nurse was done, she let them be and Grace

remained mum. All she did for the first few minutes was stare at Richard blankly.

Richard: "Grace... For some reason I never thought this day would come although I have been waiting on it."

Jonathan: "I don't think you know who I am, so I will introduce myself. My name is Jonathan White, Grace's husband."

Richard: (surprised) "Oh, I never knew you were married. I mean how could I? It's a very dumb thing to say. Congratulations."

Jonathan: "My wife has been through the most, Richard. I mean, obviously you wouldn't care since you just upped and left with her children before she could even hold her. Do you have any idea what she went through because of you? Do you really?"

Richard: (teary) "I don't, but I can imagine. Grace, I never meant to hurt you. I... I just..."

With each time Richard addressed her, it felt like she was getting stung right in her heart. The pain was just unbearable.

Jonathan: “Do you know the verse Isaiah 60 verse 22?”

Richard: “When the time is right, I the Lord shall make it happen.”

Jonathan: Ah, so you do know the Bible. Why am I surprised? It is always the devils who can recite the Bible from start to finish who can eat you alive. Do you know what Deutoronomy 32 verse 35 says? “Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.” Take this as a chance for you to repent, Richard, for you have no idea what I am capable of doing to those who hurt the ones I love. You only have today – right now. What you say or do at this very moment will determine your fate.”

Richard: (nodding) “I know.”

Jonathan: "Oh, no. I don't think you do. You see, my wife here is a specialist in Oncology. If even the Professor can't help you with your illness, what makes you think she will even want to help you? Now is the time for redemption. Start at the very beginning. Tell us everything that happened and don't you even think of leaving any details out."

Richard too a deep breath before speaking.

Richard: "I... I had no idea what my mother was planning to do. I was very happy; excited actually to become a father. I was looking forward to seeing my daughters being born; to becoming a present father to them. I had hopes and dreams that you and I would eventually get back together, Grace. I mean, despite all I did to you, I still saw a future between us. We were both young and didn't know much about love. As I grew older, I realized what a big mistake I made."

Jonathan: "Don't skip any part. Keep going."

Richard: “When the twins were finally born, my mother called me to come and meet her outside the Nursery. I saw them and I was so delighted and happy to see them. But then, she concocted her own plans. She told me that we needed to take the twins and leave Christiana with no trace in sight. She said that we could raise her better and not Grace nor her mother. Believe me, I never wanted to keep the twins away from you, but... she forced me.”

Swallowing saliva was even hard for Grace as she listened to Richard relay the entire story. He lied here and there of course.

Richard: “When they turned 2, I met Beatrice. She was chidless and she fell in love with the twins the first time she met us. I mean, I thought she was the perfect woman to play mom to them. I became successful and had everything they needed. They went to a private school and they had found a mother. Everything felt like it was falling into place. She was a good mom – or so I thought. After we got married I sensed a lot of distance between the girls and her. I was mostly away on business trips a lot and they would be left with Beatrice. Whenever I came back home, they were well fed and well dressed, so I didn’t pick up anything odd. Things went on

like that for years and they grew, but not a day went by when I didn't think of what I did to you, Grace."

Her heart started palpitating again.

Richard: "Everything was just fine, until one morning when I received a call stating that Amarah had died."

That last statement was enough for Grace to snap out of it.

Dr. White: (surprised) "What do you mean 'when Amarah died'?"

Richard hesitated for a moment. He could see Grace's bloodshot eyes and bewildered face.

Dr. White: (angrily) "What do you mean Amarah died?!"

Richard: (frightened) "She... Beatrice told me that she had put them to bed but woke up only to find Samarah sitting right

beside her cold body. She had died in the night while Samarah was right there beside her. I'm sorry, Grace."

She could feel her entire body overheat. She started breathing heavily while crying. The more she cried, the more restricted her breathing felt. Her entire body was shivering, while Jonathan never let go of her hand.

Jonathan: "Gracie, breathe, love, please."

She tried to take deep breaths but the moment she looked at him, she just saw the devil himself.

Grace: (shouting) "You killed my daughter!"

Jonathan: "Gracie, calm down please."

Grace let out one loud wail which awoken the entire ward. Everyone was quite shocked to hear her cry like that. They assumed she had heard some bad news. She wailed

for a good five minutes before collapsing right in Jonathan's arms.

Jonathan: "Can we get some help in here?!"

Just like that, Grace had started her grieving process – formally. She was grieving for the daughter she birthed but never got to know. She was grieving for all those years that went by without her being present. She was grieving for the time that was stolen from her; while the one thing that made her shut down was the other daughter; Samarah. She had no idea what happened to her and even feared to ask about it. When Richard told her about Amarah, her body went into shock. Nonetheless, the past has to be revisited sometimes, so that we can get closure and healing. Nothing comes easy in this world but she did have a kickstart to her new life.

“The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

While Richard’s health was deteriorating, Grace’s mental state was beginning to affect hers. The nurses at the hospital managed to assist Grace Speedily and get her stable in one of the wards. Her husband insisted that she be moved to a Private hospital away from Richard. That way Grace would be able to heal faster. Her blood pressure had skyrocketed in an instant, causing her to collapse. The Doctors instructed her to take it easy and since she couldn’t relax she was given a sedative. Jonathan had been by her side ever since she collapsed. The more he looked at her, the more he was reminded of the broken woman he met years before. He vowed that he would never see her in that state ever again. Therefore, he decided to make a call.

Jonathan: “It’s me. Get ready. I am on my way to you. Our plan is about to fall into place.”

Aaron: “I thought you said I need to get prepared first.”

Jonathan: "I don't think we should wait any longer. Get ready. I will be there soon."

He hung up and kissed Grace goodbye.

Jonathan: "I swear on my life, he and everyone else who hurt you and your daughters will pay."

He got into his car and dove off. After a while he finally made it to Rachel's house. Aaron and Ntate Tau were there as expected along with the expert Doctor he flew in just for Aaron.

Jonathan: "Greetings. How does it look, Doc?"

Doc: "It looks promising. It seems as if the intensive pyshiotherapy he was receiving really worked."

Jonathan: (nodding) "Will he be able to walk again?"

Doc: "Yes, but in the mean time, he needs to use his wheel chair – just until he has fully healed."

Jonathan: (nodding) "I see. You will be around as discussed to assist him with that, right?"

Doc: "Of course."

Jonathan: "Good. You may excuse us."

Doc: "I will be at my hotel should anyone need me."

Ntate Tau: "I thank you, Doc."

He said his goodbyes and left.

Aaron: (sigh) "I can't let Samarah see me like this. I am just not the same anymore."

Jonathan: “You are still the same Aaron she met and married over a year ago. Sure, you may have changed a bit physically, but she loves you. There is no time to dwell on that. We have a lot to do. Let me prepare for our journey. We shall leave in a few hours. In the mean time, let us enjoy a drink together, shall we?”

Aaron nodded in agreement. He didn’t know Jonathan at all and he had no idea why he was doing all he was for him apart from Grace being his wife’s mother. He probably felt obligated, but there was just something about Jonathan. He seemed purely good hearted. The entire situation weighed heavily on him. He poured Aaron a glass of scotch and one for himself while Ntate Tau had some juice instead. Jonathan was packing away his tools in his small, black bag while they were conversing.

Jonathan: “How do you cope with all the stuff you see on a daily basis while remaining sober, Ntate Tau?”

Ntate Tau: (chuckling) “Imagine what life would be like if I was a drinker.”

The three of them laughed together.

Aaron: "May I ask how you and Mam'Grace met?"

Jonathan smiled instantly. The sound of her name on its own was music to his heart.

Jonathan: (smiling) "We met a few years ago, she was a real mess, you know. I was on holiday in the North West, touring around the neighbourhood of Christiana, when I met this beautiful woman having a drink at a nearby bar. Believe me when I say she was a real mess; her hair looked like it hadn't been done in a long time yet she looked more radiant than the rest of the women I saw in there. I approached her of course and the first thing that came out of her mouth was, "I'm not a prostitute, so save yourself the time and leave me alone."

Ntate Tau and Aaron laughed.

Jonathan: "Yep, funny, isn't it? She looked so filled with trauma, but I wasn't interested in rescuing her, I was interested

in getting to know the real her, the woman behind all that pain. Despite her reservations, I bought her a drink – she went from having a black label to the most expensive wine there was. She probably did that to make me go away, but she wasn't going to get rid of me that easily. My visit to Christiana was extended; from a week to a month. Within a month, she had opened up to me about what happened and why she was co-dependent on alcohol. Her story ripped me apart. I couldn't understand why a boy would even do that to her. It was a long road, but I helped her turn her life around. Her sister and her husband had turned their backs on her completely. They wanted nothing to do with her, so I advised her to sell the house and move in with me. Slowly but surely she dealt with her demons and got rid of her alcoholism. A year later, she enrolled in medical school as she had always wanted. Eight years later, we are married and she has two degrees."

Aaron: "That is quite a love story."

Jonathan: "You don't know the half of it. She found me when my life was a mess too. I married a woman whom I gave my life to, but she betrayed me so much that it cost a life."

His voice broke as he said that. His story stemmed from deep-rooted pain. After a few hours, it was time.

Jonathan: "Are you ready to leave?"

Aaron: (nodding) "Yes."

Jonathan wheeled him out of the house as they greeted Ntate Tau goodbye.

Aaron: "Where are we headed?"

Jonathan: "To the root of the problem."

They drove to their very first culprit. By then it was around 10pm at night. Somehow, Jonathan knew that no one would be around the house that evening. They managed to drive in without anyone noticing. Aaron got on his wheel chair and wheeled himself into the house. It didn't take them too long to find the person they were looking for.

Bra P: (shocked) "What the fuck?! How did you get in here?!"

Jonathan: "We have our ways."

Bra P: (shouting) "Eunice! Eunice!"

Jonathan: "Do you honestly think she is still in this house? She is not here. She is obviously still out fucking your right-hand man. I mean, you failed to do the job since your partner in crime killed your daughter."

Bra P: (angrily) "How dare you?!"

He was about to launch at Jonathan when he threw him back in his chair.

Jonathan: "We didn't come here to fight drunk

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old men. Do you recognize this man right here? He is your nephew; the nephew you had killed along with his wife and mother. Do you remember that, Paul?”

Bra P: (crying) “It wasn’t my idea, okay?”

Jonathan: “Do you know why I hate liars, Paul? I hate liars with a passion because they can grow sheep’s skin and kill you.”

Bra P: “I am not lying.”

Jonathan: “I think he has memory loss, Aaron. Perhaps we should jog his memory, what do you think?”

Aaron was still angered just by looking at Bra P. He recalled Bra P being so nice to him on that lobola day. It should have been a sign to him, but he was just trying to enjoy his day with his wife. The more he stared at him, the angrier he became. Jonathan dug into his black bag and took out cable ties. He tied Bra P’s hands together behind the chair, with him already begging for mercy.

Bra P: "Please, I swear, I didn't do anything."

Jonathan took out a pair of pliers which obviously spooked Bra P.

Bra P: (frightened) "Please, don't hurt me. I... I'm just a father grieving his daughter."

Jonathan: "And he is an injured man grieving his mother, his daughters and a wife who doesn't remember him! Look at him. Look at him! Do you know how many surgeries he had to undergo just to look close to normal again?!"

Rage was brewing inside of Aaron.

Jonathan: "I hate people who tempt fate, you know. Where shall I start? Oh, yes. How about your fingers? I mean, you should never have made that call to Langa, now should you have?"

Bra P was pleading for mercy, while Aaron was watching pleurably in silence. Jonathan pulled out all his fingers from his left hand and pulled out his finger nails from his right hand. He poured salt over the exposed flesh and Bra P started screaming out loud. With every scream, Aaron forced himself not to cry. He recalled his mother's screams during and after the accident. He recalled the last scream he heard from his wife when she called out to him and Rachel. Jonathan continued to torture the screaming Paul. By then he had no emotion left to show on his face.

Jonathan: "You know, I hate people who tempt fate. You should ask Judy, my ex wife."

He put on his gloves, causing Bra P to become even more fearful than he was prior to that.

Bra P: (scared) "What... what are you going to do to me?"

Jonathan: "I am just going to make sure that you live to regret all your deeds while living in your own little mind. Say goodbye to the last thing you will ever see."

While Bra P was begging for mercy, Jonathan dug right into his eye sockets and pulled out both his eyes with his hands. Bra P's screams turned into wails and sobs.

Bra P: (crying) "I can't see anything. Why don't you just kill me? What kind of man will I be if I can't see anything?"

Jonathan: "I want you to live each and every day of your life thinking of all you have done wrong. Had you not done all that evil, Rachel would still be alive and Aaron and Samarah's children would be born by now. Your daughter would have still been alive and you would have been a different man. You should never have made a deal with the devil."

With that said, he packed away his tools and told Aaron to follow him. Aaron took one last look at his uncle and wheeled himself out of the house. He himself was capable of a lot, but Jonathan showed him another side he never thought he would ever get to see. They drove back to Rachel's house in silence. Not a minute went by that he didn't think of his beloved wife. Jonathan dropped him off and told him that they would continue the following morning. All he could think of

was Samarah. Aaron thought he would feel quite remorseful for partaking in that awful activity, but he didn't. He actually felt a bit of relief, though his heart weighed heavily due to his wife's suffering at the time.

Ntate Tau: "Would you like to talk about what is bothering you so much?"

Aaron: (sigh) "I know I'm supposed to trust the process, you know, to believe and have faith in God, but it has been so hard. I have been faced with all this recovery, losing my mother in the process, while I couldn't even be there for my wife when she lost our twins. At her tender age, she has seen and experienced things she wasn't supposed to. She fell prey to a monster's hands while I couldn't even be there to protect her. I feel so useless, I am a man. When I married her that day, I promised her that I'd protect her no matter what – yet I couldn't even do that just mere hours after we got married."

Ntate Tau: "Hold it right there, my son. You are not a quitter – you were never meant to be one. You are a real man though you might not even see it now. You yourself have been through so much trauma; yes you probably think that you were

supposed to be here, but imagine if you had come back and actually died. Would your soul have been happy?”

Aaron: (sigh) “I understand what you are trying to do, Ntate, I really do, but I miss my wife and I can bet you that she needs and misses me.”

Ntate Tau: “You saw her sessions with Grace. It is not easy being her right now. She doesn’t even remember you. What will it be like for her right now? You can’t be around her. You are yet to eliminate the problem. Give it time; you will know when it is the right time. Your grandfather has your back and will deal with everything. Why do you think Jonathan agreed to help you without you even asking?”

Aaron: “Why is that? Because he is Grace’s husband?”

Ntate Tau: (shaking head) “Because he has been in your situation – despite your relations. He knows what it is like to fight for your life while fighting for those you love. Give it time. It is almost near.”

Aaron nodded in covenant.

Aaron: “I understand. It is just hard. I can’t even bond with her with our usual prayers. I can’t even send her a daily Bible verse with flowers right now.”

Ntate Tau: “What if I told you that you could?”

Aaron: “How when that fucker has her hostage? God knows what he is doing to her right now.”

Ntate Tau: “Your ancestors are in your corner. He and Ntombi can only do so much. What if I told you that you could send her a sign without her even realizing it?”

Aaron: “What do you mean?”

Ntate Tau: “Call your old contacts – all of them. There might be a solution to this after all.”

" You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask."

While Jonathan was on the brink of revenge, Ntate Tau had plans of his own. It was important to Aaron to salvage what he had with Samarah before the damage became too much. He concocted a plan of his very own. Jonathan was doing great, as James 2 verse 24 says; "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone". He was indeed proving just that. After he was done with Bra P, he headed to his house to shower and meditate. He didn't enjoy seeing his wife after doing something like that. Sure, he needed to do it, but he didn't want her seeing that side of him. After hours of meditation, he went to see her just after 3am in the morning. She was still asleep. He was getting worried about her and decided to pray for her and speak to her though she was asleep.

One week later...

It had been a week of no change. Grace was still in her own mind, zoned out even when Jonathan spoke to her. He feared she was reverting to her old ways of blocking reality. He couldn't have that. He felt that time was of the essence. He had put his plans on hold to check up on her, but enough was enough. He went straight to Aaron. It didn't matter what time of day it was, the show had to go on. He went to fetch Aaron exactly a week later after dealing with Bra P, at exactly midday. They drove off as usual and ended up in Soweto.

Aaron: "Who are we here for?"

Jonathan: "The person who gave your uncle and Langa the power to destroy and do evil."

They parked at a nearby park and waited a while. Jonathan got out with Aaron by his side while he smoked. Aaron had quit smoking soon after his accident. They waited for approximately one hour when Braka, one of Jonathan's links arrived in his black Mercedes Benz. Jonathan put out his cigarette and got ready. A big, dark man walked and went to the boot. He dragged someone looking like a sangoma out of the car. He had a bloody nose and swollen face and was gagged.

Jonathan: "Braka."

Braka: "Mr. J."

Jonathan: "No one saw you, right?"

Braka: "Yes, I am positive. Mr. Moeng. It is an honour to meet you."

He shook Aaron's hand, who was in disbelief and drove away.

Aaron: "Are we going to do this right here, right now?"

Jonathan: "Yes, or are you scared of someone?"

Aaron: (shaking head) "No."

Jonathan: “Good then. Let’s get started. We have a lot to do. Time is not on our side.”

He placed the sangoma on a chair and slapped him around a bit.

Jonathan: “Hey, wena (you). Wake up.”

Sangoma: “Where am I? Who are you?”

Jonathan: “Oh, okay. You want to play dirty, don’t you? I can do that.”

The moment Jonathan took his time and took out his black bag and he saw the tools, his consciousness suddenly came back to him.

Sangoma: “What are you trying to do to me, Mlungu (white man)?”

Jonathan: "I see someone's back to earth. It seems as if you weren't disoriented after all."

Sangoma: "Please, whatever you want – I can give to you."

Jonathan: "Oh, I just want you to pay for what you have done."

Sangoma: "I don't know anything of what you are talking about."

Jonathan: "Oh, but I think you do. Does Paul Moeng and Langa Dladla ring a bell to you?"

The sangoma's ears immediately stood up.

Jonathan: "Judging by your reaction, you know exactly who I am talking of. You see this man right here, he is a victim of those two. He is in that very chair because of what You did."

Sangoma: "I didn't know – "

Jonathan: “Oh, you knew very well. Tell me; when you received your calling didn’t you swear to do right by people? Didn’t you take an oath to do good? You chose to practise evil and witchcraft and bring misery to people. You use your mind and your hands to do those things. I think it is only fair that I take something away from you, don’t you think?”

Sangoma: “Please, I can do anything you want me to.”

Jonathan wasted no time.

Jonathan: “I want you to remember this day the next time you choose to do any evil.”

He cut both his arms and legs off leaving him absolutely limbless. He screamed out in pain but no one heard him because he was gagged. The moment he was done cutting each limb off his body, he ensured he wouldn’t bleed to death. Jonathan’s vision of pain was to inflict it for eternity and not kill – not unless he had to. Once he was done, he dropped him off at the nearest hospital and drove off.

Aaron: "Where to next?"

Jonathan: "Well, you tell me this time."

Aaron: "Well, I'd like those poice officers to pay for taking a bribe and arresting my wife when they knew she was innocent."

Jonathan: (nodding) "That can be arranged. To the police we go."

While they were on their way to the officers, Ntombi and Langa were a bit distraught and confused to find a bunch of dead flowers with a Bible verse delivered to them. Matthew 10 verse 28; "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Ntombi: "Babe, can you believe what I just found on our doorstep?"

Langa: “What?”

Ntombi: “Look at this. What kind of sick game is someone trying to play at?”

Langa briefly looked at the flowers and the Bible verse, but he remained unphased.

Langa: “Hmm, probably someone trying to play a sick game on us. Don’t mind it. Just throw it away or something.”

Ntombi: “Perhaps someone is trying to threaten us because of her?”

Langa: “No one can threaten me. I have all the power. Get rid of it. I have to go to work. See you later.”

Langa went to work and let her be. He couldn’t really care less about what went on in the house, as long as Samarah was kept

under control. Little did he know that a plan was hatching behind his back that would soon sink him. Back at Rachel's house, Ntate Tau was finalizing his plan with Aaron. Aaron was still out with Jonathan, so he had to get the ball rolling on the other side. They made it to the police station and waited for the two police officers to make their way out as told by Braka. He rarely made mistakes and always received accurate information. Once the police officers got into their usual van and drove out, Aaron and Jonathan followed them. The officers had received a tip off that there was big criminal activity going on nearby in one of the houses. When they walked in, they found Braka there who was already expecting them.

Officer 1: "Ekse (hello), we received a call that there is some drug activity happening here."

Braka: "I don't know anything, but you are free to look around."

Officer 2: "You think we are fools, don't you?"

Braka: "Did you hear me say that?"

Officer 2: "What do you think we should do about this fool?"

Jonathan and Aaron walked in right at that second.

Jonathan: "The question you should be asking yourselves is; what should we do with the two of you?"

They quickly turned around and were stunned.

Officer 1: "Who the fuck are you?"

Jonathan was putting on his black gloves.

Jonathan: "Oh, who I am should not be of your concern. What you should be worried about is this man's wife."

Officer 2: "What are you on about, Mlungu (white man)"

Jonathan: (chuckling) “Do you know the Bible verse from 1 Peter 2:16?”

Officer 1: “Eh, ndoda (man), we didn’t come here for church.”

Jonathan: “I will break it down for you. It says; “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. I hate hypocrites, you know. When you two took the oath as police officers, you chose to protect and serve. Now I am asking you; when you arrested a 23 year old girl knowing very well she didn’t kill her stepson, were you protecting and serving?”

Officer 2: “What are you talking about?”

Braka hit them both simultaneously with a heavy object across the head and they fell down to the ground.

Jonathan: “I won’t ask you again, Officers.”

Officer 1: (scared) “We don’t keep tabs of everyone we arrest.”

Jonathan: “Oh, but surely you do keep tabs of everyone you take bribes from, right? Does Langa Dladla ring a bell?”

They were both frightened immediately as soon as they heard his name.

Officer 2: “Look man, we just needed the extra money. Besides, he is not one to mess with. He is dangerous and has connections everywhere – even the judge is on his payroll.”

Jonathan: “Oh, clearly he isn’t as powerful as we are, officers. As we speak, I gave you the chance to redeem yourselves but you chose not to. All your bad deeds are on their way to the Chief Justice’s office. You have indeed messed with the wrong family.”

Officer 1: “Look, I’ll do anything. I have a wife and children.”

Jonathan: “Oh? And you never thought for a second that Samarah didn’t have any?”

Officer 2: “It wasn’t our idea, man. It was Langa and his wife’s idea. I mean, we just happened to be at the right place at the right time.”

Jonathan: “You abused your powers as police officers. Take this as a warning and let us see if The Langa Dladla will bail you out of prison.”

Braka did what was asked of him while Aaron and Jonathan left the house. Jonathan dropped him off at Rachel’s house, while he went to check up on his wife. Grace was still the same as the day before. She was rapidly losing weight despite it being only a few days she had been in hospital. She refused to eat and would only stare at the ceiling without conversing with anyone.

Jonathan: “Grace, we cannot carry on like this. We made a promise to one another.”

She just remained quiet.

Jonathan: "Fine, I will be right back but you will thank me for what I am about to do."

He left her in her ward and went to do what he only felt was right. In the mean time, Samarah was still in shackles at the Dladla household. Ntombi made it a point to make her miserable. She ordered the nurses to keep her sedated throughout the day. She was out of it most of the time and she just enjoyed it. She spewed insults at her whenever she got the chance, but what good is that when the victim can't even respond with mere tears?

Ntombi: (chuckling) "Look at yourself, Sammy girl. You thought you were all that

didn't you? I mean where on earth have you ever seen the fat girl get the guy? Cinderella is just a movie, love. You have lost. And I can't wait for you to sign those damn papers so that you can be out of our hair once and for all. Just looking at you is sickening itself."

She found it pleasurable to converse with the non-responsive Samarah. While she was doing that, Langa decided to come home early with an unexpected guest.

Langa: (shouting) “Ntombi! Ntombi! Where are you?”

Ntombi walked out of Samarah’s room hastily.

Ntombi: “I’m here, love.”

She frowned when she saw the bombshell standing right next to Langa. She had beautiful caramel skin, an hour glass figure and didn’t mind exposing some flesh.

Ntombi: (frowning) “Who’s this?”

Langa: “Oh, I’d like you to meet Zinzi, my new PR manager.”

Ntombi: (frowning) “I thought I’d be your PR manager.”

Langa: (laughing) “Since when do you know anything about PR, love? You barely made it through Grade 12, come on.”

That stung Ntombi more than anything Langa had ever done to her before. He never insulted her like that ever since he got back together with her before.”

Zinzi: (smiling) “Hi, I’m very pleased to meet you. Mr. Dladla has told me so much about you.”

She extended her hand for a hand shake and Ntombi couldn’t afford to be rude in her husband’s eyes, so she shook her hand.

Ntombi: “The pleasure is all mine.”

Langa: “Did you cook?”

Ntombi: “Since when do you want me to cook?”

Langa: “Since you are my wife. Come on, now. I am going to shower. I expect a full course meal by the time I am done. And don’t you dare order any food. I can tell the difference.”

Ntombi’s weakness and pet peeve was cooking and any basic house chore. Langa rushed swiftly to his bedroom while Ntombi couldn’t stop admiring this new girl standing before her.

Zinzi: “Oh, I didn’t mean to intrude. He insisted that I come for dinner, you know. I told him I live a bit far but he opted to take me home, though.”

Ntombi: “Hmm, when did you start?”

Zinzi: “Oh, today.”

Ntombi: “I see.”

Zinzi: “Well, do you need some help with cooking? I can make a really mean feast.”

Ntombi: (fake smile) “Why not?”

Zinzi made herself feel at home instantly while Ntombi was carefully analysing her. Obviously she had the looks which was already a score for her. When she took out the pots and started asking if she had Basil or Thyme amongst other herbs and spices, she knew that that was another Samarah. She could cook – something she couldn’t do. She immediately took out a bottle of beer from the fridge and just let Zinzi do her thing. The entire time she was plotting how to get rid of the poor girl in her head.

Zinzi: “Oh, I mean, I am the youngest of four. We grew up with my grandmother, you know. Being the only girl, I was forced to learn how to cook from an early age. I hated cooking while growing up, but by the time in was in Grade 10 I fell in love with it. I even did Hospitality studies at school.”

Ntombi: (nodding) “Hmm.”

One thing was for sure; Zinzi was one chatter box. She was done cooking after about an hour and a half when Langa finally decided to come down from his shower.

Langa: “Hmm, it smells divine in here. It surely couldn’t have been you cooking Ntombi, now could it?”

She had gone from being called “Love” and “Baby” back to first name basis. “Could he be having an affair” she thought to herself. He was already so comfortable around her and was conversing with her without even realizing that Ntombi was still in the room. He occasionally touched her lower back and smiled right at her, making Ntombi so envious. Once again, he chose someone else over her. “What does she have that I don’t”? she thought to herself again.

Langa: “I am famished. Shall we get ready to set the table and dish up?”

Zinzi: “Oh, that would be very nice.”

Langa: “Ntombi, how long have you been drinking while the poor girl has been slaving away in the kitchen? She is supposed to be a guest, man.”

Zinzi: “It is okay, really. Besides, I offered to cook.”

Langa: “Hmm, the least you can do is assist me with setting the table.”

He left to the dining room while Ntombi followed him. She set the table with a heavy heart. Zinzi was already feeling at home and stealing all the attention while she felt like a stranger in her own house. It was just bizarre. Langa and Zinzi ended up having their own conversation while Ntombi just devoured all the wine. She didn't connect with either of them at that point and had no idea what they were talking about.

Zinzi: “You know, I have worked with a lot of companies as you saw on my resume. I was thinking that the public just doesn't know you, you know, I mean the real you. They always want to connect with your family life and get to know what you do for fun. Everyone is fascinated by polygamy in South Africa and

they are dying to know how you cope with two wives being so successful. I could organize a photoshoot with the three of you and an exclusive interview with the biggest magazine in the country.”

Ntombi: “That won’t be necessary. We don’t do interviews.”

Langa: “Since when do you answer on my behalf, Ntombi?”

She looked down immediately as his response pierced right through her heart.

Zinzi: “Oh, it was just a suggestion, hey. Perhaps I am overstepping my mark.”

Ntombi: (mumbling) “You got that right.”

Langa gave her a sharp look and she kept quiet instantly.

Langa: “I think you might be onto something, Zinzi. I don’t know where you have been all my life, but I have a feeling you will be a great asset to my company.”

Everything was no longer our or us it was back to “me” and “I” and “mine”. They sat and conversed for hours even after Ntombi decided to go to bed early. Langa had no idea but he was falling right into the perfectly set trap. He and Zinzi were having so much fun that he ended up opening a second bottle of wine. By the time it was 11pm, Samarah opened her bedroom door and walked out looking anything but appealing.

Langa: (shocked) “Samarah, what are you doing up, love?”

Samarah: “I need some water. I’m thirsty.”

She seemed woozy, but alive. That is just what Zinzi needed – proof of life.

Langa: “I’ll get you some water. Go back to bed.”

He looked at the surprised Zinzi.

Langa: "I'm sorry about that."

Zinzi: "It's alright. Is that your other wife? Samarah, right?"

Langa: (nodding ashamedly) "Yes."

Zinzi: "What is wrong with her if I may ask?"

Langa: "Oh, she just hasn't been well ever since my son died, you know."

Zinzi: (nodding) "I see. Well, I do hope she gets better."

Langa: "Yes, we all do. I'll be right back."

Langa proceeded to Samarah's room while Zinzi made a quick phone call.

Aaron: "Is it done?"

Zinzi: "Yes, I'm in."

Aaron: "Good, convince him that you live too far and that you should sleep over and he will be putty in your hands. Stick to the plan."

Zinzi: "This is easier than I thought. I have to go."

She hung up and he came back out of her room looking quite embarrassed.

Langa: "I am sorry about that. She never gets to see people, really."

Zinzi: "It's okay. It is rather late. Perhaps we should tidy up. We have an early day tomorrow."

Langa: "This house is big enough for four people. You can sleep over if you would like."

Zinzi: "I don't want to impose, I mean you already saw that your wife doesn't seem like she enjoys my company."

Langa: "Oh, Ntombi? Leave her to me. You can stay over. It is perfectly okay."

Zinzi: (nodding) "Thank you. You can go to bed then, boss. I will tidy up here."

Langa: "Oh, no. You're a guest."

Zinzi: "I don't mind. You need the sleep more than I do."

Langa: (nodding) "Alright then. I will see you tomorrow morning. Good night."

Zinzi: "Good night."

It was a blessing in disguise for Samarah. Zinzi tidied up and waited for Langa to be in his bedroom for a long while before doing what she had intended to do. She checked on everyone and even the nurses had gone to bed. Langa most probably told them to go to their own rooms so that the entire setup didn't look suspicious to Zinzi. She took the opportunity upon herself and slowly entered Samarah's bedroom. When she entered, the poor girl seemed rather woozy and half out of it. When she heard foot steps approaching, she jumped up.

Zinzi: "Shh, it's okay. I'm not here to hurt you."

Samarah: "Please, I didn't misbehave. I'm sorry, I didn't know you had any guests. Don't drug me again, please."

Zinzi: "Your husband sent me here – your real husband."

Samarah: "Who are you?"

Zinzi: "I am going to switch on the light slowly, please, don't be afraid."

She switched on the light and Samarah saw a completely new face before her.

Samarah: "Who are you?"

Zinzi: "My name is Zinzi. I am here to help you. Aaron sent me here."

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay."

Zinzi: "Here, take this and hide it where possible. Switch it on when no one is around the house."

Samarah looked fearful.

Samarah: (frightened) "No, I can't do that. If they find me with a phone, Ntombi will ensure that they drug me for good."

Zinzi: “You leave those people to me. Give me a day or two. I promise you. I’ll get you out of here soon. Just trust me.”

She nodded in agreement. Zinzi switched off the light and went to the bedroom allocated to her. Thankfully no one saw her. They were one step ahead of reaching their goal. Zinzi was hired by Aaron through one of his contacts. Zinzi was an escort who made it her career ever since she started in the field. She was wise and quite intellectual; but most importantly – she was easy on the eye, which happened to be Langa’s weakness. She had made her mark the first day she met him without even trying. Meanwhile Langa was quite upset with Ntombi for making a fool of herself in front of the new girl. After his long dinner chat with Zinzi, he found it hard to sleep and even harder to look at Ntombi. When she tried to touch him the moment he got into bed, he flipped.

Langa: “Do you honestly think I can touch you right now after the bullshit you pulled earlier on?”

Ntombi: “I don’t understand what you mean.”

Langa: “That’s the thing, Ntombi. You never understand anything. Zinzi is a guest, you made her cook. You made it seem like I can’t speak for myself when you made your snark, little comments and rolled your eyes. I am starting to think that I made the wrong choice by choosing you over Samarah.”

That hurt like hell.

Ntombi: “Langa... Are you for real right now?”

Langa: “Do I look like I am joking? At least Samarah is educated and she would never act stupid in front of guests. You know, they always say that everything happens for a reason. I am starting to think that God took Mthokozisi from us because he just wouldn’t have handled life with a mother like you. I mean look at your own mother.”

Langa hadn’t even tasted Zinzi yet and already he was acting like a pussy whipped little bitch. Ntombi was slowly getting a taste of her own medicine. Nothing comes for free in a rich man’s world.

“No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.”

The following day came and lots of surprises awaited everyone. Ntombi received yet another weird gift with dead flowers and a Bible verse. Luke 12:2 - “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.” Something within her told her that it was a cause for concern, but with Langa’s nonchalant behaviour, it was difficult to prove. She took the package to the kitchen and placed it on the kitchen counter in order to show Langa, but her mood was instantly ruined when she saw Zinzi come out of one of the guest bedrooms. She never asked Langa what happened to her, as she assumed he called her an Uber or something.

Zinzi: (smiling) “Good morning, love. How did you sleep?”

Ntombi: “Zinzi... Ulele lana (you slept here)?”

Zinzi: “Oh, yes. Your husband saw it fit that I sleep here. The streets are quite dangerous according to him.”

Ntombi: (Fake smile) "Hmm, I see."

Zinzi: "What's that?"

Ntombi: "Oh, just a silly package I found outside the door."

Zinzi: "Oh, do you mind if I see it?"

Ntombi: "Yes, actually I do."

Zinzi: "Oh, okay."

Langa walked down the stairs feeling cheerful as ever.

Langa: (smiling) "Good morning Zinzi, Ntombi."

Zinzi: (smiling) "Good morning. Are you ready for work?"

Langa: "Yes, I am, actually."

Ntombi: "Oh, before you leave, honey, there's something I'd like to show you."

Langa: "What is it?"

She showed him the package.

Langa: "Ag, I told you to throw that nonsense away. It is useless to worry about bored people sending us such things."

Ntombi: "But, it might actually be serious."

Langa: "You're getting paranoid. Perhaps it is high time you found something to keep you busy. Perhaps a job, yeah?"

Ntombi: "Aren't you having breakfast?"

Langa: “Zinzi and I will get something on our way to work. Besides, it is not like you’re going to whip us something special of yours now, is it?”

Zinzi: “Goodbye, Ntombi. It was such a pleasure meeting you.”

Zinzi left with Langa while Ntombi felt as if her heart was being shredded. She was heartbroken with nothing to do other than feel the need to stress an already broken woman out. When she walked to Samarah’s bedroom, she found her eating breakfast which puzzled her.

Ntombi: (frowning) “Who made you that food?”

Samarah: “Zinzi did.”

With that said, she completely lost it. She ran upstairs to her bedroom and started throwing things around. She felt as if she had no control over her own life any more. It was quite fun to make Samarah’s life miserable with Langa by her side, but now

he had something and someone else on his mind, which drove her mad. She ran downstairs to the kitchen and took out a bottle of Shiraz. She took out a cook book that Samarah once brought with her when she moved in with Langa, and decided to order every ingredient there was on the recipes she was trying out. She was taught that pleasing a man was everything and without him being happy she couldn't be happy. How on earth would she have not been miserable?

While Ntombi was dealing with her own self, Jonathan had his own ideas. He had gone to fetch Richard from the hospital and drove him to where Grace was. Richard of course had no say in it, as he was given an ultimatum; he was to save Grace from her current mental state and in return, he would be given a chance to fight the cancer at a state of the art hospital. When Jonathan arrived in Grace's ward, she was still the same.

Jonathan: "Gracie, I have brought someone here to see you."

She didn't respond, so he went out and wheeled in the frail looking Richard. Once Grace noticed him, she immediately lost it.

Dr. White: “How dare you bring this monster here?! Do you want him to finish me off, Jay? Do you?!”

Jonathan: “It is time you hear the rest of the story. He isn’t done.”

Dr. White: (shouting) “I don’t want to hear anything more from this mother fucker’s mouth!”

Richard: “Samarah is alive, Grace.”

When he said that she was in shock, but was willing to listen further. He continued to narrate everything that happened in their marriage and how he found out that Beatrice struck a deal with Langa. He knew very well what she had done, but he chose to accept the lobola money and basically sell his only child to that monster.

Richard: (crying) “I didn’t want her to tell her the truth; the truth about her real mother, Grace. I didn’t want to jeopardise

our relationship even further, and so I chose to become selfish.”

Dr. White: “Where is Samarah now?”

Richard: “The last time I saw her she was taken to Denmar; she was falsely arrested because of her husband, Langa Dladla.”

Everything Richard had been saying was not clear to her until she heard his full name.

Dr. White: “Are you telling me that the Samarah who is my patient is the very Samarah who is my daughter? The daughter you took from me?”

Richard: (nodding) “Yes.”

Dr. White: (angrily) “You sold my only child to that monster, Richard. You did that? It wasn’t enough that you took them both from me, but you were aiming at making her life a living hell when she is the only one left?!”

Richard: "I'm sorry."

Dr. White: "You know, if you had come a few years earlier, I'd have killed you with my bare hands."

She got up and out of the bed, surprising them both.

Jonathan: "Where are you going?"

Dr. White: "Where do you think? You and I are going to get my daughter back."

And just like that, Grace White had risen from the 'dead'. From that moment onwards, Grace came back to life. She recalled everything that happened between her and Samarah and she was quite appalled that she didn't recognize all the signs; the startling resemblance between them; the amazing connection they had and of course the obvious part being her name. She never thought she would find her daughters ever again. She was too distraught to even worry about the past; what

mattered to her was getting Samarah out of that hole she was thrown in. While they were driving from the hospital, Jonathan was forced to fill her in on everything; his plans and what he had done so far.

Dr. White: "So? When are you getting her out of there?"

Jonathan: "Soon. It is not that easy. Langa has the entire place surrounded. No one is allowed in, but we managed to get deliveries taken to them."

Dr. White: "Money talks. You of all people know that. Whatever the guards were offered – offer them more."

Jonathan: (sigh) "I first need to deal with the big guns up there."

Dr. White: "Then do so. For now, I'd like to face Beatrice myself – woman to woman."

Jonathan: "It is too soon."

Dr. White: “Oh, yes. I agree with you, which is why, I’d like to send a message to someone first.”

Jonathan: “Okay, we need to stop by the house first.”

While they were busy plotting their next move, Langa was at the office and he just couldn’t get enough of Zinzi. While she was pitching the idea of him having a photoshoot with his wives, a call came through.

Langa: “Hang on a second. I need to take this call.”

Zinzi: “Sure. Should I leave?”

Langa: “No, no. I have nothing to hide. Sit. Langa Dladla, hello?”

Officer 1: “Ekse (hello), it’s me. We need your help. We’ve been arrested.”

Langa: “Ngi ngenaphi lapho (where do I fit in there)?”

Officer 1: “Eh banna (goodness), you must be joking. Dude, we’ve been arrested concerning everything we did with you – and more.”

Langa: “There is no proof. I don’t have time for this.”

Officer 1: “He is coming for you.”

Langa: “Who?”

Officer 1: “Some white guy. I thought you’d know who I am talking about. Well, he wasn’t alone. He was with some dark guy in glasses on a wheelchair. They said that you were going to pay for what you did to Samarah.”

His heart nearly dropped.

Langa: "Describe this guy in glasses."

Officer 1: "I don't know what he looks like man, he is dark and wears glasses and is in a wheel chair. All I know is that they said she was his wife or something. Look, you had better get us out of here or else we will sing. I can't afford to lose my job."

Langa became increasingly worried. "It can't be. He's dead" he thought to himself.

Langa: "You dug that hole for yourself. You had better get yourself out."

He hung up on him and decided to continue with his session with Zinzi. He tried to replay everything that happened and concluded that the officer was delusional. If Aaron was really alive, he would have known or Bra P would have told him or something despite them not being on good terms.

Zinzi: "Earth to Langa."

Langa: "Oh, sorry. I heard everything you were saying."

Zinzi: "Do you agree?"

Langa: "Yes, I agree although I am not sure about my wife, Samarah."

Zinzi: "Well, I mean, you do want her fortune – all of it, don't you?"

Langa: "Yes, but – "

Zinzi: "Then let her loose. Give her some sort of freedom. Get rid of the nurses and let her be free around the house. That way, she will slowly think that you have changed your mind and she will let loose and sign the documents."

Langa: "Do you think that is possible?"

Zinzi: "If you keep her hostage eventually you will be arrested or summoned to release her. Have you forgotten that holding someone against their will is illegal in this country?"

Langa: "You are right, actually."

Zinzi: "I know I am. Besides, how will she agree to the interview if you are constantly drugging her? People need to believe that you have your household under control."

Langa: "You know, I don't know why I never met you before Ntombi. You have got so much common sense."

Zinzi: "Well, I have a lot more than common sense. I could show you if you want."

Zinzi was flirting with him at the time. She was dressed in a very short skirt exposing her cleavage as always. She leaned in on him and placed herself on his lap. He could feel the onset of an erection, which he didn't even mind.

Langa: (softly) “The door... it’s not locked. Anyone can walk in here.”

Zinzi: “They should learn to enter only when someone tells them to. Live in the moment, Mr. Dladla.”

She nibbled on his ear and neck, causing his body to react instantly. Without a doubt, he grabbed her and kissed her passionately. She pulled out of the kiss and went down on her knees, giving him the best blow job he had had in a very long time. Of course it didn’t take very long, less than 5 minutes to be exact. The euphoria he was experiencing was blowing his mind away so much that he couldn’t stop looking at Zinzi the entire day. By the time the day was over, he was putty in her hands. Meanwhile Samarah had some time to herself. Ntombi was too distraught to even care about her that day and the nurses were nowhere to be seen. It seemed as if they too were drained to do the same thing every day. She double checked to see if indeed no one was around to monitor her. Her room had no key, so she could not lock herself inside, but the rest of the bedrooms had keys. She decided to go into the furthest bedroom downstairs and lock herself in there. She switched on the phone that Zinzi gave her and saw a voicenote that came through on WhatsApp from a number saved as Ntate Tau. She

smiled with instant relief when she saw the name. She ensured to lower the volume enough for her to be able to listen to it without alarming anyone else. “I hope you get this message soon, my dearest Samarah. Everything will be alright. You need to keep praying. Pray harder than you ever have. We will get you out of there soon. Your mother in law is with you.”

She smiled with tears streaming down her face. A few minutes after she listened to the voicenote, a message came through from an unsaved number. “1 Corinthians 16 verse 14; “Let all that you do be done in love”. Remember Tokyo, my love. I promised to love you forever and I stand by it.” It was so frustrating for her that she couldn’t remember her one love, but she chose to have faith. She switched off the phone as a precaution and went back to her bedroom. Meanwhile, Jonathan and Grace went back to the house to change. Grace had a different ball game; she wanted to avenge all the hurt her children went through and she wanted to start with Beatrice. Jonathan tried to talk her out of it, but she just wouldn’t budge. They drove to Beatrice’s house and found her drinking some cheap wine. They had access to the house and didn’t even bother to knock. She was startled when she found two people she could hardly recognize dressed in all black, standing right in the middle of her lounge.

Beatrice: (shocked) “Who the fuck are you two?”

Dr. White: “You can’t possibly tell me you can’t see the resemblance.”

Beatrice took a closer look and nearly dropped to the floor. She was quite intoxicated.

Beatrice: “Yoh (Oh)! Grace! What are you doing in my house?”

Dr. White: “Wow, you even know my name. How thoughtful of you. You couldn’t even tell my own children about me. Oh wait, why would you when you killed one of them?!”

Beatrice: (frightened) “Grace, please. I can explain it all. It wasn’t my idea, you know. I mean, I didn’t know he stole the babies from you until after I married him.”

Dr. White: “Do you know why God never gave you your own children, Beatrice? It is because He knew that it would have been such a waste. You are no mother, you are not even capable of being a mother. I want you to remember everything you did to my daughters!”

She stepped closer to Beatrice who tried to run away but her legs gave in and she dropped to the ground. Grace was so angry that she beat her to a pulp. With every punch that landed on Beatrice’s face, all the anger that was hidden deep within her heart was unleashed on that day. Jonathan let her be until he felt it was enough. She wasn’t going to let her go that easily of course, and death would have been just too easy for her. Death was peaceful and peace wasn’t something Beatrice deserved. Samarah had a lifetime of trauma and nightmares all at the hands of someone who needed to love her but failed to. So, as her mother, she decided to return the favour.

Back at the Dladla household, Ntombi had been in her room for hours after trying out all kinds of recipes throughout the day. She was drinking until she couldn’t feel drunk any more. She waited for Langa to return and when he didn’t come back by 10pm, she started getting worried. She called hi

countless times and left endless voicemail messages on his phone. She waited up for him until he arrived around midnight with Zinzi right by his side. That was enough to send Ntombi to the edge.

Ntombi: “Langa... What’s going on here? Why are you so late?”

Langa: “Oh, Ntombi. I was just having a really good time with my Zinzi.”

Ntombi: (appalled) “Your Zinzi? What is happening? Just two days ago you were fine and happy with me, and now you have another woman by your side?!”

Langa: “Eish, Ntombi. I didn’t marry you so you could nag me, you know. Learn to be silent like Samarah.”

Ntombi: “I chose you above everything and everyone, Langa.”

Langa: “And I am grateful for that, but you must give other women a chance, man.”

Ntombi: "My mother was right about you."

Langa: "Well, if she was so right, why don't you go be with her then?"

He dragged Zinzi upstairs leaving Ntombi in an even worse state of mind.

Ntombi: "Where are you going?"

Langa: "We're going to bed. You can choose another bedroom to sleep in tonight."

She nearly died that evening.

Langa: "Oh, and pull yourself together, will you? Tomorrow we have an interview with the magazine. Ensure that you drink enough water to hide that phuza face of yours."

With that said, he rushed to his bedroom with Zinzi and Ntombi could even hear them giggling. She felt as if her heart was about to drop right out of her body. She was in disbelief, angry yet could not even direct any of that anger to anyone. She thought of calling Zanele, her partner in crime, but what would she do? Her own marriage failed. She decided to call the one woman who would know what to do. The phone started ringing and she felt herself shivering with shock.

Gloria: "Ntombi yami (my daughter)."

Ntombi: (crying) "Mama! You won't believe what is happening."

Gloria: "Yini (what is it), baby? Why are you crying?"

Ntombi: "It's Langa... he.. He..."

Gloria: "What did he do? Did he go back to that whore?"

Ntombi: “No, our plan was working just fine. He was singing my tune until this girl named Zinzi came out of nowhere. Now, he is all over her. I mean, I don’t get it. I thought you and your sangoma said that the muthi would work!”

Gloria: “It is supposed to work. Look, this Zinzi girl is probably a witch herself. She probably did something to him. I will sort it out. Give me a day or two. I will fix this my baby, I promise.”

Ntombi: “Please, Mama. I am losing my mind.”

Gloria: “All will be well, you’ll see – “

She could barely finish her sentence when Ntombi heard her mother screaming on the other side of the phone.

Ntombi: (frightened) “Mama?! Ma?! What’s happening?!”

An unfamiliar male voice spoke to her on the phone.

Jonathan: "Take this as a warning. By this time tomorrow you'll be visiting your mother in a hospital. Bithces like you don't learn, Ntombi. You're next. Redeem yourself before you meet your fate."

He hung up the phone leaving Ntombi with serious heart palpitations. For the very first time since she moved into that house, she had a very bad night and could not sleep a wink.

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.”

While others were being punished for all their bad deeds, someone's day was about to be brightened. Samarah had no idea, but she was about to see someone truly amazing. She received countless pictures of her and Aaron on different occasions with different captions of memories throughout the years. She kept checking them whenever she was awake. She restored her faith and prayed. She was visited by Rachel yet again and started remembering her, but Aaron was still a vivid image in her brain. Ntombi on the other hand barely slept a wink. It was bad enough because she chose to sleep in the bedroom right next to the one she used to share with Langa, but hearing them scream and moan throughout the night was traumatic for her. The fact that her mother never answered her phone after those alarming screams was even worse for her. She could barely think or do anything normal. By 5am, she was already in the kitchen having black coffee. Zinzi was enjoying torturing that witch. She walked downstairs dressed in one of Ntombi's pajamas. She looked way better in them of course.

Zinzi: "Good morning, darling. Slept well?"

Her smile annoyed Ntombi more than anything.

Ntombi: (irritably) "What do you think you're doing, Zinzi?"

Zinzi: (frowning) "What do you mean, Ntombi?"

Ntombi: "You didn't exist until just two days ago and now suddenly my husband is all over you. Tell me, you're a witch, aren't you? What did you feed him?"

Zinzi burst out in laughter.

Zinzi: "Bathong sesi (goodness girl)! I fed him good pussy. What else can I feed him? I mean, isn't that what you did while he was trying to get back with Samarah?"

Ntombi felt so angered but defeated that she had no words left within her.

Zinzi: "Oh, no. Does it hurt? I guess karma is a bitch, huh? You'd better repent before it is too late, darling."

She realized she heard those words just the night before.

Ntombi: "What did you just say?"

Zinzi: "I said better repent before it is too late."

Ntombi: (shocked) "It was you, wasn't it?! You did something to my mother!"

Zinzi: "What the fuck are you talking about?"

Ntombi: "You... someone called me! Was it you?!"

Zinzi: "You are so delusional."

Ntombi: “You are trying to make it seem like I am crazy, don’t you?”

Zinzi: “Girl, this is only the beginning. Did you really think Aaron was going to stand and watch you poison his wife with all those meds? Oh, no, honey. You are next.”

Ntombi felt as if the world was spinning right there and then. Langa came down with the widest smile on his face, while Ntombi looked bewildered.

Langa: (smiling) “Good morning, my wives! I am glad to see you two getting along.”

Zinzi: “Good morning, Mr. Dladla. Slept well?”

Langa: “I barely slept, but I am not complaining.”

They were flirting with one another and kissing each other right in that kitchen.

Ntombi: (angrily) “Langa, do you even trust this girl?! She’s a spy! She told me that Aaron is coming for me! She even got someone to call me last night and kidnap my mother! They told me that today I’d be visiting her in hospital! I haven’t gotten hold of her since!”

Langa looked at her in utter disbelief and then looked at Zinzi. They both burst out in perfect laughter together.

Langa: “I have been telling you about all that alcohol you have been consuming, Ntombi. It is starting to fuck with your mind.”

Ntombi: (teary) “I am serious, Langa. You are acting like I am delusional.”

Langa: “I am starting to think that the wrong wife is being administered medication.”

He and Zinzi both laughed again.

Ntombi: (crying) “Langa, I am serious.”

Langa: “Hey, man. Stop playing. This is just another one of your ploys to get me to stop the interview. Go check on Samarah and get rid of those nurses. We have very important people coming to the house in an hour.”

Ntombi was in disbelief. Langa tossed her away like a piece of trash and all sorts of thoughts were running through her mind. She had hardly slept, the hangover was playing a number on her, her mother’s screams were making her paranoid and Zinzi’s words were replaying in her head the entire time. She went to Samarah’s room and found her up already.

Ntombi: “Get ready, we have an interview in an hour.”

Samarah: (smiling) “Good morning to you too, Ntombi.”

Ntombi clicked her tongue and walked away. Indeed, within an hour the magazine crew arrived including the journalist, the camera crew and the styling crew. Langa, Ntombi and Samarah

knew none of them. Langa was so wrapped up in Zinzi's image despite her pumping him up with lots of champagne and countless blow jobs every chance she got. There was one person in particular that no one noticed. He was tall and wore unique glasses with a distinctive walk. He was one of the make up artists. He was in charge of Samarah's make up, while one of the females did Ntombi's make up. Ntombi was edgy and could barely sit still. Every sound she heard made her jumpy, while Samarah was very calm. Her make up artist was very nice to her and his voice soothed her soul. It was as if she had already met him before.

Make-up artist: "You have such beautiful skin, I shall call you goddess today. Is that okay?"

Samarah: (chuckling) "That's fine with me. I don't think I have ever been called that before."

Make-up artist: "I believe you have."

She just smiled.

Make-up artist: “What does your name mean? It is such a beautiful name.”

Samarah: “Oh, it means protected by God.”

Make-up artist: “Oh, it is Hebrew, right?”

Samarah: “How did you know?”

Make-up artist: “I just know.”

Langa: (shouting) “Hey! Stop flirting with the help and come get ready for our photos, will you?!”

Langa was already drunk but wasn't stopping with the alcohol. He had no idea that the champagne he kept drinking was laced with cocaine. He was hot and sweaty and could hardly contain his urges and emotions.

Samarah: “Forgive him, he is not always like this, you know.”

Make-up artist: "Sure."

Samarah went to stand right next to Langa while Ntombi stood on the other end. They took a few pictures but they were bad to say the least. Langa was not himself – which is what they needed him to be. The entire time the Make-up artist kept conversing with her and she was not even bothered by Langa's behaviour. She was just thankful no one drugged her that day.

Make-up artist: "Hey, let me ask you something. If I may, of course."

Samarah: "Of course."

Make-up artist: "What's your favourite song?"

Samarah: "Uh, I don't quite know."

By then, Langa was totally drunk and could barely stand up. Zinzi took him upstairs to the bedroom while Ntombi received the call she had been dreading. She rushed out of there without alerting anyone where she was going. The entire crew had to act normal, though they were all hired by Aaron and Jonathan.

Make-up artist: “What if I told you that I know what your favourite song is?”

Samarah: (frowning) “How?”

Make-up artist: “Because I know you better than you know yourself. In fact, do you mind if I surprise you by playing it for you?”

Samarah shook her head in wonder. He took out his phone and played her their favourite song that they were dancing to in Bali. While playing the song to her, something was happening in her mind. Finally, the song was triggering memories that had been buried away for quite some time.

Make-up artist: “Do you remember Bali, my love? I surprised you on your birthday with Bruno Mars when he performed for us. Do you remember us sipping cocktails in the water and making love all day long? Do you remember how beautiful you looked with the sunset right behind you? You looked like the queen you were always meant to be, Samarah. Do you remember me now?”

She looked him deep within the eyes and then it hit her. Tears were streaming down her face while she could barely swallow.

Samarah: (crying) “Aaron? Is this you?”

He slowly took off his disguise which included a lot of clothing to hide his face. She couldn’t believe it when she touched his face. She felt it and it was really him.

Samarah: (crying) “It’s you. It is really you.”

She cried in his arms while he did so too. His cries were more of relief while hers were those of grief. She couldn't believe that so many beautiful memories of them together were stored so far away in her brain.

Samarah: "Oh, my love. I have so much to tell you."

Aaron: "You have eternity to do that. For now, I need to get you out of here."

She nodded in agreement and walked out hand in hand with her. It is true what Grace said; money talks indeed. They drove out of there as if she was never held hostage. Cruelty knows no bounds especially if you don't care about the victim. Samarah was clinging onto Aaron with dear life as if it was all a dream. They barely said a word to one another until they got to Rachel's house. Walking in there felt surreal for her; it felt as if the atmosphere was incredibly different. The aura around the house was of course much more different than that of Langa's house. She could finally breathe serenity and godliness. She took a deep breath in the middle of the lounge and it all came back to her. She started off crying in total silence, with Aaron just behind her. He wrapped his arms

around her and inhaled her beautiful scent. To him, she was always Samarah, but she felt so broken. She wailed with his arms tightening around her waist.

Aaron: (whispering) “It’s okay, my love. It is really okay. I am here now and I am never going anywhere ever again.”

Samarah just cried for a good hour while Aaron let her be. They wept together on the floor without saying a word to one another. Just being in each other’s arms was enough for the both of them. He had just managed to walk again so it wasn’t easy to do what he used to with her.

Aaron: “I’d love to carry you up to our bedroom like before, but I can’t. After the accident... I just can’t do certain things I used to – not yet.”

Samarah: “It is okay. Come, we’ll walk together.”

He was hiding a painful secret from her. How he wished to tell her, but he felt she would look at him differently had she done

so. They went to the bathroom and he ran her a bath just like he used to. He used scented salts and some herbs Ntate Tau gave him to help cleanse her.

Aaron: "Get in, I am sure you've been dying to take a bath like this one."

Samarah: (nodding) "Aren't you going to join me?"

Aaron: (shaking head) "Not today, it is your time to relax."

Samarah: (Nodding) "Are you going to be right beside me?"

Aaron: "I'm going nowhere."

He sat right next to her, playing with her hair while she was inside the bath tub. The past memories were truly painful, but the bliss of envisioning the future was even better. While Ntombi rushed to the hospital to see her mother, she was met with incredible shock. Her mother was wrapped with endless

Bandages around her head, arms and legs. Her face was nearly unrecognizable.

Ntombi: (shocked) “Mama! What happened to you?”

Gloria: (crying) “Ntombi?! My daughter is that you?”

She was facing up and her eyes were moving around yet she couldn't seem to see Ntombi.

Ntombi: “Yes, Mama, it is me. What happened to you? Can't you see me?”

Gloria: (shaking head) “No, my child. I don't know what they did to me. I was... tortured. I was beaten until I could barely scream any more. My womb was removed from me without any pain relief, Ntombi. I don't want you to go through such. Which is why I need you to leave Langa. Leave him. That bastard is no good to you.”

Ntombi: “No, Mama. I have worked too damn hard for this. I can’t leave him, not now.”

Gloria: “I was told to give you a message; they said that you need to repent before it is too late.”

Ntombi: (Shocked) “Who did this to you?”

Gloria: “The sad part is that I don’t know. All I know is that a man and woman visited me and did this to me. They said that I was being punished for birthing an evil bitch like you. All of this is happening because of what you have done to Samarah. Ntombi, I regret doing that to that child. Imagine if that happened to you. Please, leave Langa. I beg of you.”

Ntombi: “I can’t do that, Ma. It is not my fault he doesn’t love Samarah.”

Gloria: (crying) “You are signing a death warrant, Ntombi. If you don’t leave, they will kill you.”

While she was still talking to her mother, she heard screams from another woman who was being taken into the same ward and placed on a bed which was empty right next to Gloria. She could recognize the voice and looked. She was so shocked to see that it was Beatrice.

Ntombi: (shocked) "Beatrice? Is that you?"

She was screaming hysterically, begging for forgiveness. She too was staring at the ceiling until she heard Ntombi's voice. When she looked at her, she started mumbling a lot of things.

Beatrice: "Ntombi! Oh, please tell them to forgive me. I never meant any harm to Samarah. Yes, did so many bad things to her. I want to confess. Tell them that I want to confess."

Ntombi: "Who?"

Beatrice: "Tell them, please. Tell that man and her mother that I am ready to confess. Leave me alone! Go away!"

Just like that, she went back into hysteria mode, making Ntombi panic.

Gloria: “Do you see what I mean, Ntombi? Take this as a sign. Leave before it is too late. Go set that girl free to be with her mother.”

Ntombi rushed out of that hospital ward feeling sicker than she was when she first got there. She tried to make it to the parking lot but it seemed too far. Her vision became blurry and her legs would not co-operate any further. She felt a sharp pain in her stomach and a bit of wetness in between her legs. She heard voices of nurses asking her if she was okay, but they too seemed to be echoing in her head until all she saw was darkness and passed out on the cold hospital floor before she could even check what was happening in between her legs. She woke up about an hour later being hooked on all kinds of drips. Her head felt as if she was hit by a very heavy object. She looked around and realized she was indeed in the hospital. While she was looking around the nurse realized she was awake and decided to call the doctor.

Doctor: "Oh, Mrs. Dladla. You are finally awake. You are one lucky lady."

Ntombi: "What is going on? Why am I here?"

Doctor: "You don't remember?"

Ntombi shook her head.

Doctor: "You passed out right in this hospital about an hour ago. I mean, there are other options available for you out there, Mrs. Dladla. Inducing an abortion with alcohol is not the way to go."

Ntombi: (surprised) "I'm sorry, what on earth are you talking about? Abortion?"

Doctor: "Yes, you didn't know? You were 8 weeks pregnant. With all the alcohol that was in your system, we assumed you knew. That was what caused the miscarriage in the very first place."

Her world felt like it was falling apart in just a few days. Everything else the doctor was saying she could barely hear. She was being punished for all her bad deeds and it was just the beginning.

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

That very night was the first of many peaceful nights for Samarah. She found herself sleeping peacefully in Aaron’s arms. The moment she was in deep sleep, he decided to move away from her. He was not ready to expose his frailty to her just yet. She slept like a baby while he was stressed out about the entire situation. He longed to be beside his love, but would she accept him the way he was? Meanwhile Grace had her own sleepless nights. She was tossing and turning in her bed making Jonathan beyond anxious.

Jonathan: “Do you want to talk about what is bothering you?”

Dr. White: (sigh) “I am just thinking.”

Jonathan: “I can see that. About what?”

Dr. White: "Samarah. I mean, surely she should be here with me. She needs to know that I am her mother."

Jonathan: "Give it time. Not before everything unravels tomorrow. Let us get through our big plans first and then gradually let her know about you. We don't want to overwhelm her before she finishes her sessions with you."

Dr. White: "I know, it is just that, I have been waiting so long for this moment and now, I have to delay it. It just doesn't feel okay."

Jonathan: "You yourself know very well what happens when you expose yourself to news you are not ready for. Give it time, love."

Dr. White: "I suppose you are right."

Jonathan: "I am, now come on. Let us rest and not think about anything else, shall we?"

She nodded in agreement and let things be. The following morning, things were about to unravel. Langa had a long night of sleep, only to be awoken by the police storming into his house. They found him alone in bed and had a warrant of arrest for him.

Langa: (shocked) "What's going on here? Who let you into my house?"

Brandon: "There he is officers. Mr. Dladla, I am here representing your so called wife, Mrs. Samarah Moeng. You are under arrest for fraud, money laundering, bribery, kidnapping and administering drugs without the consent of the patient."

Langa: (shocked) "I don't know what you are talking about."

Brandon: "You may search the house, officers."

He was shouting and cursing but no one was interested in his cries. When they checked in his closet, they found a bag

containing cocaine weighing approximately 10kg. Of course, he was beyond shocked.

Langa: “No, this is insane! It must be that bitch, Zinzi!”

Brandon: “Always blaming someone else. I guess I will see you in court once again, Mr. Dladla.”

He was taken away, with the media right outside ready to take pictures of him this time. He was the culprit and not his wife. Ntombi was not even next to him at that time and he had no money. All his assets were frozen and paper trails were set. While he was being driven to the nearest cells, the judge presiding over Mthokozisi’s case was also being paid a visit. All the evidence was there that he had taken bribes from Langa to arrest Samarah and get her committed to an institution. Jonathan was not playing when he said that he needed to do a major clean up. Samarah was in tears of joy when she saw the news. Things were finally falling into place. Abuse was about to be a thing of the past and healing was right underway. She still had a long way to go, but she was finally at peace. She chose to spend the day with Aaron, just talking about anything and everything, while Grace chose to

deal with her demons. She went by and bought flowers and went to visit Amarah's grave with Jonathan. Her heart felt like it was just numb and stopped beating for a minute when she saw her small tombstone. No mother should bury her child, but she felt that she could finally connect with Amarah and bring peace unto her life. She was down the entire time after that visit, even when Jonathan offered her his famous comfort soup.

Jonathan: "I think you should call her."

Grace: "Who?"

Jonathan: "Hope."

Grace: (frowning) "What on earth for?"

Jonathan: "It is time for you two to make peace."

Grace: "Did you forget that I am not the one who gave up on our relationship?"

Jonathan: "She should at least know that you have found Samarah. I mean even if she still wants no part in your life, you should have no regrets that you have tried."

Grace: "I don't know, Jonathan."

Jonathan: "I didn't marry a coward, that's for sure. Here, call her."

She hesitated, but did it regardless. The phone rang for quite some time as expected and just when she was about to hang up

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she answered the phone.

Hope: "Hello."

Grace: (nervously) "Hi, Hope. It's me, Grace."

Hope: "Yes, I see. What can I do for you?"

She was as hostile as ever.

Grace: "Uh, I just wanted to tell you the good news. I have found my daughter, Samarah. Amarah passed on when she was ten, though."

Hope: "Oh, that's great."

That was not the reaction she was expecting and it really broke her heart.

Grace: "Yes..."

Hope: "Well, I wish you the best. I have to go."

Grace: "Okay then. Bye..."

Hope hung up leaving Grace beyond speechless and in tears.

Jonathan: "It's okay, it is not the end of the world. She will come to her senses one day."

Grace: (crying) "I should have listened to her. We would have been close today."

Jonathan: "Well, then where would that leave me?"

Grace looked at him puzzled.

Jonathan: "I wouldn't have met you; the light of my life."

Grace: (teary) "I know, and I am grateful for you. It just hurts."

Jonathan: "I know it does, but some things have to hurt before they get better, my love."

Grace was down, but having Jonathan next to her gave her great hope. While she was still dealing with her own lot, Langa was seeing shit of his own that he thought would never come. He was taken into questioning immediately after being arrested.

Detective: "Good morning, Mr. Dladla. I hope you are sober now."

Langa: "Are you going to let me go or are you here to insult me? I am a very rich man, you know, with connections everywhere and you are truly messing with the wrong person."

Detective: (laughing) "Is that so?"

Langa: "Yes, it is so."

Detective: "Mr. Dladla, for a man who has such a long charge sheet, you have quite the attitude."

Langa: "I won't say anything until you call my lawyer."

Detective: "Oh? Are you talking about the very same lawyer who took off with all the money he could withdraw from your company funds before we could freeze your assets?"

Langa: (frowning) "What are you talking about?"

He handed him a few papers.

Detective: "Mr. Dladla, as you could see there your so called lawyer withdrew R1.5 million rand from your company funds at exactly 2am this morning. He is nowhere to be found. On this paper right here, you will see that you withdrew over R5 million from Mrs. Samarah Moeng's account in just a few weeks, without her consent. We can clearly see that you did forge her signature. You will also see that in these documents over here, you paid over R3 million into the judge's account. We can confirm that you did indeed bribe the man to charge Mrs. Moeng and have her committed to an institution. All these are paper trails of all the people whom you bribed. As we speak, you are in serious trouble."

Langa: "You are bluffing. There is no proof. This is just pure speculation."

Detective: "You are aware of Mr. Vuzimusi Dladla, aren't you?"

Langa: "What does my brother have to do with this?"

Detective: "Hmm, he is ready to testify against you as we speak. He has all the evidence and more we need against you. He is a key witness in this entire case."

Langa could not believe his ears.

Langa: "You must be joking."

Detective: "I get that a lot, you know. Even if you're not willing to make a statement, that is okay. We already have more than enough against you. You will be taken into your cell to think about your deeds. You were given a choice; to redeem yourself before it is too late. I am pretty sure your friends can't wait to see you in your little, cosy prison cell."

He was taken to his cell where he found the two officers who had asked him for help just before his arrest and the famous judge he was in cahoots with. Of course, the officers were very displeased to see him, but happy to make his life a living hell. As his father warned him before his death; "You will never be able to stay rich, everything you will get will be taken away from you and you won't even believe it. You will regret ever abusing that girl as her ancestors don't even want you. We don't even want you. You are a curse; a disgrace."

“Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.”

It didn't take too long for Langa's news to be broadcasted all over the news. It was quite a storm. Brandon was getting everything set in motion to get the trial to start as soon as possible. It was high time someone dealt with Langa. Samarah was starting to pick up vibes from Aaron she couldn't understand where they were coming from. After spending an entire day with him, Jonathan suggested that they both spend some time together alone from everyone else. Of course Grace was very anxious. Her own daughter had no idea who her real mother was, but everything had its own timing. Aaron decided to book a getaway trip for the both of them, that way they could talk about what really happened and get all insecurities out of the way. He decided to take her to Bali again, just for memory's sake. Aaron surprised her with breakfast in bed as he used to, an omelette with oven-baked sun-dried tomatoes and a berry smoothie.

Aaron: “Good morning, sunshine.”

Samarah: "Hey."

Aaron: "Slept well?"

Samarah: (nodding) "Yes, you?"

Aaron: "Well, I tried. I made you some breakfast."

Samarah: "Thank you."

He sat right next to her as she dug in.

Aaron: "I have booked us a holiday to Bali for a few days. I was hoping you'd say yes."

Samarah: "Oh, are you sure that is what you want to do?"

Aaron: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Samarah: "I am just asking if you are sure of what you would like to do."

Aaron: "Yes, I am sure."

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay then. When are we leaving?"

Aaron: "Today."

Samarah: (nodding) "Okay, but I'd like to see Lydia before we leave. She has been worried about me."

Aaron: "Of course. I would also like us to do a detour before we leave."

Samarah: "Sure."

He kissed her on the forehead and let went to take a shower. She was puzzled that he still hadn't asked her to join him in the bathroom at all. It felt as if things had changed so

much between them and a rift was growing slowly. By the time he was done, he was already dressed from the moment he came out of the bathroom. She went ahead and got cleaned up herself. She wore a pair of jeans and a Tshirt, since she felt as if he wasn't attracted to her any more. Something just didn't make any sense to her. Once she was done, Lydia arrived just on time. Aaron was nice enough to have snacks and drinks for the ready in the lounge. When Lydia saw him, she gave him a tight hug. She had come along with Collin.

Aaron: "Whoa, not so hard, Lydia. You might just make Collin jealous."

Collin: (laughing) "Still the same old Aaron, I see."

Aaron: "In the flesh."

Lydia: (teary) "How are you? Are you well?"

Aaron: "Yes, I am just glad to be back home, finally."

Lydia: “Well, where’s my friend. You two can catch up on whatever.”

Aaron: “I made you two some snacks and drinks. You can take them to the lounge.”

Lydia: “I’ll go to the bedroom. We need to be as far away from you as possible. The ears have walls.”

Collin and Aaron both chuckled while she took the tray of food up to the bedroom. When she opened the bedroom door, she was rather delighted to see her best friend looking rather well. She gave her a tight hug.

Samarah: “Oh, it is so good to see you again.”

Lydia: “I thought that fucker was going to get you killed. So much for being a Dladla wife.”

They both laughed.

Samarah: "I could use a drink, man. Come on."

They caught up on everything that happened to her after she was taken from the facility without her consent. It was hell for her and she was grateful when she found Aaron that day. They exchanged tears and laughter and it was a good girl talk session.

Lydia: "So, now that your real man is finally back, have you guys done the deed yet? I mean I bet you can't take your hands off one another."

Samarah: (deep sigh) "I wish it were that easy."

Lydia: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Samarah: "Ever since he found me he's been a bit – distant."

Lydia: "In what sense?"

Samarah: "Well, he ran me a bath the first night we arrived, but he didn't join me of which I understood. But then, it became a regular thing. What's worse is that we lie down together, but he won't ever take off his clothes. Once I dose off, he gets out of bed and I wake up alone. It just doesn't make sense. What if he can't find it in his heart to touch me because I have been with another man ever since him? What if I disgust him?"

Lydia: "Come on, Samarah. You can't ever think such of Aaron. He is not like that and besides, he is a talker. He shares his emotions whenever he doesn't feel okay. You know that."

Samarah: "Then why is he behaving like this? It doesn't make any sense."

Lydia: "Has it ever occurred to you that he suffered trauma of his own after the accident? Perhaps he doesn't like the way he looks or he probably gets flashbacks and nightmares or something."

Samarah: "Maybe you are right."

Lydia: “He wouldn’t have come back for you if he didn’t think you were worth it, Samarah. He loves you, just wait for him to open up to you. Things won’t go back to the way they were in an instant. Remember, you two have been through a lot of hell while apart. And now you have to heal – together.”

Samarah chose to trust Lydia and trust the process. She wasn’t sure what to expect, but she decided not to be narrow minded at all. Meanwhile Aaron was having his own conversation with Collin.

Aaron: “I’m serious, man. I don’t know how to tell her. What if she doesn’t look at me the same way ever again?”

Collin: “All I can say is that love knows no bounds. Even if you were in a wheelchair, she would still love you more than anything in this world. Love like yours is hard to find, so you have nothing to lose man.”

It was a good day all in all after about four hours of just conversing with their friends. Once Lydia and Collin left,

Samarah and Aaron had to pack for their trip. He took a moment to hug her from behind and enjoy the moment.

Aaron: "I love you, you know that right?"

Samarah: (nodding) "I know. I love you too."

Aaron: "Are you all done with packing?"

Samarah: "I think so."

Aaron: "Okay

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I'd like us to make a stop before we leave."

Samarah: "Okay, where to?"

Aaron: "To our first place of healing."

Samarah was clueless but she let him be. They got into his car and drove off. Once they drove into the graveyard, she was growing weary of the entire trip. She felt anxious but chose to remain silent. After he parked he opened her car door and went to get something in the boot. He came out with a small urn.

Samarah: "What are we doing here?"

Aaron: "We are here to pay or respect to our loved ones – together."

She hated graveyard sites, but she did it – for him. It was the first time that Aaron was going to see where his daughters lay. When they stopped at the graves, he became silent. He was trying to absorb everything that happened and thought of Samarah burying their children without him.

Aaron: (teary) "My children, it is I, your father, Aaron Moeng. I know that God took you away from us before your time, but I can only hope that you are fine in the spirit world. I know, your grandmother is with you and she is taking good care of

you. Please, help your mother heal and protect us while you can. We both love you so much. I have here with me, your grandmother's ashes. She has asked me to spread them evenly amongst the two of you so that you can finally be together forever. Mama, please, take care of us. I have finally made my way back to my wife. All I ask is that you grant us great blessings and protection from the other side. We will meet again soon. No one will ever harm us ever again."

Samarah was emotional throughout the entire time.

Aaron: "Would you like to say something?"

Samarah: (shaking head) "No."

She felt a sense of guilt for what happened to her while he was gone. She started to feel bad about not being able to mourn her children properly due to the memory loss, and felt even worse about falling for Langa all over again. It is never easy dealing with a person's guilt. She was sad from the onset of that entire graveyard encounter. It felt a little better to be able to share that moment with Aaron. They didn't even have

pictures of their children; all that was left was sonograms from all their doctor's appointments. They got back into the car in silence and went to the airport. Once they were in his private jet, all she felt like was a stiff drink. She held a whiskey glass in her one hand while her head was placed on his chest. They were listening to one another's heartbeat in perfect silence. They eventually dozed off in between refuelling of the jet. Once they made it to Bali, it was a beautiful morning by then. They were booked in the very same room they were in the last time they were there. The moment she saw the radiant sun rays she remembered their last vacation there in an instant. He hugged her from behind yet again.

Aaron: "Do you remember the very first time we made love here?"

Samarah: "Yes, I do. It was magical."

He inhaled her scent yet again. His warm breath on her neck tantalized her body forcing it to react. It had been a very long time since she felt that way. She turned around and faced him. They hadn't had a passionate moment since they found one another that day. She stared deep in his eyes and their lips

met yet again. It all felt so natural as if their lips never parted. Aaron's body responded with his penis getting hard. Samarah's hand travelled down to his crotch and touched him down there. He moaned in her mouth and stopped himself soon afterwards.

Aaron: (breathing heavily) "There's something I need to tell you."

Samarah: "What is it? Is it me? Is it because of Langa?"

Aaron: (shaking head) "No. I have been so stressed about this entire thing. I didn't know how to tell you."

Samarah: "It's okay, you know you can tell me anything."

Aaron: (sigh) "When my mother and I had the accident we were in a very horrible condition. We needed surgery right away and once we were stable, we were transported to the U.S. It was tough on her since I suffered severe blows to my lower body. A portion of my back burnt badly, while my mother passed away

a month later. She is the one who ensured that Brandon got everything in tact for you – in case you had the babies and in case I made it back to you.”

He slowly moved a bit further away from her.

Aaron: “Despite so many surgeries, I needed extensive physio.”

He started taking off his shirt and she could see all the scars on his body. He then took off his pants nervously and she was shocked to see what he had been hiding all along.

Aaron: (tearfully) “I lost my left lower leg due to the crash, Sammy. I haven’t been the same ever since. I have wanted to see you, but I kept wondering if you’d even love me again after seeing me like this. I am disabled now.”

Samarah cried; not because he was now disabled – it changed nothing within her. She cried because he went through all that pain all alone and he thought she wouldn’t love him again after seeing him like that. She could see the fear in his eyes. She

approached him gently and held his face. He could barely look at her.

Samarah: (crying) “Aaron, look at me. Please, look at me, baby.”

He looked at her hesitantly. She removed his glasses so that he could see her clearer.

Samarah: “All my life, I doubted myself. I wasn’t even sure that I’d ever be able to be loved but then you showed up. You lit up my world in ways I never thought could be possible. You re-introduced me to God, properly. You loved me in such a godly manner, that I felt like the only girl in the world. You exposed me to things I never thought I’d ever be exposed to. Aaron, you helped me lean on you when I was down, now allow me to be your pillar. You are still the Aaron I have grown to love. Nothing has changed within me. I am so saddened that you felt you couldn’t tell me about this. I was so worried that you felt disgusted by me or something because I had been with another man.”

Aaron: “You could never disgust me – not even on your dirtiest.”

Samarah: (chuckling) “You are mine, Aaron and I am yours. We promised one another that we’d be there for each other til death do us part. I love you even more now knowing that you fought the good fight for me. You are my world, Aaron Moeng. Please, don’t ever think otherwise.”

He broke down in relief as she held him close. They made their way to the bed and just held one another. He removed his prosthetic leg and she got to see the current state of his leg. She gently rubbed it with assurance which was relief to him.

1 Corinthians 13 verse 13 says; “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” They slowly went back into a pattern of their perfect love again. Later that evening, Aaron had their own private wedding planned with just the two of them. She had the dress and the night sky was their guests. The stars complimented them and they were finally going to be one again. They said their vows in beautiful harmony and danced to Versace on the floor as their wedding song. Once their own private festivities were over,

they took it to the bedroom to complete what they had started. Aaron was nervous, while Samarah chose to take the lead for a change. They kissed one another so effortlessly; not once did they break eye contact and their skin touched again. Goosebumps were flowing and blood pressure was rising. They made sweet love to one another, consummating their marriage for eternity. For that entire week, they never let go of one another. Love is a beautiful thing shared with the right person.

Chapter 86

Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

One week later...

It had been a rather pleasant week for Samarah and Aaron. With no contact with the outside world and just the two of them next to one another, it was a breeze. They felt so secure and all insecurities were over. The night they made love to one another in Bali again, Samarah had a very pleasant dream. Amarah was in the dream, looking a lot like her at that age. She was happy and they had a long conversation about life and how proud she was of the woman she had become. She told her that she was not sad about dying so young but she was determined to protect her at all costs. It was her time to finally be happy and bask in all that happiness. It was time for them to go back home and face reality once again, since Langa's trial was about to start. Right after they landed, Aaron had one more surprise for her.

Aaron: "Hey, can we make a detour before heading home?"

Samarah: (frowning) "You have become a huge fan of detours lately, haven't you?"

Aaron: (chuckling) "I promise you, this one will be the best one yet."

Samarah: "I'd love to see you top this week."

They drove to Grace's house.

Samarah: "Whose beautiful house is this?"

Aaron: "You'll see. Once they got out, they walked in hand in hand and found Jonathan, Grace and Brandon having lunch. Grace's face lit up immediately when Samarah walked in.

Jonathan: "Oh, hey. The lovely couple is finally here."

Aaron: "Hey, J. What's up Brandon?"

Brandon: "I am all good and you?"

Aaron: "I can't complain. Mrs. White. How lovely to see you again."

Grace: "Likewise. How are you, Samarah?"

Samarah: "I feel very good, actually."

Grace: "Do you guys mind joining us for lunch?"

They agreed and Samarah sat right next to Grace. It was so surreal for her to have her daughter right next to her. She could see all the resemblance now; they even had so much in common and everything they did they did in a similar way. After lunch, Jonathan suggested that the men go and

have some time alone so that Grace could have her moment with her daughter. Once they left, Grace dived right into it.

Grace: “Samarah, I am sure you are wondering why you are here. I can promise you, you are not here because I want to have sessions with you – no. I asked Aaron to bring you here because there is something really serious that I would like to tell you.”

Samarah: “I am all ears.”

Grace: (sigh) “Years ago, I met a very handsome boy while I was still in school. He was my very first boyfriend and I loved him so much. We fell in love, but you know, boys being boys he ended up cheating on me. I dumped him, but little did I know I was pregnant. He was fine with it and tried to mend ways with me, but I wouldn’t have it. I was carrying twins, girls to be exact. I was very happy despite the circumstances. When I gave birth, I did not even get a chance to see them when...”

Her voice started breaking when tears started flowing down her face. Samarah felt it was only right for her to hold her hand in comfort.

Grace: "He and his mother stole the babies from the NICU and ran off. I never got to see my babies ever again."

Samarah felt so much empathy for Grace.

Grace: "My life turned upside down ever since then. It was never the same so much so that my mother died of depression because of my deteriorating state. My sister and her husband wrote me off when I became a severe alcoholic. That is when I met Jonathan. He literally saved my life. I searched for years on end and I couldn't find my girls. It took me a very long time to heal with hopes that I'd find them. Then, when I met their father a few weeks ago, I couldn't believe it. When he told me that one of them died when she was 1, I... I just couldn't bear it. I broke down and ended up in hospital."

Samarah: "Oh, Dr. White, I am so sorry."

Grace: "I became depressed for days until Jonathan decided to help me snap out of it. When he told me that one of them was alive, I had hope. I was angry at the fact that she was subjected to so much abuse while I was alive. He didn't even have the heart to at least find me. I now know what they mean by fate and karma. When I saw you the very first time, I didn't think anything of it. Even when I saw your name; I mean I gave my girls those names and it is not very common to find black people with Hebrew names. My point is that I named my girls and at least he honoured that wish. I named them Samarah and Amarah."

Samarah looked at Grace in pure disbelief.

Grace: (teary) "What I am trying to say is that, you are my daughter, Samarah. I am your mother, Beatrice is not your mother, I am."

Samarah: (shocked) "You... everything makes so much sense now. Amarah always told me that Beatrice was not our real mother. When Sister Joy told me about you, I thought nothing of it. Now, when I take a good look at you, it all makes sense

why we look alike. Your face, your body structure... You are my mom.”

She broke down while Grace hugged her tightly. She had been dying to hold her children in her arms, at least she got to hold one of them despite all the years lost.

Grace: “Yes, you are my daughter, Samarah. Oh, how I have been waiting for this moment. I am so happy that I finally have my daughter in my arms.”

Samarah: (crying) “You have no idea what Beatrice has done to me.”

Grace: “Don’t you worry about that. I sorted her out. I know, the past is long gone, but new memories have never hurt anyone, right?”

Samarah: “Is it okay if I call you Mom?”

Grace: "Of course. You can call me anything you want, my daughter."

Mother and daughter made their way to one another and fate was slowly returning back to its original state. It was a good day for the White family; their family grew a little bigger and closure was found. The following day, Langa's trial was about to start. Brandon had all the facts and he was determined to make it as brief as possible. Langa was so broke then that he couldn't even afford private counsel. Jonathan

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Grace and Brandon were now part of Aaron and Samarah's family. They walked out of their cars and into the court yard like a real family. The media was all over them and of course tried bombarding them with questions, but they were not there for that. Just before they walked in, Zanele and Buhle were rather happy and relieved to see Samarah. They both rushed towards her and even attempted to hug her, annoying Aaron in the process.

Zanele: "Oh, sisi (sis)! We are so glad you are finally here!"

Buhle: “We’ve been waiting on you!”

Samarah: “Oh, really? Why?”

Zanele: “Well, we were hoping we could speak to you – in private.”

Aaron: (annoyed) “You can’t speak to MY wife in private, not after what you did to her. Be glad that I let you live and didn’t even touch a hair on your heads.”

Buhle: “Oh, come on, sisi. Surely you can’t think that we did that out of our own accord. It wasn’t really our choice.”

Zanele: “Yes, we were – “

Aaron: “Look, I assume you are here because you are hoping that she could drop charges against your brother. She is not interested in that and if anything, I suggest you both stay as far away from us as possibly before you annoy me. I am not a very nice man when annoyed.”

He cut them off as they were about to say anything further and walked into the court room. Suddenly, they both felt the need to be nice to Samarah and ask for her help. People who have hurt you never hesitate to even ask you for help when they are down and out. That is just how hypocrites operate. Aaron didn't leave his wife's side and neither did Jonathan leave Grace's side. Brandon was on the podium looking more than ready. Langa was brought up from the holding cells in shackles; he looked so frail and quite weak. He had a few bruises as if he were beaten up. He looked around and looked at Samarah with tears in his eyes. He didn't think about that when he was making a living hell out of her life. The judge made his way in and they were requested to stand as per procedure. Once they sat down, the ball started rolling.

Judge: "The plaintiff may present its case."

Brandon: "Thank you, my lord. As you can see before you the defendant is facing multiple charges including money laundering, fraud, bribery, possession of drugs, kidnapping and administering drugs without consent of the victim. We have all

the evidence you need, my lord, including witnesses who are more than happy to take the stand.”

Judge: “Very well then, you may call your first witness.”

Brandon: (clearing throat) “The court calls on Vusimuzi Dladla to take the stand.”

A few people gasped in great shock when he made his way to the stand. Langa was obviously nervous and could barely hide it.

Brandon: “Mr. Dladla, do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?”

Vusi: “I do.”

Brandon: “Mr. Dladla is it true that you and the accused are related?”

Vusi: "Yes."

Brandon: "Please state your relation."

Vusi: "We are brothers."

Brandon: "I see, and according to my understanding, you were one of his employees at Dladla Constructions, right?"

Vusi: "That's correct."

Brandon: "What kind of job were you doing for him?"

Vusi: "I was one of his company drivers. Basically, I'd be in charge of driving the builders to and from work."

Brandon: "I see. As you understand, your brother here is accused of money laundering to name a few. Can you tell the court how you found out about that?"

Vusi: "My brother has always wanted to be rich, you see – no matter what it would cost him. One day, he casually asked me to deliver a package for him, but instructed me not to open it. It was 10pm at night. I mean, I was risking my life driving to

Hillbrow to deliver a package I was instructed not to open for a quick extra buck. So, being curious, I opened it.”

Brandon: “What did you find?”

Vusi: “I found cash in the package – lots and lots of cash.”

Brandon: “Who were you supposed to give this money to?”

Vusi: “I was instructed to park at a spot in Hillbrow and wait for a man with a given description. I never knew any relations of the person, until I met him the second time. I was told to drop off and collect at the same time. It was only then when I realized that he was a drug dealer and I was being used to transport drugs.”

The court room went into shock while Langa was in distress.

Langa: (shouting) “Unamanga (you’re lying)!”

He could not contain himself when the court had to be taken to recess. It was a bumpy ride, but ultimately even Vee testified against him. It turned out they turned state witnesses against him after they were caught stealing money from Langa’s company. It turned out that Vusi had bought himself a nice stand and built himself a nice house with that money. Family can be your downfall at times, more especially if you don’t treat them right. For the next week, Zanele and Buhle were bombarding Samarah with phone calls and random visits to the house until Aaron threatened them. They were nowhere to be

seen after that. Langa, the officers, the bribed Judge and even Ntombi were charged. They all received their sentences a week later. Slowly but surely life fell back into place for Samarah and Aaron. Despite the money he stole from her, he didn't dent her one bit. Aaron's estate was worth millions so they were set. She worked for the hospital for another year, before traveling with Aaron. They went to any place they could name anywhere in the world. A few years later, Lydia had her first born and a year later, her second. It took Samarah and Aaron 8 whole years to conceive. Despite everything, they never gave up on God. They had twin girls yet again and decided to name them Rachel and Grace. Blessings were pouring in their lives ever since.

Langa had tried to attempt suicide many times in prison, but was unsuccessful. He even tried to write to Samarah countless times, but that ship had long sailed. Zanele and Buhle remained in their family home and could barely find jobs while Phume became a successful Dentist as intended. Vee and Vusi remained together with their children and enjoyed life after the money they stole. They hardly visited Langa in prison.

Beatrice went mad and was sent to a mental hospital and had been there ever since, while Richard succumbed to his cancer despite receiving the best treatment. His relationship with Samarah could never be repaired ever since.

Samarah had a tough journey; she might have been stupid most times, but love can make a lot of people do stupid things. She ignored her gut when she should have paid attention which is what most people do. Somewhere along the line she lost her faith in God. Humans do that but the important thing is that you bounce right back. God promised us all restoration and grace if we keep on believing in Him. There is no expiry date, but when your time on earth is up it is difficult to gain His forgiveness.

Ephesians 1 verse 11 says; “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”

Most men on this earth can use and abuse you if you have everything going for you. No one can help you but yourself in most cases – even a drug addict cannot be forced into rehabilitation. This life is not for the faint-hearted and even those who are ill-hearted do get their day.

The damage is mostly done by the time people heal, but what matters is that God is the only one who can steer your ship. When He says yes – no one can say no. It is never too late to fall in love and it is never too late to change. Have faith at all times and learn that God’s timing is not yours.

In most cases, it is wise not to give those a chance to enter your life again after they have hurt you – for they will do it again if not ten times more.

Psalm 37 verse 4 says; “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Give yourself to the Lord, and everything shall fall into place.

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

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